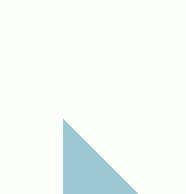July 2021

Technological Innovation and Social Transformation

Competing Views on Internal
Development in Kosovo

Aaron Spitler
The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy
Tufts University

KIPRED | KOSOVAR INSTITUTE FOR POLICY RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

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Acknowledgements

Contact Information

Aaron Spitler
Principal Author
Fulbright U.S. Student Program
aaron.spitler@fulbrightmail.org

Project Forward

The loudest voices in Kosovo have trumpeted the technology sector as a way to raise the isolated country's public profile in the international arena. However, each presents an alternative vision of how digital industry will shape the nation's future trajectory. Government officials paint a picture in which taking action to rebuild internal infrastructure and boost digital literacy will lead to the creation of a vibrant "information society" that improves general living conditions (Ministry of Economic Development 2013). International stakeholders, particularly those active in donor circles, envision the country as a hub for regional e-commerce that could provide a creative jolt to stagnant economies across the Western Balkans (Zogaj Gashi et al. 2020). Even civic leaders have seen how technology can support social entrepreneurship, finding practical ways in which innovative tools can address long-standing inequities (Kartallozi and Xhemajli 2017).

Though they share similar aims, these prominent actors use technology to achieve different strategic objectives, each holding unique implications for Kosovo's future development. Critically, this contest of ideas takes place in the public square, directly impacting the way in which Kosovars understand technology's growing role in the life of their country. Looking to the future, it is clear that this ongoing conversation will have significant implications for how the young population of this nascent democracy contextualize themselves within the larger community of tech-savvy nation-states. Most importantly, recognizing which narratives carry the most weight could provide insight on how "periphery" countries seek to close the gap that exists between them and "core" powers.

I.   General Introduction

For years, policymakers have sought to articulate how the adoption of technology would impact the development of their countries. In reviewing recent literature produced on this subject, many scholars have focused on how digitization can be a vehicle for revitalization, spurring social and economic progress within disadvantaged states. These individuals feel that the industry could not only offer countless opportunities to citizens, but also change the way the country is perceived by its peers in the international community. At its core, the argument advanced by these practitioners posits that embracing innovation will ensure the country secures its place in the interconnected (and competitive) market.

However, within the discourse regarding technology and society, a diversity of actors have sought to stake their claim as to how these tools could help the state achieve its goals. Stakeholders, ranging from figures in government to those in business, often possess competing views on how this burgeoning industry will impact the country's direction. In many cases, these players will try to "sell" members of the public on their vision for the future in what communications scholar Monroe Price describes as the *market for loyalties*. Borrowing from Price's theory, this paper will attempt to identify which groups have the most influence on shaping individual's understanding of technology in the context of Kosovo.

To answer this question, this paper begins by providing background on how technology has been conceptualized by practitioners of development, as well as by those in positions of power in Kosovo. After listing the hypotheses, the paper then highlights the framework which was used to organize the findings, outlining which

interests appear to have had an impact on how technology is understood by citizens. Following this description of the methodology, evidence is then presented to show how interviewees, selected due to their familiarity with the sector, responded to the narratives advanced by the identified interests. Lastly, the paper concludes with a discussion of the results, an acknowledgement of limitations, and thoughts on the future of research on this relevant topic.

II. Topic Overview

Within the development community, policymakers and practitioners alike have long framed technology as a means of generating economic growth and spurring social renewal in historically disadvantaged states. Investing in digital industries, they charge, can help countries on the periphery of the global system keep pace with their better-resourced peers in the interconnected economy. In doing so, citizens acquire skills that will enable them to succeed in the modern workforce, allowing them to fulfill the evolving needs of an ever-changing sector (Bimbe et al. 2015). Furthermore, these individuals can also benefit from the widespread availability of affordable devices like mobile phones, raising their quality of life to standards seen in "more developed" states (Yayboke 2017). With barriers to access removed, users can accomplish tasks ranging from pursuing employment opportunities to forging social connections, opening a window to the world beyond their immediate surroundings.

Most importantly, proponents believe that it can address inequalities that stunt the upward mobility of marginalized communities, creating an inclusive society defined by a culture of innovation (UNCTAD 2018). Making use of these tools, residents of all

backgrounds can come together to both enhance economic cooperation and further cultural understanding. At its core, this argument links technological progress with collective identity, as the advances produced by this sector make it a source of domestic pride. For many governments, particularly those who fear being "left behind" in a geopolitical order shaped by rapid digitization, crafting plans to expand the nascent industry is a matter of national need and international reputation.

A textbook example of this novel phenomena can be found in Kosovo, a former Yugoslav province situated in the heart of Southeastern Europe. Gaining independence from Serbia in 2008, the young country has not been fully recognized by the global community, a factor that has contributed to a lack of sustained economic development. Operating within these limiting parameters, policymakers in Pristina have turned their attention towards strengthening the information and communication technology (ICT) sector, which has experienced sustained growth over the past half-decade (Diakonidze 2016). Successive governments have recognized the growing importance of the burgeoning field, listing it as a "priority area" in development strategies given its potential for job creation and income generation (Open Data Kosovo 2020). In their view, the state can sponsor training programs that supply digitized economies in the European Union with talented data scientists, banking on the idea that these professionals will return to their native homeland with valuable skills that could drive local entrepreneurship.

Capitalizing on this malleable workforce, authorities believe that they can transform the former breakaway territory into a contemporary digital hub (IT Strategy Working Group 2016). Though significant challenges remain, many related to the

country's contested legal status, established practitioners believe that emergent technologies will play a key role in accelerating the fledgling state's integration into the international community. Upon rising through the ranks, they maintain that Kosovo may have its image rehabilitated, showing the world that they are a vibrant democracy no longer beset by systemic corruption and ethnic antipathy.

III.   Research Question

In both the "developed" and "developing" world, we can see how technology has featured prominently in the visions for national development touted by powerful actors. These forces, ranging from commercial interests to political elites, craft narratives that emphasize how innovation will take their respective countries to unprecedented heights. Critically, as communications scholar Monroe Price describes, this idealistic rhetoric is employed by influential stakeholders to secure the support of the citizen groups, allowing them to hold sway over large segments of the wider population. Price unpacks this dynamic in his *market for loyalties* theory, which postulates that these parties "sell" versions of collective identity to "buyers" in society, repacking tropes of exceptionality and chosenness to gain popular legitimacy (Price 1994). For those invested in the technology sector, celebrating the data revolution serves the symbolic purpose of inspiring the body politic, assuaging fears that their country will be unprepared for the demands of the digitized world (Mansell 2004).

Moreover, as citizens become more exposed to global information flows, prominent players in the "ideas marketplace" must contend with the fact that the perceptions of clients are being shaped by the inputs of actors foreign and domestic

(Carey 1998). All the while, these tensions define the contours of debate regarding the specific role emergent technologies should play within the development plans of governing authorities. This competition, which Price describes as taking place at multiple levels, has a direct impact on how the general public understands the benefits and costs associated with nurturing innovative industries.

A. Question Statement

Which forces are most influential in shaping Kosovars' understanding of the transformative potential of their country's information and communication technology (ICT) sector?

B. Guiding Hypotheses

After completing preliminary research, it is clear that certain interests have an advantage in terms of their ability to drive the debate on the innovation ecosystem in Kosovo. Specifically, there are three conclusions that could shed light on popular conceptions of the country's digital industry. Though this list is not exhaustive, the following options appear often after surveying available evidence:

A. **Commercial ventures** find success in selling the public on the employment opportunities found through the technology sector, framing it as a pathway to improved living conditions. The industry, with its growing network of foreign clients, can also expose young professionals to "best practices" used in higher-income countries. Ultimately, they believe these wage workers can be on the fast

track to becoming digital entrepreneurs, returning home to transforming their country into a center of regional commerce.

B. **International benefactors** convince citizens that the sector is a "way out" of the political gridlock, especially the issue of legal recognition, which continues to stunt job creation in the newly independent state. In spite of geopolitical isolation, these actors promise average Kosovars that they can receive salaries comparable to those seen in the European Union. Yet at its core, they intonate to citizens that they can improve their lives (and livelihoods) by bolstering their digital skills.

C. **Government actors**, maintaining pace with global trends, have marketed digital skills as the centerpiece of their strategies to revive Kosovo's dormant industries. Recognizing how neighboring countries, such as Bulgaria and Serbia, have prioritized digital industries, they believe that supporting the sector is a surefire means of increasing competitiveness in a shifting economic landscape. Chiefly, these stakeholders raise that expanding the sector can convey to outsiders that the resilient country has moved beyond its violent past.

IV.   **Analytical Framework**

To tackle this question, the author created a conceptual map to organize research findings. The end result was an analytical matrix featuring players who have an outsized impact on civil discourse surrounding technology affairs. In total, they identified four "interests" with the resources and motivation to shape opinion on

technology's place in Kosovo's future plans:

- **Government Interests:** These actors believe that the sector can be an engine for societal renewal, breathing new life into the domestic market that has suffered throughout a prolonged period of economic stagnation

- **Commercial Interests:** These actors have communicated a message centered on digital entrepreneurship, raising that the young country's future lies in creating a vibrant start-up culture not seen anywhere else in Southeastern Europe

- **Civic Interests:** These actors raise that digital tools can not only improve socio-economic realities for vulnerable populations, but may also play a significant role in facilitating inter-ethnic cooperation between former wartime adversaries

- **International Interests**: These actors imagine the country can be an essential asset to the digital economy, providing companies around the world with laborers ready to meet changing needs in the global marketplace

The rows outline the dimensions of stakeholder narratives. These focus on how their rhetoric describes technology's influence on current affairs in the Kosovar state, from attracting foreign investment to enhancing export promotion. Specifically, they are broken down into three overarching categories:

A. **Citizen-Level Implications**

Broadly speaking, this category focuses on how technology affects the daily lives of Kosovars, providing a range of benefits that enhance personal wellbeing. For

government actors interested in technological development, they believe that sustained investment into this growing sector can raise living standards for the wider population. More concretely, nurturing innovation will provide average citizens with financial security, allowing them to focus on their long-term plans after years of grappling with the fallout caused by prolonged economic recession (Ministry of Public Services 2008). Commercial interests go one step further than their peers in the public sector, arguing that technology can not only boost locals' career prospects, but can also expose them to alternative viewpoints. The push to compete in the global market will build the "hard" and "soft" skills of the national workforce, creating a class of advanced professionals who are attuned to trends in the international arena (Payne et al. 2007). In essence, these two stakeholders highlight two divergent tracks in which emergent technologies can be used to achieve personal fulfillment.

Civic interests take a more holistic approach to evaluating the impact technology will have on the lived experiences of Kosovars. To these actors based at local nonprofits, modern technologies can be a catalyst for transformative change in both rural and urban communities. Digital citizenship, in their view, will enhance participation across the board, empowering individuals from various walks of life to work together to achieve common goals (Ramaj 2020). International interests take a different view on technology's transformative potential, focusing primarily on how wageworkers in Kosovo could see benefits comparable to those found in the European Union. From improving public services to modernizing healthcare systems, these external actors charge that the technology will give individuals a glimpse into life in the continental bloc (Ahmedi 2009). Comparing these four narratives, each reflects a different set of

priorities regarding how technology can better everyday realities for those living in the former socialist nation.

B. National-Level Implications

This categorization emphasizes how emergent technologies will allow state authorities to achieve their political objectives. Among those directly involved in these policy debates, namely government interests, digital tools offer a means of "jumpstarting" the nation's sluggish recovery from the armed conflict of the late 1990s. These voices raise that legislative actions, such as proposals to integrate information technology into school curricula, are needed to develop human capital in the post-war era (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology 2016). Commercial interests take a more active approach to promoting the burgeoning sector, arguing that digital services could be the market specialization that allows Kosovo to stand out in the Western Balkans. By increasing the level of cooperation between ministries, from public administration to industry regulation, the country will be able to cement itself as a force within the regional "knowledge economy" (Iljazi and Ujkani 2014). In contrasting this pair of narratives, we can see that these stakeholders differ in determining the impact that technology will have in shaping the state's economic outlook.

Shifting our focus to macro-level concerns, civic interests see modern technologies as an accessible tool by which motivated citizens can solve long-standing shortcomings within their respective communities. Cultivating the next generation of innovative entrepreneurs is not a matter of economic output; rather, these future leaders will employ emerging technologies to achieve social goods ranging from ethnic

reconciliation to gender equality (Berjani 2017). In contrast, international interests see modern technology's usefulness primarily in terms of the economic value it would bring to the general population. A digitally literate workforce that can meet the shifting demands of international clients, particularly within the expansive field of outsourcing services, would present an intuitive solution to the unemployment issue that has slowed Kosovo's long-term development (Kica 2014). Through direct and indirect channels, these interests maintain that technology can play a role in bolstering the capacities of communities grappling with the seismic changes within our global system.

C. International-Level Implications

Lastly, this category focuses on how technology will allow Kosovo to secure its place within the interconnected online economy. Among government interests, crafting a robust technology policy would not only separate the country from its regional competitors; it would also emerge as one of the core industries that would enable Kosovo to become a prominent player in the global marketplace. Investing capital into the creation of an "information society" is a national project that would guarantee accession into the European Union, making it a more appealing trade partner to higher-income countries (Ministry of Transport and Communications 2006). In contrast, commercial interests are more concerned with Kosovo's technology sector as it compares to its Balkan neighbors in the digital market. Implementing measures like supporting industrial research and promoting skills development are required to ensure the country can break through its political marginalization (Richter and Music 2011).

While their methods may differ, it is clear that these two interests are primarily concerned with how technology can be leveraged to speed up the "modernization" of the developing country, a protracted process that initially began in the immediate period following the collapse of Yugoslavia.

Civic interests also maintain that emergent technologies can be used to rehabilitate Kosovo's general reputation, though they believe that digital tools are most valuable when used to solve grassroots problems. This dynamic field offers disaffected citizens the rare chance to affect change in their home communities, as they can employ their technical knowledge to challenge negative stereotypes that have stained the country's overall reputation (BONEVET 2015). International interests, cognizant of the region's turbulent history, also embrace technology as a means of enhancing Kosovo's global standing. Their novel solution is to emphasize the untapped potential of their young workforce, many of whom possess a technical aptitude that meets the professional expectations of Western firms. In essence, they believe that Kosovo could offer these companies a steady supply of skilled labor that can adapt to technological change (PwC North Macedonia 2020). These two actors, while aligned in their focus on young Kosovars, present divergent perspectives on how technological change can be effectively harnessed to improve their current situation.

DIMENSIONS	GOVERNMENT	COMMERCIAL	CIVIC	INTERNATIONAL
CITIZEN-LEVEL	*Technology can raise citizen incomes in spite of ongoing economic stagnation*	*Technology can provide citizens with careers in cutting-edge fields, all while enabling them to*	*Technology can be used by citizens to address problems in their own communities*	*Technology can present citizens with a standard of living similar to that seen in the European Union*

		connect with their wider world		
NATIONAL-LEVEL	*Technology can spur economic renewal, advancing the country's post-war development*	*Technology can become the "focal point" of the nation's economy, positioning it to compete against regional rivals in the digital sector*	*Technology can be used to facilitate cooperation between vulnerable communities, especially those divided along ethnic lines*	*Technology can provide the country with a pool of talented labor that is able to meet the changing demands of the digital economy*
INTERNATIONAL-LEVEL	*Technology can become Kosovo's "niche industry", securing its place in international markets*	*Technology can reconfigure Kosovo as a "digital hub" in the Western Balkans, breaking through geopolitical isolation*	*Technology can launch a wave of social entrepreneurship that addresses key priorities like inter-ethnic tension, changing the country's narrative in the international arena*	*Technology can equip Kosovo with a digitally literate workforce, enabling it to a vital cog in the machine of international commerce*

Figure 1. Conceptual map of technology narratives in Kosovo

V.   Methodological Approach

Building off this conceptual framework, the author opted to follow a qualitative approach to create an in-depth case study. By providing an overview on the trends within this burgeoning industry, they hoped to contribute to existing theory-building on how developing states are grappling with the social and economic disruptions caused by technology's ubiquitous presence (Flyvbjerg 2006). Furthermore, the author opted to incorporate insights gleaned from fifty semi-structured interviews compiled during their research fellowship as part of the Fulbright U.S. Student Program. Over the course of six

months beginning in the fall of 2019, the author traveled around the country and met with individuals whose work revolved around technology promotion. Given the unique perspectives of project participants, the author maintains that their responses could shed light on the dominant themes used to characterize technological progress (Tellis 1997). In practice, they would look through the final transcripts of recorded sessions to identify salient themes that appeared in their formal conversations with selected interviewees. Afterwards, their responses would be sorted into the above table, with the goal of identifying which narratives were repeated the most during data collection. Tallying these responses, the author would be able to pinpoint which involved "interests" have the most influence over how people understand technology's ever-growing presence in the daily lives of Kosovar citizens. Through this approach, they believe that the paper will highlight which voices have dominated the discussion surrounding technology promotion, all while underscoring how their rhetoric has potentially guided the creation of public policy.

VI.   Preliminary Evidence

A. National-Level Dimensions

Of the fifty participants selected for this project, eighteen of them primarily focused on the national-level effects technology would have on Kosovo's long-term development. It was also the most prominent dimension among the three options featured in the conceptual map. Within this group, eight interviewees echoed the narratives advanced by government and commercial interests respectively. A pair of subjects shared the views held by international interests, while no participant embraced

the perspective of civic interests. In other words, those concerned with how technology could redirect the country's trajectory did not prioritize its role in addressing social problems like inter-ethnic tensions.

It is interesting to consider how government and commercial voices possessed a similar amount of influence over industry professionals. Many participants, especially veteran entrepreneurs who experienced the upheaval which coincided with the fall of Yugoslavia, echoed the government line that technology offers a path to progress and stability. However, a number expressed frustration at the perceived indifference of elected officials, lamenting that they have only paid lip service to those advocating for increased support. Even so, many of those who sided with commercial interests believed that inter-sectoral cooperation would be necessary for the country to compete against regional rivals. Without their support, the industry may soon lag behind competitors in neighboring countries that can offer similar services at a fraction of the average price.

Regarding the international position, the individuals that fall into this category believe that a digitally literate workforce would enable Kosovo to keep pace with global trends in the tech industry. Yet in reviewing their transcripts, both individuals emphasized that significant changes would be needed in order to reach this lofty goal. Prioritizing stakeholder needs, such as educational reform and industry promotion, must be addressed sooner rather than later if the country is to emerge as a "power player". Yet with continued political instability, such as stalled recognition negotiations with Serbia, there is reason to doubt that these recommendations will be adopted and implemented in the near future.

B. International-Level Dimensions

Within the larger participant base, sixteen individuals highlighted international-level concerns when describing how technology could redefine Kosovo's place within the global community. Seven interviewees reflected the viewpoints of international interests, believing that the creation of a "tech-savvy" workforce would make the country an indispensable part of international commerce. Six aligned with commercial interests, emphasizing how the burgeoning industry would be a center for regional trade. Two individuals were influenced by government interests and their vision for carving-out a specialized niche in the global system. Finally, a single participant was convinced by civic interests' belief in the power of technology-enhanced social entrepreneurship.

These insights shed light on how stakeholders weigh the tradeoffs between focusing on outsourcing services and investing in product development. For those influenced by international interests, the most practical strategy would be to take advantage of a young and multilingual workforce, preparing coders and programmers that can be contracted out to firms in Western Europe. Conversely, those motivated by commercial interests believe in the country's ability to promote innovation that disrupts the regional market. Though both groups acknowledge the industriousness of the domestic workforce, they differ in their belief that entrepreneurs will be able to transcend the country's political realities. Critically, if the state is unable to introduce policy that regulates investment from foreign entities, these speakers acknowledge a limit to what they can achieve by themselves in the open market.

Shifting our attention to government interests, those swayed by this argument believe that the sector can be a driving force behind economic expansion in the coming years. With targeted support from government actors, they argue, Kosovo will be able to complete the transition to an economy that relies more on intellectual capital. Following the path blazed by smaller states with socialist histories, like Estonia, the country would bring a "value added" to an international system that places a premium on market efficiency. By finding an area of expertise, such as cyber security or artificial intelligence, the country would be able to distinguish itself from others sharing socio-economic characteristics.

C. Citizen-Level Dimensions

Lastly, a second group of sixteen participants emphasized citizen-level outcomes as they relate to the potential of Kosovo's technology sector. Eight interviewees advocated positions held by commercial interests, believing that tech can offer citizens stable employment. Seven individuals shared the view of civic interests, accepting technology as a force for good in their communities. One person echoed the points of international interests, viewing the industry as a way to raise living standards. Interestingly, no person could be classified as elevating the opinions of government interests, suggesting doubt in the sector's ability to raise average incomes given the harsh economic climate.

The prominence of the commercial perspective provides insight into the priorities of entrepreneurs in Kosovo. For instance, many of these individuals shared how remote work offered opportunities for personal development, allowing them to work with clients

around the world from the comfort of their own homes. The same commitment to community could be seen in those aligned with civic interests; many of these individuals, particularly those in Serb-majority areas, wanted to leverage technology in ways that better the lives of those around them. For these groups, the digital domain offers a modicum of stability amidst political disruption and economic downturn. Yet whether or not technology can help achieve collective goals, such as facilitating reconciliation between ethnic groups, distinguishes these two factions.

The lack of support for government interests not only stems from the perceived minimization of the sector in the eyes of industry insiders. It could also be due to the persistence of negative perceptions about the newfound democracy. Though governments have stressed the importance of public diplomacy, their inability to change general perceptions could be a contributing factor to citizen mistrust. This may also partially explain the minimal faith respondents had in the future scenarios proposed by international interests. The promise of higher incomes, while appealing, may not be seen as a sustainable model for promoting renewal in Kosovo.

VII. Empirical Implications

In the final tally, we can see that a plurality of interviewees expressed narratives that would suggest commercial interests are defining the role technology plays in Kosovo's future, as nearly twenty-two respondents looked to the private sector for future direction. Bearing this in mind, it can be argued that many Kosovars believe that

their country can eventually become a tech powerhouse within Southeastern Europe. In this idealized world, the state would become a destination for start-ups from around the world, all while capitalizing on the creative energy seen in local entrepreneurs (Innovation Centre Kosovo 2020). International interests were the prominent actor to ten participants, suggesting that citizens have mixed feelings on how digital skills are key for economic empowerment. Even so, it appears that citizens are mildly intrigued at the notion that preparing for the "knowledge economy" can dramatically raise their level of personal satisfaction (European Commission 2014).

Additionally, government interests emerged as the loudest voice amongst another set of ten participants, potentially indicating that they have some influence over how citizen's perceive plans for post-war reconstruction. If these actors focused on training qualified professionals, along with increasing industry promotion, more Kosovars may express support for their development agenda (Ministry of Innovation and Entrepreneurship 2017). Lastly, the author's predictions about the influence of civic interests were tentatively affirmed, as they were cited by only eight participants. This could indicate that visions for social entrepreneurship, fueled by the creative use of emergent technologies, may not resonate with locals across the country.

VIII.   Project Limitations

Several considerations must be made when assessing the conclusions drawn from this preliminary study. Firstly, the sampling strategy used by the author may affect the generalizability of presented findings. Specifically, the author employed the "snowball" approach in which referrals provided by interviewees are used to build the

participant base. This, in turn, has the effect of presenting a narrower view of how Kosovars understand technology's socio-economic utility. However, given the small size of this business community, this plan enabled the author to glean insights from a wide cross-section of the burgeoning industry.

Secondly, it is important to note that data collection was disrupted by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Prior to the outbreak, interviews were conducted in-person, with the rationale being that the format would allow for more open discussion. After being evacuated to the United States, the author held sessions via phone calls or video chats. Though this change was undesirable, quality data was procured while working within challenging constraints.

Finally, cultural barriers must be acknowledged when placing these findings within a larger context. At a theoretical level, the study's definition of the problems facing Kosovo's economic sector are largely influenced by Western media sources that have covered this multifaceted issue. More concretely, interview sessions were primarily in English, though participants had the opportunity to receive translation assistance in either Albanian or Serbian. Ultimately, these cultural elements must be properly recognized when analyzing the overriding assumptions of this final product.

IX.   Concluding Remarks

Given the centrality of technology within societies across the globe, it is important to note which stakeholders have had the most influence on shaping how people view its impact in their lives. As the evidence indicates, it appears that within the Kosovar context, those involved in business have convinced citizens that their sector

can provide an abundance of opportunities, charting a new course for the country in the process. Specifically, the narrative stating how a career in technology could provide a pathway to stability was referenced by many of the participants selected for this study. A number of interviewees also hoped that the industry could lead the way in revitalizing the economy, all the while cementing the country's place within the community of nations after years of isolation. Ultimately, while interests in government possess some sway, it is clear that entrepreneurs have defined the direction of debate on this issue.

Looking ahead, researchers should continue to investigate the place of technology within strategies for development embraced by states like Kosovo. For instance, it would be worthwhile to explore how perceptions of the sector may diverge between urban and rural populations. As alluded to in the paper, the majority of participants selected for this study came from networks based in Pristina, indicating that these findings may not encapsulate the diversity of views held by those in the countryside. However, with the sudden rise of remote work in the wake of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, sector freelancers are no longer faced with the difficult choice of physically relocating for employment opportunities. As more companies, especially those in the European Union, allow their employees to work from the convenience of their own homes, it may be worth considering how this newfound flexibility has changed the way in which individuals view the sector's appeal.

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Appendix A. Example questions used in semi-structured interviews

1. In your opinion, what explains the considerable growth of the ICT field?
2. In your view, how has the ICT field changed the business community in Kosovo?
3. Did you ever imagine that the ICT field would be what it is today?
4. Do you believe that the ICT field can help Kosovo develop domestically?
5. Do you believe that the ICT field has changed perceptions about Kosovo abroad?
6. Do you believe that the ICT field can continue to grow in spite of Kosovo's uncertain political situation?
7. Do you believe that Kosovo's ICT field can expand if the country remains outside of the European Union?
8. In the future, what do you think ICT actors should prioritize?
9. What might need to change within the ICT ecosystem in order for the field to reach its full potential?
10. What will Kosovo's ICT field look like in the next decade?

Appendix B. List of project participants

1. Celik Nimani – Chief Executive Officer, Frakton
2. Shkelzen Vishi – Managing Director, BONEVET Kacanik
3. Brikena Raka – Assistant, BONEVET Kacanik
4. Arta Teneqja – Assistant, BONEVET Kacanik
5. Fatos Axhemi – Executive Director, Jakova Innovation Center
6. Mergim Cahani – Chief Executive Officer, Gjirafa
7. Arber Lleshi – Managing Director, BONEVET Gjakova
8. Annea Hapciu – Innovation and Entrepreneurship Advisor, KosovaLive
9. Majlinda Ruhani – Head of Incubation Program, VentureUP
10. Donjeta Sahatciu – Chief Executive Officer, Rrota
11. Arianit Pajaziti – Chief Executive Director, Appbites
12. Leke Zherka – Managing Director, BONEVET Prishtina
13. Arian Kastrati – Chief Executive Officer, Hello
14. Driton Hapciu – Founder, CACTTUS
15. Meriton Pylla – Founder, eGothix Creative Studio
16. Lorik Mullaademi – Chief Executive Officer, Sogody
17. Valmir Hazeri – Chief Executive Officer, bitsapphire
18. Flamur Breznica – Founder, Trudo
19. Angus Bjarnason – Albania and Kosovo Director, British Council
20. Agon Cecelia – Chief Executive Officer, NeoX

21. Arta Shehu-Zaimi – Founder, jCoders Academy and Labbox
22. Albiona Hoti – Founder, Coder Gals
23. Agon Avdimetaj – Founder, Zombie Soup
24. Uranik Begu – Executive Director, Innovation Centre Kosovo
25. Shpend Lila – Public Relations Manager, Innovation Centre Kosovo
26. Bardh Kadiu – Chief Executive Officer, Coda Tech
27. Gezim Begolli – Chief Executive Officer, TECH FRAME
28. Leart Zogjani – Creative Director, Skins Agency
29. Andrew Moxon – Manager, Young Innovators Shtime
30. Ardian Hoxha – Chairperson of Digital Economy Committee, American Chamber of Commerce
31. Egzon Halili – Chief Executive Officer, Monego
32. Rron Cena – Chief Executive Officer, Formon
33. Granit Limani – Founder, Sonnecto
34. Arianit Dobroshi – President of Executive Board, FLOSSK
35. Driton Zhubi – Executive Director, LENS
36. Metihe Kastrati – Chief Executive Officer, DataWis
37. Zana Tabaku – Chief Executive Officer, APPDEC
38. Muhamed Bajrami – ICT and Manufacturing Advisor, GiZ
39. Tanzer Abazi – General Manager, FINDBUG.IO
40. Astrit Desku – Project Manager and Software Architect, KOMTEL Project Engineering
41. Petar Dordevic – Program Manager, Young Active Gracanica
42. Nderim Rudi – Chief Executive Officer, Tratics
43. Veton Krasniqi – Chief Executive Officer, Urpays
44. Qendron Kastrati – Mayor of Kamenica
45. Milot Shala – Founder, UCX Kosovo
46. Alejtin Berisha – Executive Chairman, Finnish Schools International
47. Petrit Selimi – former Minister of Foreign Affairs
48. Valdrin Lluka – former Minister or Economic Development
49. Visar Jasiqi – former Director, American University Kosovo's Training and Development Institute
50. Besart Kunushevci – Chief Executive Officer, Platforma Akademia