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SOCIAL (CIVIC) MOVEMENTS IN ALBANIA

**AN ANALYSIS ON CITIZENS'
PERCEPTION AND MOVEMENTS
CAPACITIES TO TRIGGER CHANGE**



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FOREWORD

This publication deals with a historic overview of the civic movements in Albania after '90s, provides a summary of movements in other countries, and dwells into the current landscape of these movements by more specifically analyzing only six of the current movements. The aim has been to look into their capacities, membership, activity level and to assess whether there is a possibility for them to mobilize support and trigger change into the democratization process in Albania. An important part of this report was to survey and measure citizen's perception of accepting and following these movements. To note here is the fact that the current pre-election phase is a very dynamic one with various developments such as the emerging of new movements and/or political parties or ceasing of other ones.

On one side, the public faith in politics and political structures has been eroded in the last years, and on the other side, the citizen's activism has been fragmented in the best case. As explained by a previous WFD study, the Cost of Politics in Albania is very high and creates an entry barrier into politics for the new movements/parties or politicians, in addition to other formidable hurdles that exist. Under the current circumstances, it is of high interest to look into the present dynamics that favor or disfavor the emerging and strengthening of new civic/political actors in the country.

The study was realized by the Center for Economic and Social Studies (CESS), one of the country's prominent think tanks dealing with this type of research / survey and was supported by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD). The Foundation would like to thank CESS and its researchers for their dedication in preparing this document.

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Sokol Haxhiu

WFD Country Representative

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1 INTRODUCTION

The collapse of the totalitarian regime in Albania started through a powerful social movement, such as the Student Movement in December 1990. Concertedly with other factors and stakeholders in the Albanian society, this movement soon became a genuine political movement that gave rise to the first opposition political party in Albania and legitimized, after almost 50 years, political pluralism and a new political-economic system founded on liberal democracy and market economy. The movement of December 1990 had the characteristics of a social movement set in motion by a social group with high patriotic awareness, such as students, and concluded with the realization of its historic mission, prompting bottom-up change and creating situations that ushered in political pluralism.

After the 1990s, Albania has experienced several 'waves of social movements', which have been related to political cycles of governance and have produced situations, factors, and decisions that include issues pertaining to poor governance of elections, protection of the environment and cultural heritage, education, social rights, etc. Subsequent to this reasoning, 'the first wave of social (civic) movements' in Albania is related to the period 1990 - 1997; 'the second wave of social movements' is recorded in the period 1998 - 2005; 'the third wave of social movements' took place in the period 2005 - 2013; and 'the fourth and fifth waves' of social movements belong to the 2013 - 2017 and 2017 - 2020 periods.

In early 1990s, the establishment of new political parties and their participation in the governance of the country, as well as the establishment of the first trade unions, set up according to the interest of workers across the country, replaced almost entirely the Students Movement. For several years, political parties and trade unions became the only centers where social movements gravitated to bring the desired change for certain causes and goals.

During the first decade of the Albanian transition from totalitarianism to democracy, in the mid-1990s, in the aftermath of the general elections of May 1996, which were not recognized and of the collapse of the so-called pyramid schemes in the following months, resulting thus in a deep political and institutional crisis, a new civic movement emerged: the Forum for Democracy. This movement was concentrated around the active action of certain public figures who believed that democratization would be empowered only through free elections, as a key factor that could abate social tensions. On the other hand, some fragmented student movements in 1998 were some additional elements that tried to reanimate the spirit of social (civic) movements.

The spirit of social and civic engagement, outside the system of political parties, during 2000 - 2005, on matters such as good governance and environmental issues was started and promoted by several new civic movements notably the Civic Coalition Against Corruption, Mjaft Movement, and the Civic Alliance for the Protection of the Bay of Vlora. Mjaft Movement was the one that draw most the attention of the public. Through its innovative methods of civic mobilization, it triggered civic engagement through non-traditional means and forms of protests. Some leaders of the Mjaft Movement, after a four-year period of activity (2004 - 2008), left the movement to create in 2009 a political party, called Grouping 99 (G99), which participated in the next general elections held on 28 June 2009 as part of the left-wing coalition Union for Change. This party received 12,989 votes or 0.86% of votes at national level. It ran again in the general elections of 23 June 2013 as part of the left-wing coalition the Alliance for European Albania, getting 2,997 votes or 0.17% at the national level. In 25 June 2017 elections, where each party ran individually, as a separate electoral subject, G99 did not register to run at all. In this period, two new political movements emerged, the Equal List or LIBRA party, led by a former SP MP, Mr. Ben Blushi. In 2017 general elections, LIBRA received 19,806 votes or 1.25% of votes nationwide, whereas the movement the Challenge for Albania, led by a group of new and young intellectuals such as Mr. Gjergj Bojaxhiu, Mr. Ermal Hasimja, etc., got 3,546 votes or 0.22%.

Also, during 2004 - 2007, the activity of the Civic Alliance for the Protection of the Bay of Vlora was noteworthy. It was created in 2004 as a civic reaction to the government's decision to grant a much-debated concession to Petrolifera to set up oil tankers near the Port of Vlora.¹ This decision was challenged by the Alliance for the Protection of the Bay of Vlora considering the fact that it is a closed bay, and potential pollution from oil spills would require decades to be removed due to the low circulation of the seawater from the bay toward the open sea. At the same time, a 560-hectare industrial park was envisaged to be built there, next to the sand strip of the beach and the forest of Pishë Poro, close to the old port and to Narta Lagoon, envisaged as a Protected Area by the Ramsar Convention on Lagoons.

Subsequent to this reaction, over 2004 - 2007, the Alliance for the Protection of the Bay of Vlora launched an awareness-raising campaign for the public, through protests and public debates in the print and electronic media and managed to collect 14,000 signatures for the organization of a local referendum. Thanks to this activity, it became a broad social movement, under the direction of environmental activists such as prof. Sazan Guri and Lavdosh Feruni. On 27 April 2005, the Alliance addressed the authorities of the Aarhus Convention (AAC) signed by the Government of Albania. According to the Convention, public consultations should be conducted on projects likely to have significant effects on the environment. Their request for a referendum

¹ <https://ekolevizja.wordpress.com/2007/09/16/trë-banka-mbeshtesin-qeverine-shqiptare-kunder-zhvillimit-te-qendrueshem>

was turned down on 25 November 2005 by the CEC and, although the decision was appealed to the court, the high Court rejected this request in December 2006. Despite the continuous public reaction through protests and a significant participation in public and media debates, on 9 February 2007, the Albanian Electrical Energy Corporation (KESH) signed a EUR 92 million contract with Italy's Maire Engineering SpA, to build Vlora's Thermo Power Plant (TEC), thus ignoring the AAC's conclusions and efforts of the Alliance for more than two years.

On the other hand, during the period 2011 - 2013, a new movement emerged in Albania, the Red and Black Alliance (RBA), which initially opposed the census of the population on the basis of self-declaration for the ethnicity and later the policies of the Albanian state vis-a-vis Greece. In the meantime, the RBA registered as an electoral subject on its own for the 23 June 2013 elections². It did not join any of the two main coalitions, the left-wing Alliance for European Albania (ASHE) or right-wing Alliance for Employment, Welfare, and Integration (APMI). The RBA received 10,196 or 0.59% of votes at the national level and, based on such results, it did not succeed in passing the threshold to be represented in the Albanian parliament. In the 25 June 2017³, where each political party ran as a separate electoral subject, the RBA did not register to participate.

The Alliance against the Import of Wastes (AKIP), a large scale social (civic) movement again in the area of environment protection, was established on 23 October 2011, in defense of a very important case related to the protection of the environment and of the health of the people. The goal of this alliance was to prevent the import of wastes to Albania, requiring the repeal of Article 49 of the Law on the Integrated Waste Management, which had been adopted by the Parliament in 2011 with the votes of the then ruling majority and strongly objected by opposition MPs. As a result of the support of the former left-wing opposition in 2001 for AKIP, when they assumed power after the 2013 elections, they annulled this law in September 2013. Through awareness-raising and public action, the AKIP managed to collect 60,000 signatures for a referendum, but since the law was annulled, the referendum was rendered unnecessary and did not take place. However, the AKIP resumed its activity when the much-debated law on the import of wastes was re-introduced for adoption in June 2016 now by the left-wing ruling majority. The law was adopted by the Parliament but was not decreed by the President, who returned it to the Parliament on 14 November 2016, to be later adopted with some subsequent amendments by the Parliament in September 2017.

In the period 2014 - 2016, a series of social movements emerged in Albania in efforts to protect public urban space in Tirana, the capital of the country. Thus, in 2014, activists from the civil society and environmental organizations led a movement for about one year to object the construction of five 17-storey towers below the dam of the artificial lake,

2 <http://cec.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/permbledhese-2013.pdf>

3 <http://cec.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/permbledhese-2017.pdf>

following a decision by the Territory Council at the Municipality of Tirana on 1 August 2014.⁴ The initiative “*Citizens for the Park*” continued alone the protests before the Municipality and the Prime Minister’s Office under the motto: “*Zero park, zero votes*”, aiming to stop the implementation of a EUR 100 million project, which would add to the density of buildings around the Lake Park. In this light, they had Gjergj Bojaxhiu, an activist, ran as an independent mayoral candidate, under the logo of the initiative “*Ne Tirana*” (Eng: We Tirana) in the 21 June 2015 local elections. But he did not manage to win, receiving only 16,303 votes. However, Mr. Bojaxhiu’s running for mayoral office marked a success; he received the highest number of votes ever received by a single candidate against broad-based coalitions in electoral processes over 25 years. In addition, around the same period, the Movement *ShqipOn* requested a referendum for the partial abrogation of the Territory Regulation Plan which envisaged the building of five towers right below the dam of the Artificial Lake of Tirana.⁵ Their petition aimed at having a local referendum organized for the partial abrogation of the Territory Regulation Plan for the area below the dam of the Artificial Lake of Tirana, arguing that the building of these towers would further reclaim the lake and hence the Lake Park, considered as the lungs of the city hosting 1 million citizens, would eventually disappear. But all the efforts of these movements failed to realize their goals. While the National Inspectorate for the Protection of the Territory (INUK) declared the construction permit as illegitimate and ordered that works stop, through its decision of 14 January 2015, ten days later, the Administrative Court of First Instance of Tirana overruled the block, thus allowing works to continue. The Administrative Court of Appeals confirmed on 3 April 2018 the ruling of the First Instance.

Furthermore, from 20 February to 1 June 2016 “*Mbro Parkun e Liqenit*” (Eng: Protect the Lake Park) Movement was set in motion as an initiative of activists from civil society and environmentalist organizations objecting to a decision of the Municipality of Tirana to build a playground inside the Lake Park. According to the activists, the playground was built on concrete layers placed on top of the green surface allowing also for trees to be cut to make room for playground items. Representatives of this movement continued to protest for several months, under their motto: “*Protect the Lake Park, let us plant trees instead of concrete!*” at times clashing with the municipal police. Democratic Party MPs, representing the parliamentary opposition and Tirana Municipal Council opposition, joined this cause. In 2015 local elections, the Democratic Party lost the Municipality of Tirana to the Socialist Party mayoral candidate, Mr. Erjon Veliaj. Irrespective of these objections, the Municipality of Tirana continued to implement the project and inaugurated the playground at the Lake Park on 1 June 2016.⁶

This brief overview of social movements in Albania after 1990 shows that they have been characterized by different typologies. At a first glance,

4 <https://www.reporter.al/beteja-ligjore-per-kompleksin-100-milione-euro-tek-diga-e-liqenit/>

5 <https://www.change.org/p/qytetar%C3%ABt-referendum-p%C3%ABr-liqenin-e-tiran%C3%ABs;http://levizjashqipon.org/>

6 <https://www.tirana.al/artikull/gati-kendi-i-lojrave-tek-liqeni>

they appear to be dominated by issues related to protecting the environment. In fact, they have been a result of the citizens' perception that these decisions that affected the urban environment were related to misgovernance and abuse of power. On the other hand, as shown by the data presented above, when transformed into electoral subjects, social (civic) movements have not been able to pass the threshold to be represented in parliament. This shows that their electoral share and level of influence among the voters is very low, testifying that the Albanian electorate, while mistrustful toward main political parties, preserves a traditional inclination in its electoral behavior. The experience of the Mjaft Movement and of the Red and Black Alliance points out that, taking into account that the share of the political parties in a certain society is significantly large, then the best option to guarantee a change in certain areas is for them to transform into electoral subjects in order to have a direct impact on decision-making. However, most of these movements, regardless of their persistence and cause, especially in relation to protecting the environment or urban space, did not manage to oblige state authorities to retire from their positions and decisions. One of the main causes may be the lack of active participation of citizens in these movements to realize significant activities with a public impact on decision-making, as well as the lack of response and 'institutional indifference' by state institutions toward these movements.

Yet, Albania witnessed the only case in its recent history where social movements succeeded in showing their strength and have an impact on public decision-making, through mobilizing the masses and raising the awareness of the public. A movement against the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons in Albania caused the Government of Albania, on 15 November 2013, to withdraw from an agreement reached in principle with the US for these weapons to be destroyed in the territory of Albania.⁷

Nonetheless, as we have already mentioned, the history of social (civic movements) in Albania after 1990 consists of various examples, whose objectives have been focusing on individual aspects related to the quality of governance, environment, public transparency, etc.

In the meantime, in Albania, in recent years, a number of social movements have emerged to advocate certain issues. Nisma Thurje, Organizata Politike, Movement for the University, Vetvendosja - Albania, EcoAlbania, Alliance for Defending the National Theatre, Coalition for Albania,⁸ Diaspora for Free Albania⁹ or Free Movement testify that certain

7 <https://kryeministria.al/newsroom/ja-e-verteta-e-armeve-kimike/>

8 The movement is led by Mr Altin Goxhaj, a lawyer and an activist. In its status, this movement has been defined as "a movement pertaining to the right-wing conservative political spectrum, an anti-establishment, anti-communist, anti-oligarchy, and anti-Soros, with a patriotic and sovranist, pro-American and Eurosceptical stance." For more information see <https://www.pershqipierine.al/https://www.facebook.com/KoalicioniPerShqipierine/>; <https://twitter.com/PerShqipierine>

9 The Movement Diaspora for Free Albania was established by two members of the Albanian diaspora, Mr Florian Haçkaj (Switzerland) and Mr Bledar Millaqi (Germany), who were involved in the Alliance for Defending the Theatre. After the demolition of the building of the National Theatre on 17 May 2020, they were motivated to establish this movement. The primary goal for the movement is to guarantee the right to vote in the general and local elections for Albanian citizens

groups of the Albanian society seek another level of representation that goes beyond the system of political parties to defend issues of significance to the public interest. Their impact on the Albanian society and institutions varies and is often inter-dependent on their financial and organizational capacity to mobilize masses to support the issues and cases they advocate. On the other hand, their potential to be transformed into political actors, political parties, that have an impact on and participate directly in electoral processes is related to their share and role vis-a-vis the citizens' perception.

2. SOCIAL (CIVIC) MOVEMENTS, DEFINITION, AND THEORETICAL APPROACHES

2.1. SOCIAL (CIVIC) MOVEMENTS: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Social (*civic*) movements are a well-known phenomenon emerging in many countries of Western and Eastern Europe, which stand up for advocating certain causes or issues. In general, these movements, as an organized effort of a group of people to achieve certain social or political goals have emerged as a legal need to oppose government acts that affect the interests of the public. Social or civic movements are a typical case of bottom-up changes within various societies and political systems.

Scholars of political science and sociology have provided different definitions of such movements, which depend on a number of factors. In different countries, at least since the second half of the XIX century, a number of different theories have been formulated trying to explain the underlying causes, factors, weight and role they play in promoting certain changes at the social or political level within the societies in which they emerge. Over the two decades of the XXI century, their role and significance has been reinforced thanks to the effects of information technologies and means of communication, social media such as the Internet, Facebook, etc. A typical case are the civic protest movements in the Middle East during 2010 - 2011, especially the Jasmine movement in Tunisia and that of the Tahrir Square in Egypt, which transformed into massive and successful ones thanks to the role of the internet.¹⁰

abroad, through the postal service, as a legal obligation of the Albanian state, which is yet to be realized, vis-a-vis its citizens. In a letter sent to the President of the Republic, the Assembly of the Republic of Albania, chairpersons of the main political parties, the Minister of State for the Diaspora, and Diplomatic Missions, they argued that given that the size of the diaspora, according to INSTAT, is estimated at around 1,64 million or 36% of Albanian citizens living abroad, it is necessary for them to be guaranteed the right to vote electronically, by post or at the embassies in the countries of their residence. For more information, see <https://www.diasporaofalbania.com/>

¹⁰ Dolata, Ulrich; Schrape, Jan-Felix (2016). "Masses, Crowds, Communities, Movements: Collective Action in the Internet Age". *Social Movement Studies*. 15 (1): 1–18

At the center of the civic or social movements is engagement and social action in the form of groups involving individuals, organizations, or both of them. Numerous studies have identified a connection, in certain cases, between civic movements and their democratic potential to be transformed into new political parties. The scope and typology of these movements varies and a number of sociologists classify them by examining elements such as the goal, the type of change they introduce, the methods they use, the spread of their activities across a territory, and longevity. Some scholars state that especially social movements in Western countries were made possible due to the widespread access to education, social awareness and increased movement of the labour force, as a result of the industrialization and urbanization of societies in the XIX century.¹¹ Freedom of expression, education and relative economic independence - prevalent in the modern culture of Western countries - are some of the driving factors for a large number of contemporary social movements having various goals.

Social movements have certainly gone through stages of historical development in Western and Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans region. In the period 1945-1990, in Western Europe, these movements culminated during the mid-1960s with student movements in France and Italy, as a result of the so-called *New Left*. In the meantime, the so-called *New Social Movements* are a significant component of them. This labelling was applied to those that emerged at the end of the 1960s and included movements focusing on environment, disarmament, LGT communities, women's rights, etc. Anti-nuclear and environmental social movements were particularly present in Western Europe, especially until the end of the Cold War. Many groups of anti-nuclear movements managed to establish structures such as the *Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament*, *Friends of Earth*, *Greenpeace*, *International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War*, *Peace Action* or the Nuclear Information and Resource Service. These movements emerged and developed across Western European countries and their initial objective was nuclear disarmament, which included also opposing the use of nuclear energy.¹² As a result of the emergence of these mass movements, based on the collective awareness of peace and preservation of the environment, Green Parties were established during the 1970s and 1980s which assumed an important role, especially in the political theatre of Northwestern European countries such as Germany, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, etc. Public awareness increased significantly following the nuclear tests in the Pacific Ocean. Moreover, intensified public protests across many Western European countries led to the signing of the *Partial Test Ban Treaty* on 5 August 1963 in Moscow by the US, the USSR, the UK and then followed by 123 other countries. Besides opposing nuclear armament, these social movements strongly opposed the use of nuclear energy, which they considered a major risk to

11 Scott, John; Marshall, Gordon (2009), "Social movements", A Dictionary of Sociology, Oxford University Press, ISBN 978-0-19-953300-8

12 Kitschelt, H. (1986) Political Opportunity Structures and Political Protest: Anti-Nuclear Movements in Four Democracies. *British Journal of Political Science*, 16(19): 57–85. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S000712340000380X>

environmental pollution and health. A typical example is the success of the movement against the construction of a nuclear power plant in Wyhl of the Emmendingen region in Baden-Württemberg in SW Germany. On 17-23 February 1975, thousands of people occupied in disobedience the site where this power plant would be built. As a result, on 21 February 1975, the administrative court revoked the license for its construction.¹³ The success of this movement fueled and inspired other social movements against the risk of nuclear energy in other European and North American countries. Meanwhile, as a result of accidents at nuclear power plants in various countries such as the US, the USSR, and Japan and the pressure of social (civic) movements against the use of such energy, developed countries such as Australia, Austria, Denmark, Norway have opted not to have nuclear power plants. Meanwhile, other countries like Germany, Spain, Italy, Switzerland are planning to phase out the use of this type of energy.

In the period 1975-1989, although Western Europe was experiencing a deep European integration process, social movements that were against the rearmament process, as part of the development of the Cold War, persisted. Such was the *Peace Week* movement, which started on 22 October in Germany, against NATO's decision to install Pershing II missiles in the territory of the then Federal Republic of Germany. Around 250 000 - 500 000 protestors came together in Bonn. Later, protests were also organized in other European capitals such as Rome, London, Amsterdam and Madrid.

Movements to protect the environment are the most powerful ones in Western Europe. The environment became an important component of social protests owing to the adverse impact on the quality of life by the rapid industrialization since the second half of the XIX century. Through pollution, coinciding also with the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution. The *Great London Smog*, pollution caused by heating using coal, sparked protests and made subsequently the Clean Air Act was adopted in 1956. Meanwhile, social and civic movements on environmental issues in Western Europe prompted the UN to establish the United Nations Environment Program during the UN Conference on the Human Environment organized on 5-16 June 1972 placing, the environment at the center of the international agenda, which would culminate in subsequent years with *climate change movements*. Thanks to this engagement of social movements on environmental issues, in 1998 the *The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)* was established with support from the *World Meteorological Organization (WMO)* and the *United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)*. Its reports ushered the signing of the *The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)* of 4 June 1992 or the *Earth Summit* in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) followed by the *Conference of the Parties (COP)*. In 1992 - 2020, some 25 similar conferences have been organized, known by the acronym COP. The last one was the COP25 conference on 23 September

¹³ Wolfgang Rudig (1990). *Anti-nuclear Movements: A World Survey of Opposition to Nuclear Energy*, Longman

2019 in New York. Since the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol on 16 February 2005 (adopted on 11 December 1997 during COP3 in Kyoto, Japan), the Conferences of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change have been referred to as *Meetings of the Parties of the Kyoto Protocol - CPM*. Social movements for the protection of the environment, especially in Europe but also in the US have transformed these meetings or *UN Climate Summits* - discussing climate change and the obligations of developed countries to reduce carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere - into platforms of debate and mobilization of the public in renowned movements such as *Energy Action Coalition*, *Global Call for Climate Action*, *People Climate Movement*, *Climate Mobilization* or, the most recent one, the *School Strike for Climate* inspired by the young environmental activist Greta Thunberg.¹⁴

After the 1990s, other social (civic) movements emerged across countries in Western, Central and Eastern Europe including Southeast Europe, thanks to socio-economic developments in the aftermath of the end of the Cold War and the fall of communist regimes in respective countries. After 1990s, a series of movements against globalism and its impact on national economies emerged in a number of Western European countries. These social movements opposed the effects of globalization on national economies, in particular the activities of those institutions they considered as the core of globalization such as the World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and free trade treaties such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPPA), the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) and the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS).

Antiglobal social movements were marked by the so-called Battle of Seattle, later known as the *People of Seattle*. On 30 November 1999, tens of thousands of protesters rallied against a Meeting of the World Trade Organization, objecting its policies and the effects of globalization on environmental standards and workers' rights. Their slogan *Think globally, act locally* was one of the key elements. Protests under this dynamic social movement were organized before WTO or G8 meetings. Since the 1980', this movement has organized a series of protests such as Berlin '88, Paris '89, Madrid '94, etc., before periodic meetings of international institutions they considered as promoters of free trade and economic globalization such as WB, IMF, G8, and WTO, raising public awareness on this economic, social and political phenomenon that has become the main feature of the XXI century.¹⁵

At the same time, anti-globalization social movements in Western Europe took the form of left-wing anti-globalist movements and right-wing anti-globalization movements. They had a nationalist profile and were also

14 Holdo, Markus.(2018) "Sincerity as Strategy: Green Movements and the Problem of Reconciling Deliberative and Instrumental "EnvironmentalPolitics. 28 (4). (<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09644016.2018.1457294>)

15 Bosi, L. and Uba, K. (2009) Introduction: The Outcomes of Social Movements. Mobilization: An International Journal 14 (4): 409-415.

part of the political party system, notably the French National Front (France), the Freedom Party (Austria), Northern League (Italy), National Democratic Party (Germany), National Independence Party (UK). On the other hand, movements such as the *People Global Action* (PGA) and Antifa have become symbols of bottom-up opposition bringing together a number of radical social movements that organize campaigns and direct actions against neoliberalism.

One of the key developments in this process is the establishment of the *World Social Forum* in 2001, an initiative of Oded Grajew, "Chico" Whitaker and Bernard Cassen. The World Social Forum was supported by the city of Porto Alegre in Brazil and the Brazilian Worker's Party. With its slogan: (*Another World is Possible*), it emerged as a movement to counter the World Economic Forum organized in Davos, a grass-root reaction to the globalization model endorsed by economic and political elites. Local committees were set up through the International Council of the *World Social Forum*, which were then transformed into centres with 75,000 delegates that brought together various organizations opposing the neoliberalist capitalism. This movement stood out, notably, during protests the war in Iraq. It was followed by the European Social Forum (ESF) established in Florence under the slogan *Against the war, against racism and against neo-liberalism* organizing a large rally against war. The largest anti-globalist group or movement such as ATTAC (*Association pour la Taxation des Transactions Financière et l'Aide aux Citoyens, Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions and Aid to Citizens*), has branches in more than 30 countries and conducts various public awareness campaigns on fiscal justice, such as the so-called Tobin tax.¹⁶

As a result of the austere measures taken during the financial crisis in Europe, which affected mostly the Southern Europe countries such as Spain, France, Italy, Greece and Portugal, social (civic) movements emerged and constantly protested against such austerity measures. Among them, *Movimento 15 M* and *Indignados Movement* in Spain, thanks to social media, set up digital platforms such as *Real Democracy YA* (*Democracia Real YA*) and *Youth Without a Future* (*Juventud Sin Futur*). They invited Spanish citizens and young people in 40 cities to take to the streets to protest on 15 May 2011¹⁷. By 2014, around 6 million Spaniards had taken part in protests across Spanish cities, demanding work, education and social rights. As a result of this movement, the *Podemos* party was established, on 16 January 2014, led by political scientist Pablo Iglesias Turrión. Podemos is already a part of the Spanish political landscape and of the coalition government under Prime Minister Pedro Sances. Inspired by the spirit of the Indignant Movement, in Greece, Alexis Tsipras' left-wing Syriza party won the 2015 parliamentary

16 Kolb, F. (2004) The Impact of Transnational Protest on Social Movement Organizations: Mass Media and the making of ATTAC Germany. In della Porta, D. and Tarrow S. (eds.) Transnational protest and global activism

17 Donatella della Porta; Hara Kouki; Joseba Fernandez (2017). "Left's Love and Hate for Europe: Syriza, Podemos and Critical Visions of Europe During the Crisis". In Manuela Caiani; Simona Guerra (eds.). *Euroscpticism, Democracy and the Media: Communicating Europe, Contesting Europe*. Palgrave Macmillan UK. p.236. ISBN 978-1-137-59643-7

elections. Mr. Tsipras served as the Prime Minister of Greece from 21 September 2015 until 8 July 2019.¹⁸ In Italy, the Five Star Movement (*Movimento 5 Stelle*) was formed on 4 October 2009 and is currently the largest party in Italy, created by comedian and blogger Beppe Grillo and web strategist Gianroberto Casaleggio and is considered as a populist, anti-establishment, environmental pro-environment and Euro sceptic movement. Since the 2013 parliamentary elections, it is the second largest party in Italy and currently is a partner in a center-left coalition government.¹⁹

The experience of social movements in Western Europe after the 1990s has shown that their success has been closely linked to their spread and their massive involvement of the public, protest strategies and perseverance. Moreover, the consolidated tradition of democracy in these countries has facilitated the so-called '*moment of political opportunity*' for the success of these movements, with public awareness being high and the political system reacting in an appropriate manner.

Countries of Central and Eastern Europe have also had a tradition of social and civic movements, even while they were under a communist rule. During the years 1945-1990, movements such as the Prague Spring, Petef Club, Solidanorst, etc., were testimonies of civic consciousness against the authoritarian communist regimes. As a result, these movements became the heart of mass protests that led to the peaceful toppling of communist regimes or the '*Velvet Revolution*', especially in Central European countries.²⁰

Social (civic) movements in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) after the 1990s focused on aspects of good governance, especially the fight against corruption and abuse of power, which became an essential feature of the new CEE democracies after the fall of communism.²¹ A massive civic movement against corruption and poor governance took place in Slovenia, known as the protests or '*revolts of Maribor*' during in the period between 2 November 2012 and 4 February 2013. Thousands of citizens of Maribor and other cities in Slovenia rose in an immense movement following charges of corruption by the Commission for the Prevention of Corruption in the Republic of Slovenia against Maribor Mayor Franz Kangler, ruling party leader Janez Jansa and opposition leader Zoran Jankovic. Subsequently, Maribor Mayor Franz Kangler resigned. Most importantly, the awareness of Slovenian citizens towards corruption and poor governance saw a boost.

18 Idem

19 Bordignon, Fabio; Ceccarini, Luigi (26 March 2014). "Protest and project, leader and party: normalisation of the Five Star Movement". *Contemporary Italian Politics*. 6 (1): 54- 72.

20 Daniels, R. V. (2000) The Anti-Communist Revolutions in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe 1989-1991. In D. Parker (Ed.) *Revolutions and the Revolutionary Tradition in the west 1560-1991*. London: Routledge. pp. 202-24.

21 Sava, I. N. (2015) A second generation of grassroots movements in central and eastern Europe?

Open Democracy, May 11, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/ionel-n-sava/second-generation-of-grassroots-movements-in-central-and-eastern-europe>

In the same-stated period, Bulgaria witnessed a large-scale civic movement in Sofia, from 28 May 2013 to 22 July 2014, which eventually led to the resignation of the left-wing government of Oresharski.²² The *With Me* movement was initiated through Facebook and focused on the fight against corruption, poor governance and conflict of interest, especially against corrupt connections between the business world, media and politics. One example is the appointment of Delyan Peelevski, a media tycoon, at the helm of the Bulgarian National Security Agency. Thanks to mass protests, he resigned. Before this social (civic) movement, protests had been organized on 28 January 2013 in Blagoevgrad against the high price of energy and water bills, due to the monopoly in this sector. Then a civic movement spread out to 30 cities of Bulgaria and ended with the resignation of Boyko Borisov's government on 20 February 2013.

The *Corruption kills* movement founded in Romania by activist Florin Badita organized a series of protests in 2017-2019. A series of protests were organized in two phases, 18 January - 5 March 2017 and 23 August 2017 - 10 August 2019, against the decision of the Romanian Ministry of Justice to amend the Criminal Code mitigating sentences for persons engaged in corruption.²³ On 1 and 5 February 2017, activists of this movement organized protests in Bucharest. Between 300,000 and 500,000 citizens took part in them and continued to protest. Eventually, on 10 August 2018 the *Diaspora at Home* protest was organized by Romanians living abroad. Subsequently, the Romanian government stepped down and former Justice Minister Florin Iordache resigned.²⁴ This movement was part of the *Indignados' Movement* followed by similar protests of solidarity in Moldova, Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, Hungary and Slovakia during 2017.

The Western Balkans region or Southeast Europe experienced a series of social (civic) movements after the 1990s focusing against authoritarian governance practices, free elections, poor governance, fight against corruption, and the elites abusing power.

Social (civic) movements in Serbia date back to the period 17 November 1996 - 22 March 1997, when students at the University of Belgrade joined forces with opposition parties to form the movement Together (*Zajedno*). They protested against the electoral fraud in local elections. Following the protests, on 11 February 1997, the then President Milošević recognized the victory of the opposition in these cities.²⁵ In 1998 this

22 Tsoneva, Jana (2017) Vectors of Ex / Inclusion in Bulgarian Civil Society Post-2013 in Jasmin Mujanović (ed.), 2017, *The Democratic Potential of Emerging Social Movements in Southeastern Europe*, 68 pages (page 11-17)

23 http://eprints.bournemouth.ac.uk/29647/1/romanian_protests_2017_publication_FINAL_nk.pdf
Romania's 2017 anti-corruption protests: causes, development and implications PUBLISHED BY: Quadriga University of Applied Sciences, edited by Ana Adi & Derren Llicker Berlin ISBN 978-3-942263-48-1, 154 pages

24 Stoiciu, Victoria (2017) Romania's Years of Turmoil, 2012–2015 in Jasmin Mujanović (ed.), 2017, *The Democratic Potential of Emerging Social Movements in Southeastern Europe*, 68 pages (page 7-11)

25 Knezic, Marko (2017) Social Movements and Democratization in Serbia since Milošević in Jasmin Mujanović (ed.), 2017, *The Democratic Potential of Emerging Social Movements in*

movement was followed by the student movement Resistance, (*Otopor*), calling for the toppling of Milosevic and fueled protests across the country. This movement culminated in the so-called "Bulldozer Revolution" (*Bager Revolucija*). After the presidential elections of 24 September 2000, President Milosevic resigned on 5 October, putting a long period of authoritarian political rule to an end. In 2018-2020, wide-spread social (civic) movements took place, supported also by the opposition called *Stop Bloody Shirts*, also known as the Movement of 1 in 5 Million (*Jedan od pet millions*) becoming one of the longest-running civic protest movements in Europe against poor governance, corruption and authoritarianism, especially against the government and the currently-serving president Aleksandar Vucic.

The *UDAR* civic movement, operating mainly in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, held a series of protests against unemployment, corruption and poor governance, from 4 February 2014 to 25 April 2014. Participation in protests was notably massive in the days 4-10 February 2014.²⁶ They began in the northern city of Tuzla to spill over to other cities such as Sarajevo, Zenica, Mostar, Jajce and Brcko, demanding the resignation of the government. Given the massive turnout in these protests, they were compared by foreign media to the Arab Spring or the Prague Spring. However, at the end of April 2014 they diminished their vigor and eventually terminated failing to achieve their goal. However, they managed to raise public awareness on the social and economic situation and the poor governance in this country.

A study on social engagement/civic movements in the Western Balkans has been recently published: *Democratic Potential of Emerging Social Movements in Southeastern Europe* (2017) the Friedrich Ebert Foundation.²⁷ The publication argues that social activism throughout the Balkan region has been successful exploiting diverse and creative channels in terms of the weight and role they have played in public space; however, a lack of empathy and solidarity with them remains a problem. As long as the political structures in the region do not show an adequate representation, they need to be changed or recreated in order to serve the needs of the society. This publication highlights a common perception that more work needs to be done with smaller communities, to build their trust and support drivers of change. Another publication *Social Movements in the Balkans: Rebellion and Protest from Maribor to Taksim* (2018)²⁸, a compilation of proceedings of the International Conference organized by the Center for Southeast Europe Studies of the University

Southeastern Europe, 68 pages (pp 23-27)

26 Eminagic, Emin (2017) Towards a De-Ethnicized Politics: Protests and Plenums in Bosnia and Herzegovina in Jasmin Mujanović (ed.), 2017, *The Democratic Potential of Emerging Social Movements in Southeastern Europe*, 68 pp 23-27.

27 <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/sarajevo/13781-20171201.pdf>

Mujanović, Jasmin (ed.), 2017, *The Democratic Potential of Emerging Social Movements in Southeastern Europe*, 68 pages

28 Bieber, Florian; Brentin, Dario (2018, ed) *Social Movements in the Balkans. Rebellion and Protest from Maribor to Taksim*, Centre for Southeast European Studies (CSES), University of Graz, Austria

of Graz, focuses on the wave of anger and indignation driving these protests and offers an explanation of their failure or success. On the other hand, the emergence of new parties challenging traditional parties is serving as a driver to transforming the existing political landscape in their respective countries. They have pushed for possible changes. Due to the economic crisis that hit various Southern European countries after 2008, movements such as Syriza in Greece, 5 Stars Movement in Italy or Podemos in Spain, as well as their counterparts in Northern Europe, such as the Alliance for Germany, have been able to challenge political systems by combining elements of the new left over participatory democracy with radical populist calls by right-wing parties. These challengers to Europe's traditional economic and political systems use a different approach, yet they place a strong emphasis on the current economic or political issues in Europe.

2.2. THEORIES AND LITERATURE ON THE STUDY OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

According to researcher Mario Diani,²⁹ social movements are more or less related to the fulfillment of three criteria such as "the existence of networks of informal interactions, between a plurality of individuals, groups or associations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity." Charles Tilly,³⁰ a sociologist, defines social movements as a series of contentious performances, displays and campaigns by which ordinary people make collective claims on others. For Tilly, social movements are a major vehicle for ordinary people's participation in public politics. According to him, there are three major elements to a social movement: 2) list of contentious issues, public meetings, petitions, media statements and pamphleteering; and 3) the so-called WUNC displays (worthiness, membership, and commitments). Sidney Tarrow³¹ defines a social movement as collective challenges to elites, authorities, other groups, or cultural codes by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interactions with elites, opponents, and authorities. He specifically distinguishes social movements from political parties and advocacy groups. Sociologists John McCarthy and Mayer Zald define social (civic) movements as a set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preferences of a group of people, community, or society, for changing some elements of the social structure.³²

29 Della Porta, D. and Diani, M. (1999) *Social Movements: An Introduction* Oxford: Blackwell; Diani, Mario (1992). "The concept of social movement". *The Sociological Review*. 40 (1): 1–25. ISSN 0036-0261

30 Tilly, Charles. (1978) *From Mobilization to Revolution*. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley.

31 Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Collective Action, Social Movements and Politics*, Cambridge University Press, 1994. ISBN 0-521-42271-X

32 McCarthy, John; Zald, Mayer N. (May 1977). "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: a Partial Theory". *American Journal of Sociology*. 82 (6): 1212–1241

According to Paul van Seeters and Paul James³³ defining a social (civic) movement entails a few minimal conditions of coming together, such as the formation of some kind of collective identity, the development of a shared normative orientation, the sharing of a concern for change of the status quo of a situation, norm, law, decision and institutional behavior. In this case, it is important for practical actions to come together across an extended period of time, taking into account that social (civic) movements address public concerns.

Thus, the definition of the social movement is related to a form of political association between persons who participate in it and have a complete sense of themselves as coming together with others for a common purpose. In this regard, any action should aim to bring about the appropriate social change according to the agreed goals or objectives. Many researchers have noted that social (civic) movements are characterized by different typologies based on the purpose and level of mobilization of civic masses to achieve their objective. They make another classification of social (civic) movements depending on the type of change they want to introduce to the society, such as movements that seek to change certain norms in their communities such as liberal or conservative movements that want to preserve certain social norms and values, e.g. Luddites movement in the XIX century Against technology, anti-abortion or anti-GMO movements, etc.³⁴

These movements differ in terms of the social groups they have at the center of their activity, i.e. groups or individuals. Also, the methods these social movements use divide them into violent or peaceful movements, with the latter using peaceful means to protest, also known as non-violent resistance.

Social movements have a long history and have existed for centuries. Most of these earlier movements date back to the XVIII and XIX centuries, focusing their activity on certain social groups such as the working class, peasants, and minorities. They were also grouped around certain goals pertinent to these groups, including improving living standards, property rights, right to vote, etc. In the meantime, new social movements dominated in the second half of the XX century Notably movements on civil rights, feminists, environmental, and disarmament causes focusing around a certain issue their interests and goals go beyond a single group of the society. Hence, their activity takes place in different locations. Some examples are: World Social Forum, *Peoples Global Action*, *No Global* or local ones that have objectives and goals that are pertinent to a territory of a certain country, such as the Taksim Square Movement to protect the Gazi Park, *Occupy Qall Street* or other similar movements in other countries.

33 James, Paul; van Seeters, Paul (2014). *Globalization and Politics*, Vol. 2: *Global Social Movements and Global Civil Society*. London: Sage Publications.

34 Suzanne Staggenborg (2008), *Social Movements*, Oxford University Press. ISBN 978-0-19-542309-9

Scholars say social movements have a life cycle (Blumer, 1969) Maus (1975), Tilly (1978)³⁵, like a living being, they are born, they develop and then die out. Social movements have their own life cycle. They are created, they grow, they achieve successes or failures and eventually, they dissolve and cease to exist or are transformed into a political party in certain cases, for example the *Movimevento Cinque Stelle* (5StarMovement) in Italy. Social movements evolve in accordance with the time and place, for example related to the proliferation of ideas of the XIX century of human rights, freedom of expression and civil disobedience. The history of these movements has shown that they emerge in liberal and authoritarian societies in different forms to achieve certain objectives depending on the circumstances that conditionalize their birth and development. According to sociologist Neil Smelser³⁶, the birth of a social (civic) movement needs an initiating event, an event that will begin a chain reaction leading to the creation of a social movement. The cause is the first step in the birth of a social (civic) movement, followed by the sustainable formation, organization and then its activity. In this case, any social (civic) movement may result in success or failure, depending on the conditions, the means used, the level of civic mobilization and the institutional response, to respond to the change required by these movements.

The history of the development of social (civic) movements has produced an abundant literature, which is continuously enriched in line with the forms and strategies these movements apply. Hence, sociologists have developed several theories related to the study of social movements, most notably: Marxist theory (1880s); collective behavior/collective action theories (1950s);³⁷ relative deprivation theory (1960s); value-added theory (1960s); resource mobilization (1970s);³⁸ political process theory (1980s); framing theory (1980s) (closely related to social constructionist theory) new social movement theory (1980s).³⁹ They continue to be constantly updated through new approaches and concepts due to the perspective researchers political science, sociology, psychology, media, etc. on these movements.

35 Tilly, Charles. (1978) *From Mobilization to Revolution*. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley.

36 Smelser, Neil J (1962). *Theory of Collective Behavior*, Free Press, Glencoe, Ill., 1962

37 Miller, David L (2000)., *Introduction to Collective Behavior and Collective Action*, Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 2000 2d edition.

38 Piven, Francis; Cloward, Richard (Summer 1991). "Collective Protest: A Critique of Resource Mobilization Theory". *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*. 4 (4): 435–458

39 Buechler, Steven M (1995). *New Social Movement Theories*, *Sociological Quarterly* Volume 36 Issue 3, Pages 441 - 464, 1995.

Selection of regions: Based on previous studies, and in collaboration with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy Albania, for the purposes of this study, the research team selected these Regions of Albania: Shkodra, Kukës, Dibra, Tirana, Korça, Fier and Vlora. This selection allows a representation of a) all the regions of the country; b) urban, semi-urban and rural areas; c) different levels of social-economic development, especially since the beginning of the post-socialist transition; d) various forms of the economy and of the development of social processes. For each of the selected Regions, the information was collected and analyzed for different categories of their residents, such as men, women, youngsters, and aged adults.

Quantitative and qualitative techniques: For this study, our work focused on analyzing data from both primary and secondary sources. It consisted of a review of the existing literature, quantitative and qualitative methods (data cross-checking). The quantitative and qualitative methods included: a) focus group discussions with citizens who were voters, and with members of civic movements/organizations; b) semi-structured interviews with citizens and leaders of movements; and c) a questionnaire for the social-economic survey of 1018 citizens, consisting of 20 sets of questions.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 DESCRIPTION OF TECHNIQUES

Literature review. The research team reviewed the relevant literature related to social movements in Western Europe, Central and Eastern Europe, and in the countries of Southeast Europe or the Western Balkans. All sources are listed in the bibliography.

Focus-groups: The research team members realized focus group discussions employing semi-structured questions, formulated in collaboration with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy Albania. This technique allowed for a broader scope and more open discussion. The questions helped to a) gather information on citizens' perceptions about potential new policy actors; b) assess the capacities of these social (civic) movements to mobilize citizens and to become trusted actors in the political life; c) understand their history, activism, membership, mission, objectives and medium and long-term plans. All focus group discussions were first recorded and then transcribed. The research team conducted 6 focus groups (1 for each Region), with individuals of voting age. The focus group participants were residents of urban, semi-urban and rural areas. Each group consisted of 7-12 individuals of different age, gender, educational level, and social-economic backgrounds. In focus group discussions, open-ended questions were used such as: 'How

satisfied are you with these movements?', 'What is the most notable impact of these movements?' and 'What can be done to improve their impact on the society?'. Their responses were helpful in having a clearer view on perceptions and attitudes toward these movements.

Focus group discussions were also held with representatives and members of these organizations/movements.

Semi-structured interviews – 30 semi-structured interviews were conducted with citizens of voting age in each of the selected Regions (5 in each Region). Interview questions were formulated in such a way to better understand the perception of citizens about new political actors in Albania. In addition, 2 semi-structured interviews were realized with representatives of each of these movements/civic organizations. The semi-structured questions were formulated by the research team, in consultation with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy Albania.

Social-economic questionnaires – To cross-check the information and to obtain quantitative data, the research team used questionnaires with Albanian citizens of voting age. For this purpose, an *in-person* survey was realized with 1018 citizens in the six selected Regions. The survey contained 20 sets of questions to generate quantitative data on citizens' perceptions of these movements and the latter's impact on promoting social mobilization and involvement in policymaking.

The number of surveys in each Region was proportionate to the size of the respective Region's population.

The quantitative method was determined as follows:

- a) before starting the field survey, based on INSTAT data, the size of the population in each Region was determined;
- b) based on the population size, the percentage of surveys that would be administered in each region was calculated;
- c) the collected data indicated the number of surveys to be administered in each Region.

Table 1. Surveys by Region

No	Region	Population	Percent	Number of surveys	Urban	Rural
1	Shkodra	200.007	10.1	101	60	41
2	Kukës/ Dibra	191.285	9.7	98	59	39
3	Tirana	906.166	45.7	457/411	365	92
4	Korça	204.831	10.3	103	65	38
5	Fier	289.889	14.6	146	100	46
6	Vlora	188.922	9.5	95	60	35
	Total	1.981.100	100	1000	709	291

Source: INSTAT, Population of Albania, 1 January 2020 http://www.instat.gov.al/media/6849/popullsia_me-_1_janar_2020.pdf

(d) in each Region, the survey was realized in the main city, in a smaller town, and in rural areas (2-3 villages, both near and distant from the city, were selected).

Table 2. Selection of primary and secondary city in each Region

No	Region	Main city	Smaller town
1	Shkodra	Shkodra	Vau i Dejës
2	Kukës/Dibra	Kukës	Bulqiza
3	Tirana	Tirana	Kamza/Vora
4	Korça	Korça	Pogradeci
5	Fier	Fier	Lushnja
6	Vlora	Vlora	Selenica

(e) respondents were randomly selected in different parts of the city, mainly on the streets or in local businesses (shops, bars, restaurants, etc.). The survey also included individuals from different ethnic groups. During the survey process, deliberate efforts were made to maintain gender and age balances. The collected quantitative data were coded, computed and processed in SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) by a person who had previous experience with CESS. After entry and checking, the data were then analyzed.

4. SURVEY RESULTS

4.1. MAIN FINDINGS

The role and weight of social or civic movements in Albania was assessed through a survey conducted in six regions of Albania: Tirana, Fier, Vlora, Korça, Dibra/Kukës and Shkodra. Some 1018 individuals of different ages, professions and education levels were asked about their perception of civic or social movements such as Nisma Thurje, Alternativa, Organizata Politike, Aleanca për Mbrojtjen e Teatrit, Vetëvendosja and EcoAlbania. Regarding the degree of the respondents' knowledge about these movements that operate in the country, the data show a low level of information and knowledge about them. Thus, 80.1% of them say that they do not know Organizata Politike, 79.4% Alternativa, 62.8%. Nisma Thurje and 59.3% EcoAlbania. Meanwhile, only 22.8% of respondents state that they do not know Aleanca për Mbrojtjen e Teatrit and 36.7% of them say the same Vetëvendosje (Table 3). Due to their higher activity in the public, media coverage and the time when the survey was conducted, the Aleanca për Mbrojtjen e Teatrit was most recognised by the public compared to other movements of the survey. In the case of Vetëvendosje,

the higher level of recognition may owe to the media coverage of the activities of this movement, turned a political party in the Republic of Kosovo, than to the activity of its branch in Albania. However, 33% of respondents claim that their knowledge about the Aleanca për Mbrojtjen e Teatrit is minimal and 24.6% state the same opinion about Vetëvendosje. This shows that, in general, the movements that have been recently established have not been able to be properly recognized by citizens through the activities they carried out or the issues they defended.

Table 3. Do you know the following civic movements? (in %)

No	Civic Movements	Don't know	Minimum	I know	Very well	Maximum
1	Nisma Thurje	62.8	22.5	10.5	1.9	2.3
2	Alternativa	79.4	14.3	4.0	1.2	1.1
3	Organizata Politike	80.1	14.3	4.0	1.2	0.4
4	Aleanca për Mbrojtjen e Teatrit	22.8	33.0	27.3	9.6	7.2
5	Vetëvendosja	36.7	24.6	20.8	9.8	8.1
6	EcoAlbania	59.3	18.0	11.6	6.4	4.6

Source: CESS, Survey with citizens on social movements

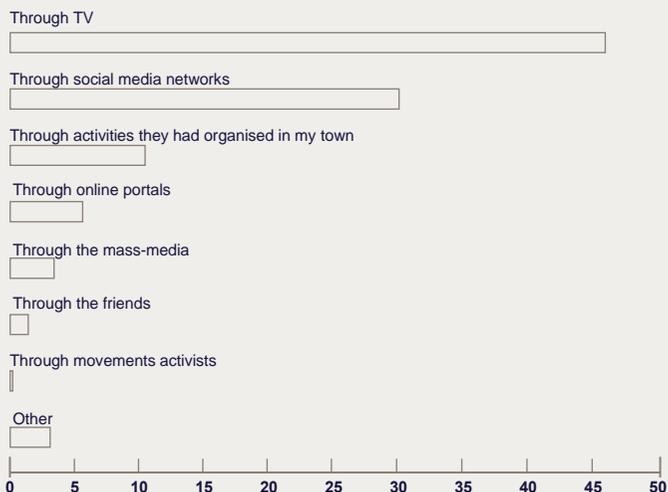
Based on the history of their development, social or civic movements may expand their level of recognition among the communities where they operate by using communication tools, whether traditional such as the print and electronic media or the more recent social media networks. According to the survey results, 45.9% of respondents stated that they receive information about these movements through TV (Figure 1). This proves that traditional media, especially dedicated news TV channels, are an important medium for bringing information about these movements to different individuals.

On the other hand, 30% of respondents say that they receive information about civic or social movements through social media networks (Facebook, Instagram). The share and role of social media networks in disseminating information about the movements' activities and issues they advocate has increased significantly, especially among the younger generation. They have become 'shadow media' - often playing a primary role in sharing live information, opinions, comments and measuring their significance and impact on the society. Meanwhile, only 10.4% of individuals said that they received information about these movements from the activities they had organised in their cities. This percentage points to a low participation in these movements and their limited presence in the main regions of Albania.

Using the traditional media and social media networks to share their messages with the public and raise public awareness is of key importance for social movements. This is confirmed by Saimiri, an activist of the

EcoAlbania movement arguing that ‘we are a bit traditional in terms of communication with the media paying attention to the print and electronic media. We follow direct communication in the field, which includes the use of social media, as we have an expert in this field dealing only with communication. For example, if we send a press release to our contact list, it is certain that it will appear in ten or fifteen media outlets with which we have contacts...’.

Figure 1. How do you obtain information about these movements? (more than one answer is possible)



Source: CESS, Survey with citizens on social movements

Regarding the level of interest respondents show for these movements in the six selected Regions, we note that on average about 24.9% of them claim that these movements do not attract them at all. This may be explained both by indifference and social apathy and the fact that issues that these movements advocate such as cultural heritage, environment, changing the electoral system, may appear like “elite issues” vis-a-vis poverty, unemployment, lack of services and others communities face with in their everyday life. However, due to the media coverage, protagonism and interest of the debate or actions, almost 27% of respondents say that they are very attracted to the Aleanca për Mbrojtjen e Teatrit, followed by 19% for Vetëvendosje (Table 4).

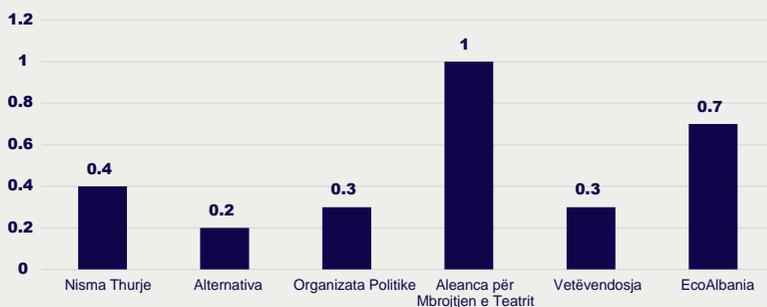
Table 4. How much do the following movements attract you? (in %)

No	Civic Movements	Very much	A little	Somewhat	Don't know
1	Nisma Thurje	8.4	41.2	24.5	26.0
2	Alternativa	3.9	38.2	26.5	31.2
3	Organizata Politike	4.0	38.2	27.2	30.6
4	Aleanca për Mbrojtjen e Teatrit	26.9	41.6	22.5	8.9
5	Vetëvendosja	19.0	44.3	24.8	11.9
6	EcoAlbania	12.1	41.6	23.9	22.4

Source: CESS, Survey with citizens on social movements

Participation in the activities organised by these movements is very low. Almost 99% of all respondents answered they had not participated in activities of any of these movements (Figure 2). This very low turnout can be explained by a number of factors, which include mainly social apathy in different segments of the Albanian society, lack of capacity of these movements to expand their activities to other cities, or a weak link between the issues they advocate and the most direct interest of citizens, such as poverty, unemployment, poor quality of public services, etc.

Figure 2. Do you participate in the activities of any of these movements?



Source: CESS, Survey with citizens on social movements

It should also be noted that due to the Covid 19 pandemic, since 9 March 2020, the activity of these social movements has slowed down or halted altogether as a result of the state of natural disaster and the quarantine

applied throughout the country ⁴⁰. In this period, however, a major event involving the Aleanca për Mbrojtjen e Teatrit, happened. On 17 May 2020, the building of the National Theater was demolished by the Inspectorate of Construction, Urban Planning and Control (INUK). This led to a physical clash between the activists of the Alliance, supported also by representatives of the out-of-parliament opposition, from the Democratic Party and the Socialist Movement for Integration⁴¹, and was extensively covered both by the traditional media and in the social media networks.

Conversely, the lack of human and financial resources of these movements to expand their activity and organise awareness-raising campaigns has played a significant role in a low citizen participation or mobilization.

Financing have been unstable and lack of financial resources makes it difficult to extend the activity to other cities. As Ardit, a member of Alternativa, says, *“Funding has been random, or through individual contacts meeting friends, businessmen; we ask them to help us in various ways, but without funding it is impossible to keep an organization or movement up and running...”*.

One factor that may explain to some extent this low level of public participation in activities organised by these movements is their perception that they are not independent of political parties. Almost 76% of respondents to this survey stated that they do not believe that these movements are independent of the main parties (Figure 3). Hence, the perception of this lack of independence prompts a passive civic engagement and demonstrates high suspicion and distrust of any efforts.

Figure 3. Do you believe that these movements are independent of the major parties?



Source: CESS, Survey with citizens on social movements

⁴⁰<https://shendetesia.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Akti-Normativ-nr.-3-date-15-mars-Per-marrijen-e-masava-te-vecanta-administrative-gjate-kohezgjaltes-se-periudhes-se-infeksionit-teshkaktuar-nga-COVID-19.pdf>

⁴¹<https://www.zeriamerikes.com/a/5423205.html>-Shembet nga Bashkia Tiranë në orët e para të mëngjesit godina e Teatrit Kombëtar

Most of them, however, believe that the issues they advocate are of relevance for the community. This indicator supports these movements. Thus, on average, 58.2% of respondents think that they are advocating issues of relevance to the community. In Figure 4, the Aleanca për Mbrojtjen e Teatrit has the greatest support; with 71.5% claiming that their issue is important, followed by 64.8% for Vetëvendosje, 56.7% and 56.1% EcoAlbania and Nisma Thurje respectively, and almost 50% say so for Alternativa and Organizata Politike.

Figure 4. Do you think that the causes they advocate are of relevance for the community?

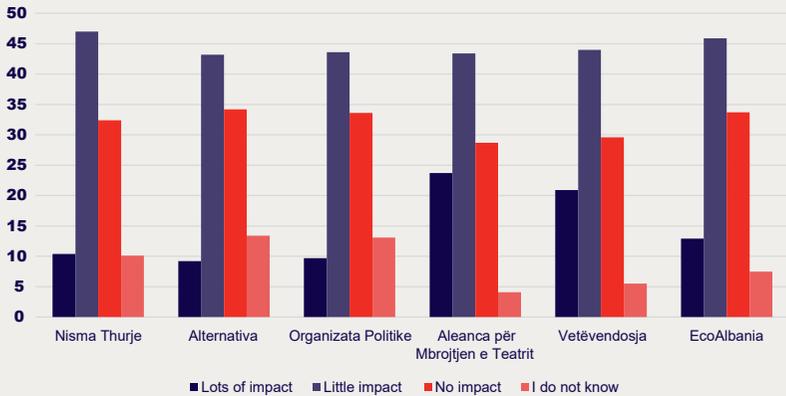


Source: CESS, Survey with citizens on social movements

When asked about the impact of these movements have on public life and the involvement of citizens in decision-making, 44.5% say that they have little impact, while 32% claim that they have no impact at all in this regard. By contrast, only 14% of them think that these movements have a great impact on public life and citizen involvement in decision-making processes. Again, the Aleanca për Mbrojtjen e Teatrit and Vetëvendosje are the two movements for which respondents think can bring about change with 23.7% and 20.9% of respondents affirming it (Figure 5).

Perhaps one of the reasons of the voters' distrust in these movements is that they focus only on denouncing without offering solutions that could inspire citizens to join them. Regarding this argument, Martini, another activist of Alternativa, says, *“We are used to movements or political parties that only make denunciations. It is very simple to make denunciations, from dawn to dusk. The issue is to give the solution. On the other hand, solutions without any ideology behind to support them, simply turn into populist solutions ...”*.

Figure 5. What is the impact of these movements on the public life and the inclusion of citizens in decision-making processes?



Source: CESS, Survey with citizens on social movements

Yet, despite the doubts and distrust of respondents about the contribution of these movements to public life, it is interesting to note that when asked about how their activity should be in the future, 79.8% answer that it should be stronger. In this case, there is a propensity to accept new forms of representation and expression of public interest, vis-a-vis the system of political parties.

Table 5. How do you think the activity of these movements should be in the future? (in %)

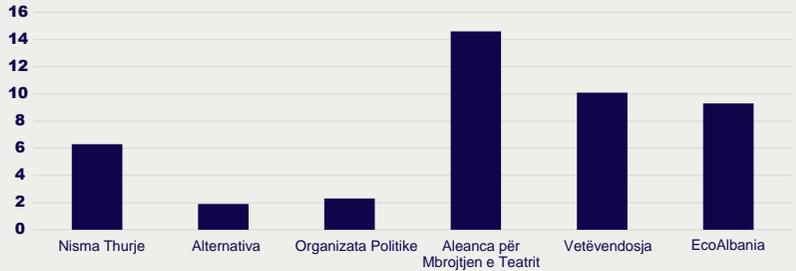
No	Civic movements	Stronger	Weaker	Same
1	Nisma Thurje	79.3	7.7	13.1
2	Alternativa	78.9	7.9	13.3
3	Organizata Politike	78.4	8.2	13.5
4	Aleanca për Mbrojtjen e Teatrit	82.2	6.5	11.3
5	Vetëvendosja	79.9	7.1	13.0
6	EcoAlbania	80.0	7.3	12.7

Source: CESS, Survey with citizens on social movements

The so-called 'paradox of passive social engagement' appears again in these responses about the perception of civic movements. On average, 89.7% of respondents state that they do not want to be involved in these movements (Figure 6). If, on the one hand, most respondents want these movements action to be stronger, their lack of desire to participate in

them fails to explain the paradox of how can a civic movement with a stronger action can succeed with such a passive social engagement and low citizen participation.

Figure 6. Do you wish to take part in any of these movements?



Source: CESS, Survey with citizens on social movements

Participation in electoral processes remains an area where Albanians visibly express their social engagement. It is apparently considered the culmination of their involvement in efforts to change or protect their interests. About 80.9% of respondents in these Regions have stated that they will participate in the upcoming parliamentary elections, which proves the importance of electoral processes as the main and often the only stage through which social engagement is expressed for most of the respondents to this survey (Table 6).

Table 6. Do you plan to vote in the upcoming elections?

No	Planning to vote	Number	Per cent
1	Yes	822	80.9
2	No	140	13.8
3	Have not decided yet	54	5.3
Total		1016	100

Source: CESS, Survey with citizens on social movements

The lack of interest would be the main reason for 48.1% of respondents when asked about reason why they would not vote. This proves that social apathy, due to disappointment and prolonged transition, remains at the core of this perception that drives the electoral indifference.

Table 7. If you are not voting, what are the reasons?

No	Reasons for you not to vote	Number	Per cent
1	I have no time	11	7.1
2	I have no interest	75	48.1
3	I do not support anyone	33	21.2
4	None represents me	21	13.5
5	Other	16	10.3
Total		156	100.0

Source: CESS, Survey with citizens on social movements

On the other hand, 49% of them, if elections were to take place the next day, would prefer to vote for a new party or political movement (Table 8). Preference for new political parties or movements is a desire to depart from traditional political parties, but the results of the general elections so far have shown that new movements that ran in the last parliamentary elections such as Group 99, Red and Black Alliance, Nisma, Libra were not supported due to this perception.

Table 8. If you were to vote tomorrow, would you prefer to vote for?

No	Preference for voting	Number	Per cent
1	One of the 3-4 major parties	479	47.2
2	For a new party or new political movement?	497	49.0
3	Other	39	3.8
Total		1015	100.0

Source: CESS, Survey with citizens on social movements

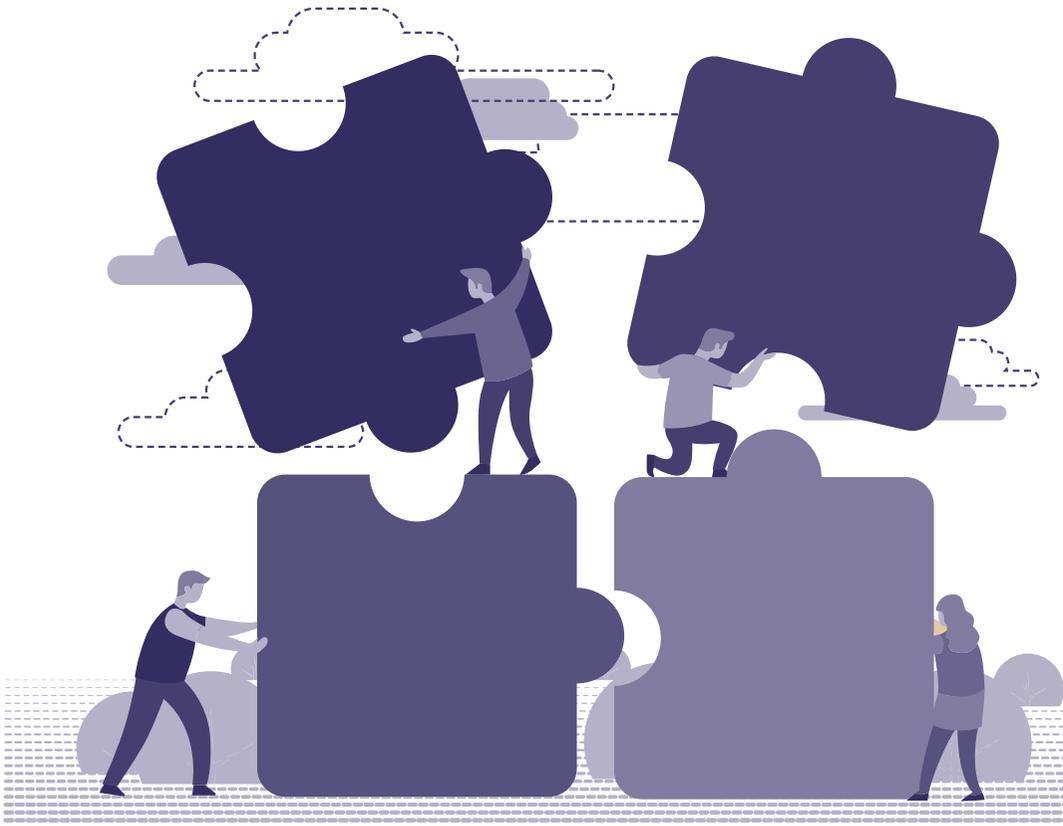
In this context, we note that the propensity to vote for new political parties or movements is further supported when 67.2% of respondents state that they would vote for new politicians who have just entered the political life of the country (Table 9). The circulation of political elites is a challenge facing Albania, and these figures show that voters at least trust their inner conviction to vote for new leaders.

Table 9. If you were to select, would you prefer to have as a leader of the country:

No	Preference for voting	Number	Per cent
1	Politicians who have been active in the last 20 or more years in politics	306	30.1
2	New politicians who have entered recently in politics	683	67.2
3	Other	27	2.7
Total		1016	100.0

Source: CESS, Survey with citizens on social movements

When asked if social movements such as Nisma Thurje, Aleanca për Mbrojtjen e Teatrit, EcoAlbania, Organizata Politike, Alternativa, and Vetëvendosja were to participate as political parties in the upcoming parliamentary elections, only 6.2% of respondents would vote for these movements. This proves that their political power and potential to become electoral parties is weak. Meanwhile, 74% of them have stated that they would vote for the current left - and right-wing traditional parties. Faced with this paradox - between the desire to vote for new political movements and the electoral behaviour to support traditional parties - notably, the Albanian electorate does not yet have the courage to try new political alternatives through their votes. The dualism between perception and electoral reality among voters in Albania is the main explanation as to why for many years, although most people have a negative perception of traditional parties, the electoral behaviour has remained unchanged and `political dualism` between the two main parties continues to prevail as a result of this unchanging electoral behaviour.



**5. PROFILES OF THE CURRENT SOCIAL (CIVIC)
MOVEMENTS IN ALBANIA**

5.1. NISMA THURJE

Name of movement	Nisma Thurje
Logo	
Leader	Endri Shabani, Pano Sako
Year of establishment	2013
Membership	Undefined
Places of activity	Tirana

OBJECTIVES

Nisma Thurje is an initiative based on the activity of the citizens in the face of what this movement defines as “an organized political class” by inviting citizens to join under the motto ‘Unite against the system’. According to the so-called Charter 2020, through awareness-raising and social engagement activities of citizens, Nisma Thurje, aims to achieve a number of objectives such as nationalization of natural wealth, redistribution of wealth and economic recovery, empowerment of the people and direct exercise of sovereignty, decentralization of power and strengthening of mechanisms of constitutional checks and balance, democratization of political parties, guarantee of free and fair elections, reinstatement of the jury in the judicial system, the unification of Albanians.

ACTIVITIES

Two of its key activities were related to policies for higher education including the creation of the movement University in Danger in 2012 and the Movement for the University created in 2014 against the draft law on higher education. The Movement for the University encouraged by the Political Organization was the first of its kind which with means of protests, symbolic actions with articles, critical writing and a manifesto that included principles and pillars of a new more democratic and more inclusive University. The movement culminated in 2015 where the slogan was “For the University for the Society” meaning that a free and equal society should first of all start from such a university system. At the time, the Movement for the University started a debate on free of charge public education and the role of the university and students in public space. On December 4, 2018 student revolts started since students from the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture organized spontaneously a petition to express their dissatisfaction with a sudden notice from administration that they would now have to pay extra fee for each test they had to repeat from

previous years. Their revolts brought the resignation of the Minister of Education, Sports and Youth and to the signing of the Pact for the University from the government. One of the Activities of the Political Organization was also the awareness raising of the public opinion regarding the right of employed persons and especially the public denunciation of cases of labor exploitation of minors and accidents with death consequence at labor merely in mines relating this to the uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources.

Political orientation	Liberal
Funding	
Website, Facebook, Twitter	https://nismathurje.al https://www.facebook.com/thurje/ https://www.instagram.com/nismathurje/?hl=en https://twitter.com/nismathurje?lang=en

“At that time, we perceived the reality and everything else as a matter of fact that transparency was lacking in Albania. What does ‘lack of transparency’ mean? It is the fact that the whole system is modified, starting from the government, the prosecution, civil registry, etc. We thought to enter the game of transparency and become a spokesperson of what is happening, to report reality as is, explain to the people those things for which we had information. We came from different walks of life, economists, lawyers, journalists, urban planners, architects, engineers, medical doctors. Coming from different professions helped us to enter into many fields and provide a real reflection and transparency of what has been happening, a processed opinion, not an [already molded] opinion served from the TV.”

Excerpts from interviews with representatives of Nisma Thurje

5.2. MOVEMENT POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

Name of Movement	Political Organization
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Logo



Director	Dr Arlind Qorri
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Founding Year	2011
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Membership	Undefined
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Geographical Coverage	Tiranë, Durrës, Vlorë, Shkodër, Elbasan
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OBJECTIVES

The political movement is a movement oriented left to the center left created in 2011 that is supported by new intellectuals and students that aims to raise awareness amongst youth, to increase their reaction force as an important social group and to fight against the tendencies of neoliberal policies in the area of economy and education by emphasizing the importance of public enterprises for administration of natural resources and guarantee of higher education by means of support by the state as a public right and a public good. Under the motto *three parties one oligarchy* this movement aims to be identified as an anti-establishment movement against current main political parties aiming to criticize from left to right all economic and social policies that are followed so far in Albania.

ACTIVITIES

Two of its key activities were related to policies for higher education including the creation of the movement University in Danger in 2012 and the Movement for the University created in 2014 against the draft law on higher education. The Movement for the University encouraged by the Political Organization was the first of its kind which with means of protests, symbolic actions with articles, critical writing and a manifesto that included principles and pillars of a new more democratic and more inclusive University. The movement culminated in 2015 where the slogan was "For the University for the Society" meaning that a free and equal society should first of all start from such a university system. At the time, the Movement for the University started a debate on free of charge public education and the role of the university and

students in public space. On December 4, 2018 student revolts started since students from the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture organized spontaneously a petition to express their dissatisfaction with a sudden notice from administration that they would now have to pay extra fee for each test they had to repeat from previous years. Their revolts brought the resignation of the Minister of Education, Sports and Youth and to the signing of the Pact for the University from the government. One of the Activities of the Political Organization was also the awareness raising of the public opinion regarding the right of employed persons and especially the public denunciation of cases of labor exploitation of minors and accidents with death consequence at labor merely in mines relating this to the uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources.

Political Orientation	Left
Funding	Individual membership donations
Website, Facebook, Twitter	http://organizatapolitike.org/ https://www.facebook.com/orgpol/ https://twitter.com/orgpolitike?lang=en https://www.instagram.com/organizatapolitike/?hl=en https://teza11.org/pse-teza-11/ https://www.facebook.com/PerUniversitetin/ https://www.reporter.al/si-lindi-levizja-per-universitetin-2/ http://ikesh.org/kush-jemi/ Institute for Criticism and Social Emancipation

“In fact, the idea and our strong point is to be the encouragers of a large social movement, something that was tested a little by students. It was in my opinion a general test of what should come after, a social movement that goes beyond the students to the workers, to the poor people, to the middle class and becomes part of a greater cause. In this meaning the aim and work we do serves to build this type of front or social movement that is joined by the war towards oligarchy, the war for social democratization and emancipation.”

Part from the interview with representatives of Political Movement

5.3. ALTERNATIVA MOVEMENT

Name of Movement	Alternativa
Logo	
Director	Besart Kadia
Founding Year	2019
Membership	2000
Geographical Coverage	Tiranë, Korçë, Shkodër

OBJECTIVES

Alternativa movement was founded in November 2019 under the leadership of the new pedagogue and economic scholar Besart Kadia as part of Albanian Enterprise Institute and aims to unite young professionals of Albania to contribute to bring socio-political changes. Their aim is to invite young people of Albania to bring their energies with ideas in favor of the market by not hiding behind large traditional political parties but rather by creating their perspective through direct dialogue with the citizens by means of communication platforms in the media or social network.

ACTIVITIES

Awareness rising through conversations in the electronic media and in social network regarding simple taxation, pro-market reforms and transparency of the government regarding public expenses.

Political Orientation	Liberal
Fundings	Individual Donations
Website, Facebook, Twitter	https://www.facebook.com/pg/gjenerataere/posts/

“This is a social movement that aims to attract those parts of the society that want to leave, but we tell them that the reason why they should stay is because they need to be organized and to influence policy making in Albania (...). We do not have a proper membership, but we have organized some meetings in Tiranë, Korçë and Fier and have considered as our members those 2000 supporters that followed our meetings. Moreover, we aim the forums, discussions with public stakeholders and drafting potential recommendations. We say what are the ideas that can bring Albania forward. This is more or less how we perceive our structure....”

***Parts from the Interview with the representative
of Alternativa Movement***

5.4. EKOALBANIA MOVEMENT

Name of movement	EkoAlbania
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Logo



Director	Olsi Nika
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Founding Year	2014
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Membership	Undefined
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Geographical Coverage	Tiranë, Vlorë, Gjirokastër, Shkodër
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OBJECTIVES

EkoAlbania is an organization and citizen's movement for raising awareness to the communities of different areas, public opinion, and national and local structures in regard to the importance of preserving environment and biodiversity. All its activities are realized by a dedicated and specialized team of professional (biologists, specialist of the area of environment protection, communication experts etc.) with the assistance of a number of collaborators and volunteers. EkoAlbania aims merely to preserve and manage the environment and continuous awareness of the public in this regard.

ACTIVITIES

Under the slogan "Let's give voice to River protection" the key activities of EcoAlbania Movement have been the support of local inhabitants touched by the hydropower plant projects which has included advocates and environmentalists by organizing awareness rising campaigns, conferences and judicial denunciations to prevent the building of several hydro power plants that threaten biodiversity. According to EcoAlbania the situation of Hydro Power Plants is presented as alarming in all the territory of Albania where the rivers nationwide are in danger from over 700 hydro power plants that are planned to be built nationwide by threatening their rich flora and fauna. On the other hand, these projects are risking welfare of the inhabitants whose life is related to the water sources of their area leaving them without water and also threatening tourism development and local economies. EkoAlbania has especially been famous in awareness rising campaigns against building of hydro-power plants in the network of Albanian rivers where most important is the Alliance for Protection of Vjosa or the Alliance for the protection of Kalivaç Hydropower Plant, the Protect Valbona Movement and .those campaigns related to several aspects of biodiversity protection

One of the key activities with influence in EcoAlbania Movement, of environmental organizations Riverwatch and EuroNature and 38 citizens and activists of Kute village of Mallakastra has been the stopping of the building of the hydropower plant of Pocem at Vjosa River.⁴⁶ This was made possible thanks for giving in concession for 35 years to two Turkish companies the building of hydropower plant of Poçem at upper Vjosa valley. Based on the studies of the Albanian government on Vjosa river there is a plan to build about 25 hydropower plants where the largest are the hydropower plants of Kaludh, Dragot, Kalivac, Poçem and Karbonar.

In the framework of the Vjosa Day, during a conference that took part on 13-16 June 2019, EcoAlbania Movement announced the initiative to nominate Vjosa a National Park considering it as one of the last remaining wild rivers in Europe with free stream during all of its bed.⁴⁷ The pressure and public awareness rising by EcoAlbania Movement has encouraged the Albanian government on September 25, 2020 to approve as a National Park the upper Vjosa Valley by stopping also building of hydropower plants in this area including also the dam of Kalivaç.¹ Meanwhile EcoAlbania managed to raise the awareness of foreign scientists and activists in the area of environment to protect Vjosa River through the campaign "Protect the Blue Heart of Europe".⁴⁸

Under the spirit of this awareness rising campaign and protests one of the activities and key areas of EcoAlbania Movement is the support of the movement of the inhabitants of four villages of Derjan Administrative Unit of Mat Municipality where key villages are those of Zall Gjocaj. Under the motto "Protect Zall Gjocaj National Park", they opposed the building of the Burie-Lura Hydropower Plant by the Sek Hydropower firm at Selita River, in Burine village situated in northeast of this park and who threatens the sources of two from the 12 chastic lakes.² It is nominated as a National Park from 1992 and includes Deja Mountain being categorized as a II category of the International Union for Conservation of Nature. Inhabitants raised at etend of collective resistance meanwhile in October the EcoAlbania Movement sued in the first rank Administrative Court the building of this hydropower plant but the court decided for continuation of works. The case is currently appealed.

46 <http://www.ecoalbania.org/sq/event/dita-e-vjoses-vizioni-per-park-kombetar/>; <https://portavendore.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Angazhimi-i-Komunitetit-%E2%80%93Tregues-i-Integritetit-n%C3%AB-Vendim-marje-AKTIV.pdf>; https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=top+story+vjosa (Top Story- 'Liqenet mbi Vjosë-Dy hidrocentrale po zhdukin lumin më të egër në Europë

47 <http://www.ecoalbania.org/sq/2020/09/25/kryeministri-rama-reagon-kalivac-nuk-do-te-ndertohet/>

48 <http://www.ecoalbania.org/sq/tag/te-shpetojme-zemren-blu-te-evropes/page/21/>

49 <https://portavendore.al/2020/01/23/>

<https://www.facebook.com/pg/zallgjocaj/posts/><https://www.facebook.com/EcoAlbania.org/posts/2543090629105167/>

Political Orientation	Environmentalist
Funding	BE, NAVA Foundation, Leviz Albania, GEF-UNDP
Website, Facebook, Twitter	http://www.ecoalbania.org/sq/kreu/ https://www.facebook.com/EcoAlbania.org/ https://www.instagram.com/ecoalbania/ https://twitter.com/ecoalbania?lang=en

Our movement is a movement of pedagogues of the Faculty of Natural Sciences of the University of Tirana and the team that worked for little more than 3 years for the campaign save the blue heart of Europe regarding Vjosa river. This was our encouragement the campaign then aimed to protect rivers with large natural potential all over the Balkan Peninsula. Nevertheless, the valley of Vjosa river has been one of our key objectives. Then it was transformed in movement, while EcoAlbania is not a movement I would rather say it is an organization that supports and encourages social movements in protection of the environment."

Parts from the interview with EkoAlbania association representatives.

5.5. VETËVENDOSJA MOVEMENT – ALBANIA HQ

Name of Movement	Lëvizja Vetëvendosja-Qendra në Shqipëri
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Logo



Director	Bojken Abazi
Founding Year	11 April 2019
Membership	2000
Geographical Coverage	Tiranë, Shkodër, Vlorë, Kukës

OBJECTIVES

Vetëvendosja Movement – Albania HQ is created as a branch of Vetëvendosja movement in Kosova and aims to provide support for the exercising of the democratic right for self-decision of Albanian people for the realization of national unification of the independent state of Kosova with Albania based on the Preamble of the Constitution of the Republic of Albania and on the principle of self-decision of peoples expressed on the first chapter of the United Nations Charter. One of its key objectives is to increase self-awareness that national unification and integration of Albania and more widely of Albanians into Euro-Atlantic structures such as the European Union and NATO are processes that shall occur in parallel and fulfill each other. Therefore, its activity aims to increase awareness and citizens' activism in the Republic of Albania regarding the problems of Albanians that live outside the territory of the Republic of Albania and vice versa.

ACTIVITIES

Moreover, the whole of activities of this Movement is related to the establishing of bridges of communication and cooperation projects with civil society, academic sphere and intellectuals, syndicates and students, sportsmen/sportswomen in Albania and Kosova and in other regions of the Balkan region as well as with our diaspora patriots. On the other hand it also conducts activities that encourage active citizens encouragement for issues related to the fair economic development and strengthening of the national identity Therefore on January 26 2020 Vetëvendosja Movement in Albania supported the protests of the Mining Syndicate of Bulqize in front of the Ministry of Finance and Economy, in front of the Prime Minister Office and in front of the offices of "AlbChrome" company

ad in front of Labor Inspectorate.⁵⁰ In this protest the syndicates requested the new collective contract, increase of salaries, review of norms, bonus payments for end of the year, recognition difficulties and elder at work, compensation for accidents at work, stopping of pressures towards miners and return to the job of four syndicates leaders previously fired in an outlaw way. Following these activities, recently activists of Vetevendosja Movement, Albania HQ have supported the oil workers of the Factory of Deep Processing of Petrol in Ballsh city who from 28.9.2020 are in a hunger strike. This movement has also supported the requests of oil workers and requested for the respect of the dignity and rights of over 700 workers of this oil refinery such as enforcement of the court decision of 2017 regarding payment of unpaid salaries during all these months together with the other salaries since the stoppage of work of the refiner, remount and the restart of it as well as collective work contracts. On the other hand, on October 11 activists of Vetevendosja Movement in Albania have supported the initiative of inhabitants in Hormove village in Tepelene to rehabilitate of the Memorial of the Massacre of Hormova that commemorates the massacre of 207 persons from the Greeks. Vetevendosja Movement in Albania requests the transparence of local governance unit organs for this case insisting that such memorials shall be maintained and raised in all cases where they influence the commemorial of history and for strengthening national identity.

Political Orientation	Left
Funding	Membership donations
Website, Facebook, Twitter	https://shqiperi.vetevendosje.org/ https://www.facebook.com/LVVShqiperi/ https://twitter.com/LVVShqiperi https://www.instagram.com/lvshqiperi/?hl=en

“For us it is especially important to interact the issue of national cause and that of the welfare state that fights against inequalities and injustices in economy and society. I think that these two theses are important for the Albanian state from the XIX century ... We did not invent those thesis, ... Of course everything that did not happen then must be adapted to the new needs of the XXI century but nevertheless some programming lines can be followed to state that we do not perceive ourselves as something new but we think we are a continuity of the historical attempt of the Albanians inside or outside the Republic of Albania to develop and unite the Albanian nation. We are inspired by National Renaissance and try to take the best of that effort to bring it forward in current conditions Albanians live.”

Parts from the interview with Vetevendosja Movement representatives.

⁵⁰ <https://argumentum.al/lajmi/2020/01/levizja-vetevendosje-ne-shqiperi-proteste-ne-mbeshtje-te-minatoreve-minatoret-e-bulqizes-nuk-jane-vetem/>

5.6. ALEANCA PËR MBROJTJEN E TEATRIT

Name of the Movement	Lëvizja Aleanca për Mbrojtjen e Teatrit
Logo	
Directors	Robert Budina, Neritan Lica
Founding year	2018
Membership	Undefined
Geographic coverage	Tiranë, Durrës

OBJECTIVES

Aleanca Për Mbrojtjen e Teatrit was funded on 18 of April 2018 and is a citizens movement that came as a reaction towards the decision of the Albanian Government to demolish the building of the National Theatre, a building of 1938 and to build there through public private partnership (PPP) a new National Theater Building based on the project of the Danish architect Bjorn Ingels.⁵¹ This decision was the cause that in the Movement “Aleanca për Mbrojtjen e Teatrit”, under the motto ‘Protect the Theatre-National Theatre Cultural Monument Protected by the People’ several active citizens got involved including actors, urbanists, citizens, civil society activists that were gathered at the national theatre and protested in different forms for over 2 years in order not to demolish the National Theatre but to see an option for the buildings reconstruction considering its importance as a building with historical values.

ACTIVITIES

Also the “Europa Nostra” Forum, thanks to the awareness raising campaigns of Aleanca për Mbrojtjen e Teatrit, ranks it amongst the most risked buildings of Europe that shall be protected for its “symbolic” in national culture and for the whole Europe with its 80 years of history”.⁵² Following demolishing of the building of the National Theatre by the Municipality of Tirana on May 17, 2020 following Decision of Tirana Municipality Council on May 17 2020,⁵³ Aleanca për Mbrojtjen e

⁵¹<https://www.parlament.al/Files/ProjektLigje/20180926123505ligj%20nr.%2037,%20dt.%2020.9.2018%20i%20rishikuar.%20i%20rivotuar.pdf> Ligj Nr 37/2018 Për përcaktimin e procedurës së vecantë për vlerësimin, negociimin dhe lidhjen e kontratës me objekt “Projektimi dhe realizimi i Projektit Urban dhe Godinës së re të Teatrit Kombëtar

Teatrit started the signing of the petition 'For the Reconstruction of the Theater' by collecting firms all over Albania, by inviting the citizens to sign for reconstruction of the demolished theatre at the same place and with the same architectural model. Due to their long activity presence of its public representatives in written media and the electronic one and the reaction following the demolishing of the national theatre on May 17, 2020 the role of this movement in public opinion has been greater compared to other social movements.

Political Orientation Undefined

Funding

Website, Facebook, Twitter <https://www.facebook.com/pg/Aleanca-p%C3%ABr-Mbrojtjen-e-Teatrit-zyrtare-110243613751205/posts/>
<https://twitter.com/perteatrin>

"By means of this movement we brought an impact to the public, we raised its awareness by going outside in the square by facing police forces to protect a public wealth and historical one related to the cultural memory of the city and beyond For over 100 years it never happened that through civilian disobeying a group of citizens, artist, activists with different professions entered inside a building such as the National Theatre not only to preserve it but to recall to the self-conscience and public awareness of the Albanian citizens that such building needs restoration. (...) Despite the fact that we did not make it to save the building, our movement for the protection of the theatre made the citizens more aware that we all must be engaged (...) The problem is at the roots of citizens' conscience. How strong are they (...) Otherwise the theatre will not be demolished".

Parts from the interview with representatives of the Aleanca per Mbrojtjen e Teatrit Kombëtar Movement.

52 <http://7mostendangered.eu/sites/national-theatre-of-albania-tirana-albania/>
 53 <https://exit.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/vkb-50.pdf> Vendimi Nr 50 datë 14.05.2020 i Këshillit Bashkiak – Tiranë Për miratimin e shëmbjes së godinës së Teatrit Kombëtar, pasuri në pronësi të Bashkisë Tiranë, bazuar në Akt-Ekspertizën e hartuar nga Instituti Kombëtar i Ndërtimit 'Mbi vlerësimin e godinës së Teatrit Kombëtar'.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Albania does not have an extensive tradition of (civic) social movements. It dates back to as early as the beginning of 1990s, with a strong civic response to the totalitarian system. Although only three decades old, however, its history is increasingly enriched with new social subjects and new causes, of concern and interest to the Albanian society.

Governments continuously produce arbitrary problems; the civic response against them is and will be required. It is important, therefore, to know how to appreciate more and better the mission, values, role and contributions of the social (civic) movements. First and foremost, the society is expected to be more participatory, more present and more active towards relevant causes.

Furthermore, an active public support by the international presence in Albania, such as multilateral organizations, the diplomatic corps accredited in Albania, etc., would have a very positive contribution to increasing the prestige of these movements amid the public opinion and in the mass media.

The data of the survey on the activity and impact of social (civic) movements operating in Albania provides us with a clear overview of how their activity, capacity and impact in advocating the public interest and reaction is perceived. In general, the limited knowledge of respondents about these movements is related to the fact that activities are mainly concentrated in Tirana and are not characterized by efforts to mobilize large-scale measures.

From our assessment, the Aleanca per Mbrojtjen e Teatrit (Alliance for Protection of Theatre) has had a wider media coverage, due to the concentration of its activity in Tirana, as a result of the location of the theater and the attention for the demolition of the National Theater building on May 17, 2020. Other social movements such as Nisma Thurja, EcoAlbania, and Alternativa seem to have a lower level of recognition by the public. A major reason conditioning their activity is the lack of financial resources. Limited and insufficient financial resources keep them from organising intensive awareness-raising activities or reach other areas beyond the capital.

Nisma Thurje, Organizata Politike and Vetëvendosje - Albania, are civic movements that have the potential to become political parties. The goals and objectives they have set are related to aspects that belong to parties as electoral subjects. Already, Nisma Thurja has indicated its intention to run in 2021 parliamentary elections.

To raise public awareness, Nisma Thurje, the Aleanca per Mbrojtjen e

Teatrit and EcoAlbania have used petitions and lawsuits in courts for the causes they advocate, as a tool to attract media attention but also their impact on society, with the aim of involving larger number of citizens in support of changes in areas such as electoral systems, protection of historical and cultural heritage, and biodiversity. Despite their indifference to participate in these movements, the citizens has stated a desire for a stronger role and action of these movements in public life.

The use of print and electronic media or social media such as Facebook, have been the main channels these movements have used to raise public awareness, although protests or awareness-raising campaigns require massive participation of citizens.

Certainly a civic apathy towards various events is also explained by the insufficient culture of today's Albanian citizens to react to arbitrary government acts that affect the interests of society. Therefore, often these movements are considered as "gyms of democracy" and their presence in public life allows citizens, youth and groups of interest to try and foster their skills to advocate for certain public interests, beyond the traditional level of representation of interests by political parties.

Social (civic) movements are an irreplaceable asset of a society, with a broad scope and significant role and influence, for the benefit of the country's progress.

Despite the general readiness to vote for new faces, voters -in the end- turn to traditional parties and this is also related with the current low capacities of these movements to profile themselves as political actors. Such movements have the capacity to mobilize around specific issues in a certain context, but do not have structures and capacity to mobilize as political actors around elections.

Most of these movements do not have clear and identified membership, nor its clear what is the state of their finances and also, the willingness to become political actors cannot be assessed. The landscape of these movements is so fluid by indicating a lack of well-thought process before their establishment. An example is the 'Alternative' movement that was set-up last year as a right wing one, but whose leader was decreed in November as the deputy minister of Finance, by putting an end to the existence of this movement through the phenomena of co-opting. Also, one of the leaders of Aleanca per Mbrojten e Teatrit is now part of the candidates' MP list for parliamentary elections of 2021 representing the main opposition party.

The past history of movements indicates that when they were transformed into electoral subjects, they have lost relevance and have not been able to mobilize sufficient support for getting elected into the Parliament (the examples with Mjaft Movement – G99, Sfida party, LIBRA party, Red and Black Alliance etc.).

For the most part, new movements are prejudged and misjudged to the point that also the donor support towards them has been almost non-existent. In that framework, the donors should be more intentional in

paying attention and supporting the new movements in order to increase the political options in the country and increase the pressure from the new actors for further democratization of the political system (the example of Nisma Thurje on advocating for open lists for next elections). The topic-based movements seem to be more successful in appealing to citizens.

Regarding the relationship vis-a-vi media, it is noticed that the traditional media does not create sufficient space for covering the movements stances and actions. Meanwhile, a general civic apathy in the country may be explained by 1) the government's actions to discredit any civic movement and leader and efforts to frame any opposing voice as part of the opposition's agenda, and 2) the insufficient culture of citizens to react to arbitrary government acts that affect the interests of society.

On the other side, the dualism between perception and electoral reality among voters in Albania is the main explanation as to why for many years, although most people have a negative perception of traditional parties, the electoral behavior has remained unchanged and `political dualism` between the two main parties continues to prevail.

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(FOOTNOTES)

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9 <http://7mostendangered.eu/sites/national-theatre-of-albania-tirana-albania/>

10 <https://exit.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/vkb-50.pdf> Vendimi Nr 50 datë 14.05.2020 i Këshillit Bashkiak – Tiranë Për miratimin e shëmbjes së godinës së Teatrit Kombëtar, pasuri në pronësi të Bashkisë Tiranë, bazuar në Akt-Ekspertizën e hartuar nga Instituti Kombëtar i Ndërtimit 'Mbi vlerësimin e godinës së Teatrit Kombëtar'.

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