

## Collaboration versus Cooperation: Grassroots Activism in Divided Cities and Communication Networks

**Authors :** R. Barbour

**Abstract :** Peace-building organisations act as a network of information for communities. Through fieldwork, it was highlighted that grassroots organisations and activists may cooperate with each other in their actions of peace-building; however, they would not collaborate. Within two divided societies; Nicosia in Cyprus and Jerusalem in Israel, there is a distinction made by organisations and activists with regards to activities being more ‘co-operative’ than ‘collaborative’. This theme became apparent when having informal conversations and semi-structured interviews with various members of the activist communities. This idea needs further exploration as these distinctions could impact upon the efficiency of peacebuilding activities within divided societies. Civil societies within divided landscapes, both physically and socially, play an important role in conflict resolution. How organisations and activists interact with each other has the possibility to be very influential with regards to peacebuilding activities. Working together sets a positive example for divided communities. Cooperation may be considered a primary level of interaction between CSOs. Therefore, at the beginning of a working relationship, organisations cooperate over basic agendas, parallel power structures and focus, which led to the same objective. Over time, in some instances, due to varying factors such as funding, more trust and understanding within the relationship, it could be seen that processes progressed to more collaborative ways. It is evident to see that NGOs and activist groups are highly independent and focus on their own agendas before coming together over shared issues. At this time, there appears to be more collaboration in Nicosia among CSOs and activists than Jerusalem. The aims and objectives of agendas also influence how organisations work together. In recent years, Nicosia, and Cyprus in general, have perhaps changed their focus from peace-building initiatives to more environmental issues which have become new-age reconciliation topics. Civil society does not automatically indicate like-minded organisations however solidarity within social groups can create ties that bring people and resources together. In unequal societies, such as those in Nicosia and Jerusalem, it is these ties that cut across groups and are essential for social cohesion. Societies are a collection of social groups; individuals who have come together over common beliefs. These groups in turn shape the identities and determine the values and structures within societies. At many different levels and stages, social groups work together through cooperation and collaboration. These structures in turn have the capabilities to open up networks to less powerful or excluded groups, with the aim to produce social cohesion which may contribute social stability and economic welfare over any extended period.

**Keywords :** collaboration, cooperation, grassroots activism, networks of communication

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