



Making it work

The formulation a sense of belonging to the newborn Kosovo state among Kosovo-Albanian students in Pristina



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*The formulation of a sense of belonging to the newborn Kosovo state
by Kosovo-Albanian students in Pristina.*

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My interest in the issues of a sense of belonging and identification covered below have always been lingering interests of mine. As a young man in my early twenties, who is like the youth covered in this thesis, shaping his life. Belonging and identification are issues that I myself deal with in my everyday life. Towards the end of my pre-master and during the start of my master these interests came to be more prominent in my academic writing as well as came forth a fascination for Kosovo. Thanks to the intellectual generosity of my professors and with special thanks to my supervisor, Roos de Wildt, I felt encouraged to try and combine these interests in my thesis. Roos, I really appreciate the way you allowed for the space that accommodated my writing process. Your coaching stance, your feedback, your confidence and our shared enthusiasm for the subject have greatly motivated me throughout the entire research.

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List of abbreviations

APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Corporation
AUK	American University Kosovo
EULEX	European Rule of Law Mission
ICO	International Civilian Office
KFOR	Kosovo Force
NAFTA	North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
RIT	Rochester Institute of Technology
RTK	Radio Television Kosovo
UN	United Nations
UNMIK	United Nations Mission in Kosovo
UP	University of Pristina

Chapter 1

An introduction

Walking towards 'Boulevardi Nënë Tereza', the hart of Pristina's city centre, I can feel the heightened level of excitement of the otherwise already vibrant city. It is the 17th of February and today Kosovo celebrates the 11th anniversary of its unilateral declaration of independence from the Republic of Serbia. The streets are filled with even more honking cars than usually, all of Pristina seems to have left their homes to fill the streets and cafés. I arrive at 'Boulevardi Nënë Tereza' and although I am enjoying the celebrations it isn't hard to notice the symbolism that's around. The colour scheme of the boulevard has changed from the usual grey of the buildings and green of the trees to a grand mix of blue, yellow, white, black and red. The respective colours of the Kosovar, Albanian, American and EU flags. Above the boulevard, hundreds of Kosovar flags are dancing in a little breeze while to my right, on the side of the boulevard, people are buying Kosovar and Albanian flags from one of the many stands. As I continue down the boulevard towards a stage in front of Pristina's 'Grand Hotel', I pass a few big American and EU flags hanging from the apartments on both sides of me while in front of me a crowd has gathered around two musicians in Albanian traditional clothing, playing a çifteli and encouraging their crowd to dance. I get carried away by the music and catch myself being amazed about the wide variety of seemingly different expressions of identities put forward by the people in the celebration of their young home country.¹

¹ Field notes 17-02-2019

1.1 Kosovo's crisis

The vignette above is characteristic of the 'crisis of the hyphen'. The 'crisis of the hyphen' refers to the hyphen that converges a nation with a state and brings into question the sense of belonging once so firmly linked to the nation-state by anthropologist and political scientist Benedict Anderson (2006). Anderson (2006, 6) argues that a nation is an imagined political community of which most will never know their fellow members, meet them or even hear of them, yet, have in their mind an image of their communion. In our contemporary world however, most states do not seamlessly fall together with one nation. On the contrary, our contemporary world is characterized by an increasing diversity due to the seemingly opposing forces of globalization. Seemingly opposing, as globalization and fragmentation are considered to make up two sides of the same coin (Eriksen 2013, Barber 2001).

Globalization entangles the nation-state in an intricate web of global interconnections. Generally understood as the weakening of borders, globalization enables flows of capital, services, people, information, and culture to cut across borders and transfers power from the nation-state to the global arena (Eriksen 2007, Inda and Rosalda 2007, Ariely 2012). Most national economies have become embedded in a more global world economy, characterized by transnational treaties such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the European Union (EU) (Smith 2013). Furthermore, most nation-state's regulatory bodies have become members of transnational regulatory bodies such as the United Nations (UN) and, although more regional, the European Union (EU) (Holton 2011). Fragmentation on the other hand, refers to a global retribalization or polarization (Barber 2001, 202), that can be easily recognized in the rise and proliferation of various kinds of identity politics (Smith 1995, 2). The rapid, uncontrolled and sometimes confusing changes caused by the increasing globalization makes people regroup around primary identities such as religion, ethnicity, regionalism and nationality (Castells 2010, 3). Back in 1995, Anthony Smith (1995) predicted these forces of globalization and fragmentation to be the forces of the future. He argued that; "In fact, we are already witnessing the breakdown of the 'homogenous nation' in many societies, whose cultures and narratives of national identity are becoming increasingly hybridized and ambivalent and the emergence, some would say re-emergence, of looser polyethnic societies." (Smith 1995, 3). If previously a sense of belonging was linked to a homogenous nation-state such as described by Anderson (2006), in the future described by Smith (1995) this belonging would become problematic.

Kosovo can be seen to reflect this future caused by the dynamics of globalization and fragmentation that lay at the basis of the ‘crisis of the hyphen’. Although Kosovo is not embedded in any of these trade agreements and is no member of any transnational regulatory body, its entire existence is characterized by an entanglement into the global arena. With the Kumanovo Agreement on the 9th of June 1999, the 1998-‘99 Kosovar war was officially concluded and the Republic of Serbia handed the sovereignty of Kosovo over to the UN (Perrit 2010, 51). Until the 17th of February 2008, when Kosovo unilaterally declared its independence in agreement with the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), the UN administered Kosovo (Lemay-Hébert 2009, 69). Until this day Kosovo’s sovereignty is shared with a number of international institutions. While the state is being built, the government of Kosovo shares administrative powers with UNMIK, the NATO led Kosovo Force (KFOR), the European Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) and the International Civilian Office (ICO) (Ernst 2011, 125). This entanglement makes that Kosovo’s state-building process is heavily influenced by several international actors. Kosovo’s internal dynamics however, shows that besides dealing with globalization, it also deals with forces of fragmentation. Kosovo deals with high migration rates among its youth to the EU (Ivlevs & Kink 2012, 97), experiences a relatively high outflow of radicalized youth as foreign fighters to conflict areas (Kraja 2017, 5) and struggles to fully solve ethnic tensions in its deeply divided society (Vardari-Kesler 2012, 149).

Kosovo’s relation to the global arena and its internal dynamics illustrate Kosovo’s crisis of the hyphen. In an attempt to resolve the problematic issue of belonging to the state in the crisis of the hyphen, the Kosovo state has aimed to put forward a civic national identity that binds Kosovo’s diverse population by declaring itself a “state of communities” that protects all of its communities with extensive minority rights while very openly steering towards membership of international institutions (Landau 2017). This national identity aims to transcend the ethno-religious divide along which lines the Kosovo war was fought and aspires EU ascension. An ambition that is reflected by the Kosovo flag which consists of a blue backdrop with a yellow outline of the country in the middle and six white stars in a slight bow above it. The six white stars represent the six communities that make up Kosovo and the blue backdrop and the stars give the flag a remarkable resemblance with the flag of the EU. The attempt to resolve the crisis of the hyphen by introducing a civic national identity has yet to lead to any salvation. Although the ‘state of communities’ made Kosovo not a nation-state of its ethnic Albanian community, it has also not made the state ‘colour blind’ to all its divisions (Landau 2017, 446). Instead, it has created a situation in which the divisions between the communities have been institutionalized. Keeping the tensions in place and limiting the

possibility of a decline in the importance of these divisions (Baliqi 2018, 53). Furthermore, the continuing absence of visa free travel to the EU leaves the country in a situation of both recognition and isolation by the EU (Flessenkemper and Bütow 2011, 165).

As the youngest state on the European continent, having its roots in conflict and being built in a time in which our belonging to the state is undergoing reconfiguration, questions arise around how the people of Kosovo navigate the forces of globalization and fragmentation in their construction of a sense of belonging to the Kosovo state. Questions of which the study allows for an insight in the locality of Kosovo and contributes to expanding our understanding of the formulation of a sense of belonging in our contemporary world.

1.2 A New Generation for the Newborn Kosovo

Across the Western Balkans new generations arise that often did not directly witness the conflicts of the 1990s or were too young to understand what was happening (Kurze, 2016, 452). These conflicts have however, created a unique and challenging political and social context which calls for a rethinking of the social experiences and the ways these generations are shaped by new configurations (Vardari-Kesler 2012, 149). In the context of Kosovo these configurations entail a deeply divided society along ethnic lines and a newborn, internationally supervised, state in which EU institutions play a prominent role. (Vardari-Kesler 2012, 149-150).

The Kosovo state, besides being the youngest state on the European continent, also has the most youthful demographic of the continent and one of the highest percentages of youth in the world (Schwartz 2010, 165). Just over half of Kosovo's population is under the age of 25 and Kosovo's overall average age is 30.2 (Kosovo Agency of Statistics 2018). This makes the largest part of Kosovo's population belonging to this new generation that did not directly witness the Kosovo war or was too young to understand what was happening. As mentioned in the first paragraph of this introductory chapter, the state that Kosovo's new generation grows up in, is not an Albanian nation-state. It has, under large international influence, been declared a 'state of communities', despite consisting of a large majority of Albanians and small minorities of Serbs, Bosniaks, Roma, Ahskali and Turks.² These largely in size differing communities with a history of conflict quickly reconfigured the make-up of Kosovo into a true state of communities by regrouping into enclaves, contributing to a far-reaching segregation of

² Giving any exact current percentages in this regard is difficult since the last census was held in 2011 and excluded the majority Serb North of Kosovo and was boycotted by Serbs and Roma's in Southern Kosovo See: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kv.html>

Kosovo's population (Dahlman and Williams 2010, 407). Kosovo's new generation is giving shape to their lives in a context of a post-war reality and an internationally influenced state-building process, formulating a sense of belonging to a multi-ethnic state while living in largely segregated environments. Additionally, Kosovo's new generation is giving shape to their lives in a post-socialist context which has contributed to an urbanization focussed in Pristina. The penetration of capitalist economic developments lay at the base of the estimated 45-50% of Kosovo's population that currently lives in cities (Gollopeni 2016, 85). After socialism and after the recent war, Pristina came to be the centre in which central administration, public and private institutions, health care institutions, offices of the international supervisory institutions and economic business created the best living conditions (Gollopeni 2016, 81).

In light of the new generations arising in the Balkans this thesis focusses on Kosovo-Albanian students which constitute larger part of Kosovo's new generation and its larger population and are giving shape to their lives in the new social configurations of the newborn Kosovo state. Reflecting these new social configurations, this thesis will focus on identification with the newborn Kosovo state, the majority Albanian population and the international presence in Kosovo. I will do in Pristina, the focal point of Kosovo's new social configurations. The findings of this research thus need to be understood accordingly, as relating to Kosovo-Albanian students in the context of Pristina.

1.3 'Who am I?' and 'Where do I belong?'

In a world where the nation-state is increasingly being contested, understanding the ways in which people navigate through formulating a sense of belonging becomes more and more important. Cultural scientist Elspeth Probyn (1996, 9) describes the importance of the study of belonging in her work 'Outside Belongings' when she states;

"Simply put, I want to figure the desire that individuals have to belong, a tenacious and fragile desire that is, I think, increasingly performed in the knowledge of the impossibility of ever really and truly belonging, along with the fear that the stability of belonging and the sanctity of belongings are forever past. [...] in a climate marked by a wide-spread politics of polarization, it is of the utmost urgency that we take into account this desire to belong, a desire that cannot be categorized as good or bad, left or right— in short, a desire without a fixed political ground but with immense political possibilities."

This thesis responds to this urgency by following up on a call for empirical studies on belonging by human geographer, Marco Antonsich (2010, 653). Antonisch (2010, 653) calls for more empirical research on the intersection between the two dimensions of belonging he distinguishes as place-belongingness and the politics of belonging. In this thesis I take identification to spring from this intersection, with which I build on Antonsich's (2010, 646) argument that belonging and identification are interlinked. He (2010, 646) poses that; "the question 'Who am I?' cannot be isolated from the other question 'Where do I belong?'.". Antonsich connects the concepts of belonging and identification in his conceptualization of a sense of belonging and divides the concept into two analytical dimensions, being; "belonging as a personal, intimate, feeling of being 'at home' in a place (place-belongingness) and belonging as a discursive resource which constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion (politics of belonging)". Over the course of reading this thesis one will gain a more elaborate understanding of these two analytical dimensions of belonging and their relation to the field. At this point, however, I briefly focus on creating a conceptual understanding of their mutual link and the intertwinement with identification.

The first analytical dimension of belonging given by Antonsich (2010, 646), refers to 'home', which he thoughtfully places between quotation marks. With 'home' he does not refer to the domestic material space of a house but rather to a symbolic space of familiarity, comfort, security and emotional attachment. The emotional connotation associated with belonging makes that it is often rendered in terms of a sense of rootedness and place attachment. This terminology suggests that belonging, although referring to a symbolic space, does not exist in a geographical vacuum but is very much attached to, and rooted in place. Antonsich (2010, 647) therefore, dubs the first analytical dimension of a sense of belonging, place-belongingness. Understanding belonging to be attached to place, a sense of belonging then becomes unavoidably linked to the group of people that lives in that place. Any feelings of rejection by the people who live in a place inevitably spoil any feelings of belonging (Antonsich 2010, 649). Antonsich (2010, 649) argues that feelings of being at home in a place are thus not solely a personal matter but also a social one. It is not a primordial, essential feature that people have but a one that is socially constructed (Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst 2004, 12). This means that one's personal, intimate feeling of belonging to a place always has to come to terms with discourses of inclusion and exclusion that are at play in that particular place. These discourses separate the 'us' from the 'them' and comprise 'the politics of belonging' (Antonsich 2010, 649).

The intertwining of belonging and identification springs from the intersection between place-belongingness and the politics of belonging. Colin Goodrich and Kaylene Sampson (2008, 257-258) argue that places are sets of complex social and cultural constructions, that become central to identification, as people draw on the range of social processes, symbols and values in a place to describe themselves. According to Hall (1996, 4), such narrativization of the Self is what constitutes identification. He understands identification to consist of the articulation of a point of attachment to discourses by a narrativization of the Self. This thesis will connect to Stuart Hall's (1996) argument for a use of the concept of identification over the concept of identity. Where identity still refers to something that is 'naturally' possessed and constructed around sameness. Identification is understood as multiply constructed and consisting of a suturing of the individual into discursive practices. A suturing that is never a total merging with the discourse but is rather an articulation of a point of attachment to the discourse that shows the positioning of the individual (Hall 1996). As such this thesis discusses the formulation of a sense of belonging to the newborn Kosovo state through the active role of place and discourse in the identification of Kosovo-Albanian students in Pristina.

1.4 Methodology and Operationalisation

Tim Ingold (2005, 238) suggest that Anthropology is "[...] not a study *of* at all, but a study *with*. Anthropologists work and study with people. Immersed with them in an environment of joint activity, they learn to see things (or hear them, or touch them) in the ways their teachers and companions do." (cursives added). While conducting my fieldwork, my actions were inspired by this conviction as much as possible. The qualitative research method participant observation allowed me to bring this into practice, as it is "[...] a method in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, inter-actions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture." (Dewalt and Dewalt 2011, 1). Practically this translated into me taking part in the rich social life that the vibrant young city of Pristina offers and in which Kosovo-Albanian students engage by hanging around in coffee places and lunch places frequently, going out in bars and visiting events of significance such as Kosovo's Independence Day on the 17th of February. Furthermore, I have been fortunate enough to had the opportunity to spend time both at Pristina's public University of Pristina (UP) and private university of the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT). UP is a public university with a rich history being the first Albanian

language university of Kosovo, located right in the middle of Pristina. RIT, also known and widely referred to as the American University Kosovo (AUK), is an English language private university attended by both Kosovar and international students and located on the edge of Pristina. At both universities I joined in lectures and seminars in which I took active part and through which I found students willing to continue conversation outside of the university. In my participant observation I have utilized Margerethe Kusenbach's (2003, 463) 'go-along' method, by which she refers to joining research participants on their 'natural' daily outings. According to Kusenbach (2003, 463) this encourages a focus on research participant's physical and social context. A focus that allowed me to get familiar with student's everyday lives and their surroundings. An important note to be made here is that, following Karen O'Reilly (2012, 97) I aimed not to solely be there, hang around and take part in the student's social life in Pristina. In being there, hanging around and taking part I forced myself to mentally take a step back in order to observe and learn from my research participants (O'Reilly 2012, 97). Both by being aware of my position as a researcher as well as being there and hanging around in social locations in Pristina on my own every once in a while, consciously separating participation from observation. In the fieldwork my efforts of participant observation reached beyond engaging with students' everyday lives in the city of Pristina and to the considerable part of it spent on universities.

With Ingold's (2005, 238) conviction in mind, I deployed 'guided conversations' in contact with the research participants that I invited to have further conversations with on specific topics. Guided conversation offered me a way to semi structure my conversations and collaboratively explore specific themes *with* my research participants during conversation instead of extracting information in the more 'interrogative' form that interviews suggest. The same principle I applied in the use of 'focus groups' which I preferably call 'group conversations'. Group conversations elicit discussions in which participants enjoy sharing their ideas and perceptions (Krueger and Casey 2015, 26). Group conversations allowed me to gain elaborate information on certain topics as I could focus on understanding the feelings, comments and thought processes of the participants while they discussed the issues I had laid out before them (Krueger and Casey 2015, 36). The research participants that participated in these group conversations, I had met through my presence at UP and RIT.

Throughout my fieldwork I have documented my findings by writing down notes and where possible record the conversations I had. In order to maintain a balance between on the one hand, taking the time to write down as much of what I observed and being selective in my note taking in order to leave time for doing actual research (O'Reilly 2012, 101), I tracked my

daily interactions in a digital log. Furthermore, this daily log allowed me to easily chronologically order and sift through my fieldwork experience and order my Field notes accordingly.

Although I have aimed at seeing the field with fresh eyes, I have found myself to use my own referential framework to interpret the experiences of and my interactions with my research participants. This thesis should therefore, be read bearing in mind that the ethnography is constructed by me. My own personal referential framework has informed the choices I have made in what to research, interpret what to see and hear and decide what to write and how to write it (O'Reilly 2012, 211). Throughout this thesis I bring forward the experiences of my research participants that illustrate my findings best. For these research participants I use pseudonyms in order to protect them from direct identification and any consequent harm or embarrassment that might come of it (Nespor 2000, 86). I have chosen not to anonymize the organizations mentioned in this thesis as the research participants I spoke to on their behalf had permission of the organization to take part in my research. The organizations are furthermore so distinct that the use of a pseudonym would hardly conceal the organizations identity for the research participants as well as for the reader (Walford 2005, 87).

1.5 Structure

The next chapter in this thesis sketches Pristina as the locality through which Kosovo-Albanian students experience the state of Kosovo as a 'place'. The attachment to place forms the core of Marco Antonsich's (2010, 645) first analytical dimension of belonging, which I use as a framework to outline the most significant characteristics of Kosovo. Characteristics that are heavily influenced by Kosovo's state make-up, take up a major presence in the everyday life of Kosovo-Albanian students, to which these students ascribe meaning and which they aim to alter through place-making practices.

Chapter three intertwines the previously described 'belonging to a place' with 'belonging to a group of people'. Following Antonsich's (2010, 649) second analytical dimension of belonging, this chapter understands belonging to a group of people to be conditioned by discourses that separate the 'us' from the 'them' and constitutes the 'politics of belonging'. Connecting to Michel Foucault's interpretation of the concept of discourse as a collection of statements that form a 'body of knowledge', I will outline how the newly introduced Kosovar discourse is being contested by Albanian, European and Islamic discourses.

Chapter four brings together the question of ‘Who am I?’ and ‘Where do I belong?’. Understanding the intertwinement of belonging and identity to spring from the intersection where place-belongingness and the politics of belonging meet, this chapter dives into the identifications of Kosovo-Albanian students in Pristina. I will outline the ways in which the place and discourses described in the previous chapters culminate into the identifications of Kosovo-Albanian students in Pristina.

Chapter five is the concluding chapter of this thesis and will briefly recap the core of the previous chapters after which it gives some concluding thoughts



Chapter 2

Experiencing Kosovo

Drawing from the first analytical dimension of Antonsich's (2010, 645) framework of belonging, this thesis takes a sense of belonging to be a personal, intimate feeling of being 'at home' in a 'place'. As mentioned in the previous chapter, 'home' in this definition does not refer to the domestic material space of a house but rather to a symbolic space of familiarity, comfort, security and emotional attachment (Antonsich 2010, 646). In this definition a distinction is made between a 'material space' and a 'symbolic space', a distinction that in literature is more often referred to with the concepts of 'space' and 'place'. Walter (in Ryden 1993, 37) defines both concepts as follows; "[...] 'space' is universal and abstract, whereas a 'place' is concrete and particular. People do not experience abstract space; they experience places. A place is seen, heard, smelled, imagined, loved, hated, feared, revered, enjoyed, or avoided. Abstract space is infinite [...], repetitive and uniform."

The concept of 'place' is therefore, generally conceived as being 'space' instilled with meaning. One could say that place refers more to the meanings that are invested in a location than to the actual physicality of that location (Vanclay 2008, 3-11). A social constructionist view that has been fairly strong in the literature on the concept of place (Stedman 2003, 672). This chapter will however, connect to Richard Stedman's (2003, 671) view that, while the understanding of place as consisting of personal meaning is important, these personal meanings hardly arise out of thin air. It is the physical setting of a location that form the foundation for the personal meanings being attached to a place (Vanclay 2008, 3-11). According to Frank Vanclay (2008, 3-11), any characteristic of a location can become an icon to which meaning

can be ascribed; from natural and constructed landmarks to social locations and every other characteristic that has developed meaning due to some type of experience. Viewed in this way, places include the 'physical' setting as well as the range of human activity and social and cultural mechanisms that ascribe meaning (Goodrich and Sampson 2008, 257-268). I therefore consider spaces to become places through human interpretations of a location, instilling space with meaning through lived experiences in relation to the 'physicality' of a place (Vanclay 2008, 3-11, Stedman 2003, 672).

Given the emotional connotation related to belonging as feeling at home in a place, the concept is often reduced to a sense of rootedness or place attachment (Antonsich 2010, 646). Place attachment is the extent to which an individual has positive feelings about their local environment. People that have a strong place attachment often have strong feelings of belonging to that place, meaning that they have ties to a place which make them feel that they belong there. Not all places directly allow for such ties, as the meanings instilled in a place can be both positive and negative (Vanclay 2008, 3-11). On an individual level and on an institutional level however, one can be active agents when it comes to transforming such places. By investing in the alteration of a place as well as symbolic investment in changing the way people feel about a place, one can take part in 'place-making'. Place-making is the process of transforming 'space' into 'place' and of transforming bad places into good places (Vanclay 2008, 3-11).

Due to the symbolic nature of the concept of place, a place can be conceptualized at multiple scales, from a particular spot, to a larger location surrounding that spot, to the region beyond that location, to a state in its entirety (Vanclay 2008, 3-11). In this chapter I aim to create an understanding of the state of Kosovo as a 'place' as experienced through the locality of Pristina. In order to do so it is essential to explore the largest influence on Kosovo as a 'place' and the base for some highly influential characteristics, being its minimalist statehood, which will be expanded on in the next paragraph. Through the exploration of Kosovo's minimalist statehood, this chapter describes the most significant characteristics of Kosovo that impact the everyday life of students in Pristina, to which they attach personal meaning and which they aim to transform through place-making practices.

2.1 Kosovo, a Minimalist State

Minimalist states are considered to fall firmly within the category of 'weak states' however, need to be clearly distinguished from each other (Bieber 2011, 1784-1786). Since the Cold War, the concept of the 'weak state' has gained significant meaning as the gravest threats to world

security no longer seem to be military threats that emanate from the world's greatest powers but rather from the world's most poorly governed states. Weak states are the result of failed domestic state-building and are linked to human rights abuses, humanitarian disasters, waves of immigration, environmental degradation, energy insecurity, global pandemics, international crime and regional instability (Bieber 2011, 1784, Fukuyama 2004, 92-93, Patrick 2006, 27). As such, the vast majority of the international crises after the Cold War centred around weak states, stretching from the Balkans across the Caucasus, the Middle East and Central and South Asia (Fukuyama 2004).

The strength or weakness of a state is hard to define. It is relative and not all states define the same states as strong or weak however, state strength or weakness is generally measured through four fundamental political goods that are associated with statehood; physical security, legitimate political institutions, economic management and social welfare (Patrick 2006, 29). Steward Patrick (2006, 29) states;

“In the security realm, they [weak states] struggle to maintain a monopoly on the use of force, control borders and territory, ensure public order, and provide safety from crime. In the political sphere, they lack legitimate governing institutions that provide effective administration, ensure checks on power, protect basic rights and freedoms, hold leaders accountable, deliver impartial justice, and permit broad citizen participation. In the economic arena, they strain to carry out basic macroeconomic and fiscal policies or establish a legal and regulatory climate conducive to entrepreneurship, private enterprise, open trade, natural resource management, foreign investment, and economic growth. Finally, in the social domain, they fail to meet the basic needs of their populations by making even minimal investments in health, education, and other social services.”.

According to Francis Fukuyama (2011, ix), the proliferation of issues caused by weak states has made that state-building has become one of the most pressing issues for the international community in our contemporary world. With the aforementioned in mind, the case of Kosovo fits seamlessly into that of an issue caused by a weak state. Barely mentioned in the Dayton Agreement that had ended the war in Bosnia in 1995, the unresolved question of the status of Kosovo became the last outburst in the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia (Webber 2009, 449). As a province of Serbia, Kosovo for long enjoyed an autonomous status that came close to that of the republics in the Yugoslav state (Malcom 2002, 314). However, on March 28th 1989, this

status was revoked and the control over Kosovo was taken back to Belgrade. It was a significant moment, not just for Kosovo but for the whole of Yugoslavia, as it contributed to a wave of Serbian nationalism (Malcom 2002, 344). Growing violent incidents over the course of three years due to ruthless measures by the Yugoslav army to the rising Kosovo Albanian militancy, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), resulted in a full fledged war in 1998. While the situation on the ground deteriorated, a number of international efforts failed to reinvigorate stability in the region (Webber 2009, 449). In a final attempt to deter an escalation of the Serbian offensive against the Kosovo Albanian population, NATO started a bombing campaign on the 24th of March 1999 that would last for 78 days and result in Serbia handing over the sovereignty over Kosovo to the UN on the 9th of June 1999 (Judah 2009, 87, Perrit 2010, 51). By then it was estimated that 10,356 Kosovo Albanians had lost their lives and 90 percent of the Kosovo Albanian population had fled their homes of which 863.000 had fled Kosovo and 590.000 were displaced internally (Webber 2009, 451).

The end of the Kosovo war marked the beginning of a period of extensive internationally led state-building (Landau 2017, 446). As mentioned in the introduction, until this day international organizations such as UNMIK, KFOR, EULEX and ICO are heavily involved in Kosovo' state-building process (Ernst 2011, 125). According to Florian Bieber (2011, 1784), this state-building process has led to the building of a 'minimalist state'. Bieber argues that although Kosovo has some weak state attributes it is not, like a weak state, the result of failed domestic state-building but rather the result of international efforts to build a state that constitutes an effort to address the sources of conflict by developing state structures which fall short of the set of functions that most states are expected to fulfil. All in order to ensure the states endurance (Bieber 2011, 1784). This underpinning of Kosovo's state-building process makes it into a state which has strong formal and informal challengers to the symbolic and real state power and can be seen to deal with issues that relate to the three criteria that constitute a minimalist state; a limited legitimacy of the state, limited scope of state institutions and weakness of state institutions (Bieber 2011, 1786).

2.2 A Dual Legitimacy Crisis

Kosovo's limited legitimacy can best be described as a dual legitimacy crisis. A crisis that, according to Dana Landau (2017, 443), refers to contestation in the country's external as well as internal legitimacy and a crisis that is observed through the continuing absence of EU visa liberalization.

On my way to the city centre, just around the corner from my apartment in the Dragodan neighbourhood, past fish restaurant Amalfi and the Austrian and the American embassy, on the other side of the road yet again a large group of people has gathered on the sidewalk in front of the TLScontact centre³. This is the umpteenth time I have witnessed this scene since moving to this neighbourhood some seven weeks ago. During weekdays, large groups of people can be found at this exact spot on the sidewalk. The group, although always a mix of young, old, men and women, is clearly off balance. The lion share is, at my best estimation, between 20 and 35 years old. All holding a pile of papers while nervously moving from one foot onto the other and talking to any of the other nervously looking individuals holding piles of paper. Every now and then someone breaks away from the group and enters the TLScontact centre that borders their spot on the sidewalk, usually coinciding with someone leaving that same centre empty handed and bearing an expressionless gaze. Not knowing what these people are there for, I cross the street and find eye contact with a young man that has to be of similar age as me. I greet him, introduce myself and ask him what this group of people is waiting for. I learn that all these people are going to or coming from their long-awaited appointment to apply for a visa for either Switzerland, Austria, Belgium, France Luxembourg or the Netherlands.⁴

The scene described above is one that is familiar to most Kosovars that have the ambition to visit, study or work in any of the EU member states. Kosovo is as of now the only country in the Western Balkans which has not received visa liberalization meaning that in order to travel to any of the EU members states, Kosovars need to go through an elaborate visa application process. The continuing absence of visa liberalization is a direct result of Kosovo's limited external legitimacy. Although Kosovo has no visa liberalization as of right now, the country is in a Visa Liberalisation Dialogue with the EU and has gotten a roadmap consisting of a number of requirements. These requirements are categorized into four blocks. Block 1; document security, block 2; illegal migration and readmission, block 3; public order and security, block 4; external relations and fundamental rights (Trauner and Manigrassi 2014, 129).

³ TLScontact centre is a commercial company that in this particular case works with the Swiss Embassy and functions as the Swiss Visa Acceptance Centre (TLScontact, 2018). The TLScontact centre arranges the visa applications for Switzerland as well as Austria, Belgium, France, Luxembourg and the Netherlands as they have no embassy or a small embassy in Kosovo whereas Switzerland has a relatively large one.

⁴ Field notes 19-04-2019

It is in block 4 that the external legitimacy of Kosovo becomes problematic. Kosovo is (as of April 2016) recognized by 111 states, of which 109 are UN member states, and has established diplomatic relations with 70 (Newman and Visoka 2018, 367). Although these rates of states that recognize Kosovo seem to reflect an upward trajectory still, non-recognizers are significant in both number and influence (Newman and Visoka 2018, 368, Landau 2017, 453). Influence is reflected in the inability of the EU to grant visa liberalization as visa liberalization is granted through the EU Council which is not able to grant visa liberalization as long as not all 27 member-states endorse Kosovo's independence (Koeth 2010, 240). Currently Spain, Cyprus, Greece, Romania and Slovakia do not recognize Kosovo, their main motive being that it could set for separatist movements on their own territory (Koeth 2010, 242).

The visa liberalization issue is a central theme in the everyday lives of most Kosovars as it heavily restricts their movement possibilities and is a very elaborate, tedious, expensive and precarious process. During an interview in his office, Fatos, TV director at Radio Television Kosovo, clearly frustrated tells me;

You know how many documents you need for visa? Plane tickets. Now, for example, Greece embassy, they even want you to pay hotel in advance to send them the receipt. What if they refuse, you lose the money off the reservation of hotel? Now, for example, if I want to go somewhere, and my wife doesn't have visa, I need to wait four months for appointments. What about summer holidays, I want to go somewhere I can't go because I don't have appointment. And you need birth certificates state certificate, you need insurance, okay, plane ticket reservation, guarantee from the contract. If you are a student you need document from faculty, if you are working in RTK you need that you're taking days off, document that somebody has permitted you to do so, you need account balance to send them, that is very privacy of you how much money you have.⁵

Most students feel isolated, as they have not travelled further than some of the surrounding countries in the Western Balkans. As put by a student of the University of Pristina, during a group conversation; "I haven't travelled in any other country, except Albania and Montenegro. And besides these places, not much further than my home... hometown."⁶ However, most students do have the ambition to travel and express their dissatisfaction with their situation in relation to the larger part of Europe's youth; "I think we should not have visa regime and we

⁵ Interview Fatos 18-04-2019

⁶ Group conversation 5-04-2019

should be free to travel as any other young person in Europe.”⁷. A dissatisfaction that is aimed at both the EU and the Kosovar government and contributes to a limitation of the internal legitimacy. According to Bieber (2011, 1786), the internal legitimacy of a state derives from support for the state and key institutions of the state such as the government, parliament and the president. The visa liberalization issue brings out this lack of support as Kosovo’s youth consider visa liberalization to be a carrot on a stick; “What the EU together with our government, in my opinion, do is. They make us do the things they want with this visa liberalization card in their hand. You do this, we... but they never show you the card, they never give it to you.”⁸.

The stance of Kosovar youth towards their government is critical and comes forth out of an experienced inability to participate in decision-making processes.

They keep talking about the youth, the youth, but still the same old people are in power. I wish the people in power would count to ten every once in a while. They should let some issues rest and let the next generation solve them but they don’t let the new generation in. For example, the generation of my sister, who is now almost thirty, is ready to step in but it is really hard to get involved.⁹

Despite the institution of ‘The Law on Youth Empowerment and Participation’ in September 2009 which aimed to promote and consolidate the participation of young people in the decision-making process, in practice, no real opportunities for participation have arisen (Feltes 2013, 202-204). The most given reason for this lack of participation opportunities is the reigning nepotism and corruption that characterizes decision-making processes in Kosovo; “We’re still run by mafia, our government, many of them are very corrupt.”¹⁰.

The manifestations of Kosovo’s dual legitimacy crisis in the everyday life of students in Pristina, in the shape of the visa liberalization issue and lack of opportunities for participation in decision-making processes, have become significant characteristics of the ‘place’ that is Kosovo. Characteristics towards which students are critical and to which they attach meanings of dissatisfaction.

⁷ Interview Drita 26-03-2019

⁸ Interview Drita 26-03-2019

⁹ Field notes 12-02-2019

¹⁰ Interview Gezim 27-04-2019

2.3 Segregation through Parallel Systems

The minimalist state-building project of Kosovo is often compared to other minimalist state-building projects in the Western Balkan region. Most often it is compared to the state-building project of Bosnia and Herzegovina. A state that, like Kosovo, has come out of the collapse of Yugoslavia through a vicious war during the 1990s. Although closely related in origin and the international involvement in its state-building process, there are significant differences in the subsequent states being built (Bieber 2011). In Kosovo the scope of the state, which refers to the variety of fields in which the state engages, is greater than that of Bosnia and Herzegovina. While in the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina the state is extensively decentralized, in Kosovo most state competences are located in central institutions. The formal constitutional scope of the state is therefore not particularly weak (Bieber 2011, 1787). Still, decentralization can be seen to have been embedded in Kosovo, however, in an entirely different manner that reflects more the limited strength of Kosovo's state institutions than a limitation in the scope of state institutions.

In the pursuit of independence, Kosovo's political elite and the international actors involved in Kosovo's state-building process have put a strong focus on diversity and minority rights (Landau 2017, 443). With the unilateral declaration of independence, the parliament of Kosovo declared itself a "state of all its communities" through a repeated reference to diversity and multiethnicity as key features of the state and which entailed "strong commitments to collective rights for minority communities (Landau 2017, 442). This unilateral declaration of independence was based on the Ahtisaari Plan¹¹ that supposed to resolve the final question on Kosovo's status, reflecting the opposing views of Serbia and Kosovo. The Ahtisaari Plan created a blueprint that allowed Kosovo-Serbs to have their own local institutions and communal life with a continuation of linkages to Serbia but within the framework of a multi-ethnic Kosovo. The plan called for Kosovo-Serb-majority municipalities with important elements of self-rule in cultural and religious affairs, selection of police station commanders, healthcare, education and an improved representation in the judicial and prosecutorial system (Galluci 2011, 4, Gjoni, Wetterberg and Dunbar 2010, 302). As a result, Serbia continued to fund significant services like healthcare and education, creating parallel systems outside the control of the Kosovar government (Gjoni, Wetterberg and Dunbar 2010, 297). The

¹¹ Commissioned by the UN in order to reach a status agreement for Kosovo and composed by former Finnish president Martti Ahtisaari through joint sessions between Serbian and Kosovar officials (Galluci 2011, 4). The official name of the Ahtisaari Plan is: The Comprehensive proposal for Kosovo Status Settlement. The proposal is however, generally referred to as the Ahtisaari Plan. In my writing I will therefore use the term Ahtisaari Plan.

encapsulation of state scope and strength through this kind of decentralization, aimed at addressing the sources of conflict that lay at the base of the Kosovo state, have not led to the creation of the conditions for Kosovo to flourish as a multi-ethnic state like it announced when declaring independence. Instead it has perpetuated ethnic divisions and segregation (Gjoni, Wetterberg and Dunbar 2010, 309).

The perpetuation of ethnic divisions and segregation in the everyday life of students in Pristina becomes most evident through their partition in Kosovo's parallel education systems. In an interview with Drita, a student of the University of Pristina, she makes apparent that she hardly has any contact with Kosovo-Serbs which she contributes to the lack of contact through the education system. She states that;

[...] it's easier to create relation with Albanians than Serbs. For example, one is because we've... it's very hard to communicate with Serbs because they don't go to the same school, they do not go the same universities because we have a parallel system of education still. So, we used to have one in the '90s of the Serbian government system and then the Albanian system it switched. We have the Kosovar education system and then we have Serbian one which is the same as in Serbia. So, they provide the books, they provide the narratives in the book, they provide schools. So, this is one of the reasons that it's very hard to have them kind of be friends or even..."

As she paused overthinking how to put words to what she had in mind, I finished her sentence by saying; "Meet". Drita nodded and continued; "So, I have much more friends in Belgrade who are Serbs than here. I don't... I don't think I know any Serbs here that I have contact with. I know people I have met and talk but not that we have contact. Because either they don't know English, I don't know Serbian. Unfortunately, I would love to know."¹²

Opportunities of shared education among any of Kosovo's communities are limited as Kosovo's municipalities are obliged by law to provide access to public education at all levels in ones preferred official language. If not by offering the education then by arranging transport to such education¹³. Educational facilities are therefore generally attended by students of the

¹² Interview Drita, 26-03-2019

¹³ See: The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo.

Article 59.2: Members of communities shall have the right, individually or in community, to receive public education in one of the official languages of the Republic of Kosovo of their choice at all levels.

Article 59.3: Members of communities shall have the right, individually or in community, to receive pre-school, primary and secondary public education, in their own language to the extent prescribed by law, with the

same community. Such is the case with the University of Pristina which is an Albanian language institution attended almost solely by Kosovo-Albanians. Contributing to a lack of communication the erection of barriers between all communities but in particular post-war Kosovo-Albanians and Kosovo-Serbs, who are not bilingual in each other's languages (Gjoni, Wetterberg and Dunbar 2010, 309). This makes that, as stated by the UP student above, one's social contacts limits itself to one's own community. An issue that is not given much thought, as it has become a normalized element of the everyday life of students in Pristina. During a group conversation with UP students, a student stated that "[...] yeah, it's bad and to be honest, I haven't thought about it. I feel bad haha."¹⁴ Private institutions seem to offer some exception to the rule;

It is the late afternoon when I enter 'Walkers', the cafeteria on the RIT campus. As I look around to see if I can spot ..., I notice that I can pick up small parts of conversations between students as the languages that surround me are a mix of English and Albanian. An observation that jumps out to me as, until now, I have spent most of my time at the campus of the University of Pristina where the only language that surrounded me was Albanian. I spot ... in line at the counter and start walking over to greet her. We greet each other and she insists on buying me a cup of tea. ... handles the bill all in English, I grab my cup of tea and we move over to a little round table near one of the entrances of the cafeteria. While sipping from my tea, I elaborate on my research and in that regard ask her how she came to study in Pristina as I have not encountered any Kosovo-Serbs at UP or RIT. She told me that, like all Kosovo-Serbs, at first, she only considered the option to go and study in Mitrovica North or Belgrade due to the language of education. ... however, had been one of the last Kosovo-Serbian students to have been offered an American scholarship to study at RIT due to the fact that she had been 'top student' at her high school. After some consideration on breaking the beaten track and study at a university as part of a very small Kosovo-Serb minority, she took the offer because it allowed her to stay close to her home, in the Serbian majority village of Gračanica, just outside of Pristina.¹⁵

thresholds for establishing specific classes or schools for this purpose being lower than normally stipulated for educational institutions.

¹⁴ Group conversation 25-04-2019

¹⁵ Interview Kaltrina and Dajana 21-03-2019

By offering education in English, private institutions like RIT allow for an attendance across communities however, high tuition fees limit the actual number of students that is able to enrol. The larger segregation of Kosovo's society into majority populated municipalities also clearly takes up an important role in the choice of education. Aside from the occasional exceptional case such as the one mentioned above, private institutions thus cannot be considered to instigate any direct large-scale structural change. The parallel education system as a result of the encapsulation of Kosovo's state scope and strength has made for homogeneity in the contacts in the everyday life of students of Pristina. It makes that students in Pristina live their lives having barely any contact with students from other communities their age or at all.

2.4 Place-Making in Pristina

The two previous paragraphs outlined the most significant characteristics of the place that is Kosovo, namely the continuing absence of visa liberalization, a lack of opportunities to participate in decision-making processes and the far-reaching segregation in Kosovo's society as exemplified through parallel education systems. How these characteristics impact the everyday lives of Kosovo-Albanian students in Pristina and how these students in Pristina attach meaning to these specific characteristics. Kosovo-Albanian students in Pristina are however, no passive recipients of the place they live in but actively contribute to transforming the characteristics of Kosovo. By investing in the alteration of a place as well as in changing the way people feel about a place, one takes part in 'place-making' (Vanclay 2008, 3-11). Such place-making implies that places are not solely natural occurrences, but physical places shaped by people and their actions, and are subject to interpretation and the meaning-making processes of those who inhabit these spaces (Fataar and Rinquest 2019, 27). During my fieldwork in Pristina I came across place-making by Kosovo-Albanian students through civic engagement. Civic engagement is a broad concept that describes how active citizens participate in the life of a community in order to improve conditions its conditions and shape its future (Adler and Goggin 2005, 241). In the following three examples I illustrate the way Kosovo-Albanian students in Pristina go about civic engagement as both political involvement and social change.

Europe Day protest

The 9th of May, a day that does not bring to mind any significant meaning for most people. It certainly did not for me. Rather striking as I realized that, being an EU citizen, apparently, I

have never been aware of the celebration of ‘Europe Day’¹⁶, the day on which peace and unity in Europe is celebrated. I have never had a day off or seen any celebrations in the street, completely different from the scene one encounters while in Pristina on the 9th of May. Europe Day is a national holiday, complete with organized cultural events in the city centre and EU related informational stands on the central boulevard, ‘Boulevardi Nënë Tereza’. Although most European topics are being dealt with on state level, Europe Day allows for a platform on which international actors and Kosovo citizens can express themselves in relation to these topics. On Europe Day the representational bodies of EU member states take the opportunity to address Kosovo citizens promoting their own countries as well as emphasizing the progress made with regards to Kosovo’s road towards EU integration. This year quite literally shown through a video featuring EU ambassadors.¹⁷ Kosovo-Albanian students on the other hand used the platform of Europe Day to address the EU presence in their country and express their dissatisfaction with the continuing absence of visa liberalization for Kosovo. By holding up signs like the one in the picture below, during the celebrations of Europe Day on ‘Boulevardi Nënë Tereza’, students make their frustrations heard and aim to influence the political outcome of the visa liberalization process. The protest is a way for the students to be politically involved, deliberately attempting to influence the people in power in order to make a difference, despite their lack of participatory opportunities in the decision-making processes in Kosovo (Ekman and Amnå 2012, 286).



Figure 1 Europe Day protest. Taken from https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=%23letmetravel&epa=SEARCH_BOX

¹⁶ https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/symbols/europe-day_nl

¹⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wC5iBFAY8Sg>

Democracy for Development (D4D)

The lack of youth participation in decision-making processes is of great frustration to Kosovo-Albanian students. In the eye of nepotism and corruption, feelings of disempowerment take a hold of them and make their stance towards the government incredibly critical. Unable to participate in decision-making processes on the governmental level, students turn towards civil society for participatory opportunities. During my fieldwork I have had the opportunity to attend a number of ‘salons’ organized by D4D. D4D is a Kosovar NGO that aims to achieve full participation of Kosovar citizens in the public space and decision-making processes (Democracy for Development, n.d.). Under the name of one of their projects called ‘Good Governance’, D4D organizes salons that consist of panel discussions on themes surrounding youth and women participation in governance and facilitate open conversation between government officials and the people in attendance. Not all of the salons I attended contained direct discussion between youth and government officials however, during one of D4D’s salons, I was witness to a fierce discussion between a panel of a majority of female youth, some young men and a few people in their forties or fifties and a municipal official. The discussion was held on the lack of transparency regarding the spending out of the municipality’s youth fund and overall poor communication from the side of the municipality. Out of the circa 30 people present only a handful did not take an active part in the discussion. Almost everyone had experiences to share in which they had requested funds for projects that had taken a lot of time to be processed and then declined without much or any satisfactory explanation. This particular discussion contained a lot of back and forth between the panel and municipal official who did not seem at ease responding to the frustrations expressed at his address¹⁸. Understanding civil society to limit the ravages of political power (Hall 1995, 25). By taking part in discussions with the government in D4D’s salons, this allows Kosovo-Albanian students to act as a regulator of the state and contribute to a strengthening of democratic government (Putnam 2000, 182).

¹⁸ Field notes 8-03-2019



Figure 2 D4D salon of 08-03-2019. Taken from <https://d4d-ks.org/aktivitetet/perfshirja-e-grave-dhe-rinise-per-nje-qeverisje-te-mire-lokale/>

Kosovo Youth Fest

Kosovo's parallel education systems are a contributing factor to segregation in Kosovo. As of now, both public and private institutions do not seem to be instigating direct large-scale change in this regard. The Kosovo Youth Fest however, is an example of the potential that lies in shared education. The Kosovo Youth Fest is the brainchild of Kaltrina and Dajana, Kosovo-Albanian and Kosovo-Serb which are both RIT students. In an interview with both students they explained to me that they had come up with the idea for the festival and had entered a competition for a UN grant. Having gotten the UN grant, it was brought to life and is now an annual one-day festival geared towards bringing youth from all communities together to enjoy and celebrate their diversity. A goal described in the festival's promotional video as 'we share the same home'.¹⁹ Kaltrina and Dajana's idea for the festival had sprung from the answer to the question 'What are the commonalities among Kosovo's communities?'. They came up with a wide variety of commonalities under the themes of food, music and dance which are all festival elements they explained to me. Both see it as essential for events like the Kosovo Youth Fest to exist, as they see them as breaking down the barriers between communities and contributing to improving contact and communication.²⁰ Although it cannot be said that Kaltrina and Dajana's stance is universal across students from all communities. It is an example of a small-

¹⁹ Promotional video Kosovo Youth Fest; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JqsMucgu-Ww>

²⁰ Interview Kaltrina and Dajana 21-03-2019

scale initiative of civic engagement in order to shape the future of Kosovo's communities, bringing about social change (Adler and Goggin 2005, 239).



Figure 3 Kosovo Youth Fest 2019. Taken from <https://www.facebook.com/UNMIK/posts/10157039193887798>

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Chapter 3

Pristina, a complex field of play

The previous chapter has taken Antonsich's (2010) first analytical dimension of a sense of belonging to explore the 'place' that is Kosovo, as experienced and acted upon by Kosovo-Albanian students in Pristina. This chapter continues to build on Antonsich's framework of belonging and centres around Antonsich's second analytical dimension, 'the politics of belonging'. Understanding with Antonisch (2010, 649) that a sense of belonging is attached to place, a sense of belonging inevitably also becomes linked to the group of people that live in that place. It is here where the two dimensions intertwine. In Antonsich's (2010) analytical dimension of the politics of belonging he argues that one's personal, intimate feeling of belonging to a place always has to come to terms with discourses of socio-spatial inclusion and exclusion in that place. After all, how can one feel a sense of belonging to a place if one does not feel welcomed or feels rejected by the people who live in that place?

Antonsich (2010, 649) thus argues that feelings of being at home in a place are not solely a personal matter but also a social one. It is not a primordial, essential feature that one has but rather one that is socially constructed (Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst 2004, 12). Considering a sense of belonging to be a social construction entails understanding it to be constructed in the interaction between people in their social life. In these interactions, particular versions of knowledge on the world are fabricated which make the way we perceive the world not a product of objective observation but rather one of social processes (Burr 1995, 3). In this chapter I understand these 'versions of knowledge' to be the discourses involved in the politics of belonging. I follow Michel Foucault's interpretation of discourses as relatively well-bound

bodies of knowledge (McHoul and Grace 2002, 31), consisting of a group of statements which provide a way of representing a particular kind of knowledge on a topic (Gieben and Hall 193, 201). Such a body of social knowledge makes it possible to construct a topic in a particular way, while simultaneously limiting other ways in which that topic can be constructed. Although topics are discursively produced, this does not mean that the world can be made into anything one wants by simply representing it in a certain way. Discourse is a material condition. The historical and socio-political conditions of a place constrain and enable our socially productive ‘imagination’ (McHoul and Grace 2002). It is therefore, that Foucault (1972), in his seminal work ‘The Archaeology of Knowledge’, argues that analysing the statements which make up a discourse goes beyond looking solely at their enunciation. Such an approach only allows for a focus on the means by which discourses are enunciated. Instead Foucault proposes to look at the bundle of statements at the level of what is enounced, the actual statement made. Furthermore, it is essential to recognize that one’s understanding of a topic does not spring from just one discourse. Our understanding of a particular topic, in a particular place, at a particular time, comes forth out of the interaction of a variety of discourses within a complex field of play (McHoul and Grace 2002, 45). A field of open relations in which discourses interact and in which they are tied in power relations (McHoul and Grace 2002). It is within these power relations that discourses are connected to politics (McHoul and Grace 2002, 56).

The politics of belonging is a struggle around the determination of what is involved in the belonging to a certain community and involves the maintenance and reproduction of the boundaries of that community through an interplay of discourses (Yuval-Davis 2006). In this chapter I outline the three dominant discourses I have observed to be involved in the struggle on the determination of what is involved in belonging to Kosovo and describe their interactions in the complex of field of play that is Pristina.

3.1 Nationalizing Kosovo

It was like a TV show. There was a parliament session and they came and said ‘Now we’re going to present the state flag.’. An official came in and showed us our new identity, you know. It was a big part of the project. Gezim, Kosovo-Albanian graduate.²¹

²¹ Interview Gezim, 27-03-2019

After the Kosovar war of '98-'99, Kosovo's fate came to be in the hands of the 'international community', in the shape of the UN. Security Council Resolution 1244 authorised the UN to take on the executive, legislative and judicial authority in Kosovo while envisioning a process some kind of process for resolving Kosovo's final status. At the highest level of abstraction, the international community had common goals of preventing a resurgence of violence between ethnic Albanians and ethnic Serbs and transforming Kosovo into a modern society with interethnic tolerance. With regards to resolving Kosovo's final status however, the international community was divided. The most prominent voices on both sides were that of Russia, who hoped that Kosovo could eventually be folded back into Serbia and those of the 'Quint', consisting of the United States, Italy, France, England and Germany, who considered the only viable option to be independence (Perrit 2010, 91). Large-scale protests on the lack of progress on the resolution of Kosovo's final status by Kosovo-Albanians in 2004, kickstarted the final status process (Perrit 2010, 3).

Facilitated and mediated by a special convoy, led by Marri Ahtisaari, talks between the respective capitals of Belgrade and Pristina eventually lead to the Proposal for Kosovo Status Settlement (Perrit 2010, 141). This status settlement proposed independence based on a number of General Principles that would make of Kosovo a multi-ethnic state²² under international supervision²³. Backed by the proponents of the proposal and conditioned by the unconditional requirements of the proposal, on the 17th of February, 2008, Kosovo unilaterally declared independence from the Republic of Serbia (Perrit 2010, 212). Although highly contested in the international arena, the Kosovo state had become a fact and it was now to the state to take on the task of nationalising its territory. A challenging task because, being a state consisting of a majority Albanian population and a variety of minority communities with a recent history of conflict, there was no notion of a single imagined political community or a Kosovar nation (Anderson 2006).

Completely by the book, on the day of Kosovo's declaration of independence, the Kosovo state presented its emblem of nation-ness (Anderson 2006, 133). A newly designed national flag consisting of a blue backdrop with a yellow map of Kosovo's territory in the centre

²² See: The Comprehensive proposal for Kosovo Status Settlement. Article 1: General Principles: 1.1 "Kosovo shall be a multi-ethnic society, which shall govern itself democratically, and with full respect for the rule of law, through its legislative, executive, and judicial institutions."

²³ See: The Comprehensive proposal for Kosovo Status Settlement. Article 1: General Principles: 1.10 "The international community shall supervise, monitor and have all necessary powers to ensure effective and efficient implementation of this Settlement, as set forth in Annexes IX, X and XI. Kosovo shall also issue an invitation to the international community to assist Kosovo in successfully fulfilling its obligations to this end."

and six white stars in a slight arch above it. A few months later, in June²⁴, a wordless anthem called ‘Europe’ followed. These national symbols were designed, in accordance with the Ahtisaari Plan, to reflect the multi-ethnic character of the state²⁵ and aimed to bind Kosovo’s population under a civic, neutral national identity (Landau 2017). In aiming to reflect multi-ethnicity, Kosovo’s national symbols in do not refer to any of Kosovo’s ethnic communities, although its blue colour did make some of my research participants recognize a correspondence between the blue backdrop of the Kosovo flag and the blue in the Serbian state flag. A much more common comparison however, is that to the EU.

Situated in rock café ‘Rockuzinë’, overlooking the barely used and only railway track that runs through Pristina. Gezim, an ambitious student in his mid-twenties and in between his masters and a possible PhD, tells me; “I know our anthem is called ‘Europe’ and our flag has the colours of Europe. So, where most symbols refer to history, our symbols refer to aspirations.”. The use of the map on the Kosovo flag is the only visual signifier that links to Kosovo, hereby reinforcing a territorial identity that is not related to any of Kosovo’s communities but instead to a shared European identity. An overarching European identity that Gezim views as an aspiration rather than a current matter of fact. The six white stars on the Kosovo flag refer to the supposed equal status of all of Kosovo’s communities. Built into the national identity and protected by extensive minority rights in practice (Landau 2017, 444). Kosovo’s minority rights have however, made for an institutionalization of divisions between the communities, allowing tensions to stay in place and limiting the possibility of a decline in the importance of divisions (Baliqi 2018, 53). According to Gezim, the interpretation of Kosovo’s national identity as one of neutrality completely misrepresents the reality. He exemplifies the institutionalization of division;

“They brought in a constitution which provides reserved seats for minorities. Twenty reserved seats out of the 120 seats in parliament. Ten of these twenty seats are specifically reserved for Serbs. So, we now have discrimination against other minorities in the country. According to the census we had in 2011, 92% of the population are Albanian, at around 5 or 6% are Serbs and we’re giving them 10 seats.”²⁶

²⁴ See: <https://balkaninsight.com/2008/06/11/kosovo-approves-anthem-with-no-lyrics/>

²⁵ See: The Comprehensive proposal for Kosovo Status Settlement: Article 1: General Principles: 1.7 “Kosovo shall have its own, distinct, national symbols, including a flag, seal and anthem, reflecting its multi-ethnic character.”.

²⁶ Interview Gezim, 27-03-2019

This institutionalized division can be recognized across multiple sites. While interviewing Fatos, TV director at Radio Television Kosovo, stands up and walks to a whiteboard that displays the planning of today's broadcasting. He explains how RTK's divides its broadcasting across the different communities;

“[...] we are obliged, although RTK 2 is a Serbian language channel, to give 15 percent of programming to minorities across the other channels. [...] we broadcast in eight languages. So, every day from four to five we have news in all languages and every department has a 50-minute magazine once a week. For example, today at 4 o'clock you will see the news in the Roma language. They have their own editorial policy, not the same as the Albanians because for me it might be interesting if the municipality of Pristina blocks the traffic for 24 hours but for example Roma's don't live in Pristina.”²⁷

In nationalizing the territory of Kosovo, the Kosovo state in aiming to stand for neutrality it rather enunciates division. Like many of my research participants, taking the Kosovo flag as a metaphor for the nationalization of Kosovo, the six stars stand divided from each other and not united into something that symbolizes one Kosovar nation.

3.2 A Superseded Community

We cannot forget the past²⁸.

Pjeter, member of the General Secretariat of VETËVENDOSJE.

In 'Seeing like a State', James Scott (1998) warns for the dangers of large-scale state reforms that are implemented in a top-down manner, the likes we see in Kosovo. Such a way of going about state reformation only changes the formal structures while the societal structures tend to stay unchanged. It supersedes communities in their own unique histories, social ties, mythology and capacity for joint action (Scott 1998, 191).

It is an early Wednesday morning when I walk down one street from my apartment in the Dragodan neighbourhood, towards the General Secretariat of Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE²⁹. I have arranged to meet with Pjeter, a 27-year-old who just finished his masters and now works

²⁷ Interview Fatos, 18-04-2019

²⁸ Interview Pjeter 27-04-2019.

²⁹ Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE is everyday life most commonly referred to solely as VETËVENDOSJE. In the remainder of the paragraph I therefore, comply to this reference.

in the General Secretariat of VETËVENDOSJE. VETËVENDOSJE, meaning ‘self-determination’ is a socio-political movement which forms Kosovo’s largest oppositional political subject in parliament and is the ruling political subject in Pristina’s city council. I use political subject because during our conversation, Pjeter corrected me several times when using the term political party. Pjeter explains; “It’s just that in our language we usually use the term political subject to identify all movements, political movements and political parties. So, as a political subject you can structure yourself as a party or as a movement and we structured our self as a movement.”.

VETËVENDOSJE finds its roots in the Kosovo Action network (KAN) that was established in 1997 to organise mass student protests against the oppression by the Serbian government. After the Kosovo war and under UNMIK administration VETËVENDOSJE rose from KAN during the anti-UNMIK protests it organized over the course of several years from 2004 onwards (Yabanci 2016, 24). In these protests the movement demonstrated against the exercise of international power through implementation of the Ahtisaari Plan and condemned Kosovo’s political elite that agreed with this implementation (Zani 2015, 314). VETËVENDOSJE claimed that this restricted what they saw as the universal and unconditional self-determination right of Kosovo-Albanians, their slogan; ‘Jo negotiate Vetëvendosje’ or ‘No negotiations, self-determination’ (Yabanci 2016, 24). As a Kosovo-Albanian movement VETËVENDOSJE is illustrative for the unique history, social ties, mythology and capacity for joint action that is superseded in the nationalization of Kosovo by the Kosovo state.

Political engagement and collectivism

VETËVENDOSJE has proven itself to be very capable of instigating joint action. The movement is known for its mobilization through street protests and demonstrations (Yabanci 2016, 24) and has been participating in the national elections since 2010 (Zani 2015, 314). In a relatively short period of time the movement has been able to firmly establish oneself in national politics. During the last national elections in 2017, the movement received 27% of the votes making it the second largest political subject of in Kosovo (KQZ, 2017). In that same year, during the municipal elections in Pristina, the movement received 33% of the votes making it the biggest political subject in Pristina (KQZ 2017).

VETËVENDOSJE’s emphasize on self-determination is a conviction that rings through in the structure of the movement which in turn contributes to the creation of social ties among

its members and activists³⁰. The movement takes on a bottom-up approach and deploys majority decision-making, Pjeter tells me;

We have three levels; an organization on the neighbourhood level, for example here in Dragodan, I live here and we have our structure in our neighbourhood which is called the 'point'. From the point, you sent delegates to and elect the president of the Prishtina 'centre' and from the centres we get the third level which is this General Secretariat. We are the only political subject in Kosovo that elects the president of the movement with a referendum.

This structure allows for a high level of involvement of its members and activists as well as for its locations to become places for social interaction. Pjeter tells me; "In daily activities yes of course, we have our hierarchy and everyone respects that we have our statutes, our regulations and that everything is set in that way, but we don't mind grabbing a table and helping someone you know. Or if we clean our garage everyone comes and...". I finish Pjeter's sentence by saying; "Joins in the garage.". Pjeter continues; "Yeah so, in that sense like, in the social sense we are friends you know." The strong ties (Granovetter's 1983) described by Pjeter illustrates the collectivism of Kosovo-Albanian culture pointed out to me many times by my research participants. During my first week in Pristina, I myself experienced the sociality among the members and activists of VETËVENDOSJE. On the occasion of the commemoration of the killing of two activists UNMIK forces during the movements anti-UNMIK protests of 10th of February in 2007, a Kosovo-Albanian friend took me to see a documentary on the events in the ABC cinema just off Boulevardi Nënë Tereza;

Up the stairs, at the door of the cinema he greeted an older man that was having a smoke. He gave him a firm handshake and after having exchanged some pleasantries in Albanian we both went inside. In the hallway that gave access to the screening hall he greeted a man and inside the almost empty screening hall he greeted some men from a distance. We went and sat down somewhere in the few middle rows and I asked him if he knew everybody here. He said that these people were all members and activists of VETËVENDOSJE. This is when it occurred to me that the hall was filling up and a great

³⁰ A differentiation made based on the level of active participation of a member.

*majority of the people were familiar with each other. Greeting each other from a distance, handshakes and two kisses or more.*³¹

Besides the capacity for joint action and the emphasis on collectivism in the social ties among Kosovo-Albanians as illustrated through VETËVENDOSJE, the nationalization of Kosovo as described in the previous paragraph foregoes Kosovo-Albanian history.

Liberating nationalism

My conversation with Pjeter takes place in VETËVENDOSJE's pressroom. We have turned two chairs towards each other while the other chairs still face a red wall in front of which a stand and an Albanian flag are positioned. Incapsulated in the movements strive for self-determination is the wish for the right for unification with Albania (Vetëvendosje, n.d.). The Kosovo state however, in agreement with the Ahtisaari Plan, renounced the right of unification with any other state³². The movement strongly opposes this condition to Kosovo's independence. It defines the Kosovo state, like the movement itself, through the perspective of the majority and is committed to the constitutional definition of Kosovo as a state consisting of Albanian and other communities³³ (Yabanci 2016, 28). A definition and commitment that makes that VETËVENDOSJE is often labelled as an Albanian nationalist movement.

The question of Albanian nationalism “[...] is a very tricky discussion.” according to Pjeter. “Especially with you being a Western-European.” he says. Pjeter tells me that he understands there to be two kinds of nationalism; “You have oppressive nationalism and liberating nationalism.”. His, and the movements Albanian nationalism is a liberating one he argues; “Our history tells us that we've never been oppressive. We never conquered, we have always been defensive and liberating.”. A way of interpreting nationalism that Pjeter has often experienced to be hard to understand for most Western-Europeans with a history of oppression by colonization. Pjeter's position of a liberating Albanian nationalism against oppressive nationalism such as that lay in the history of Western-Europe is not arbitrary. The liberating aspect infused in the Albanian nationalist discourse can, to a large extend, be traced back to the

³¹ Field notes 10-02-2019

³² See: The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo. Article 1.3. The Republic of Kosovo shall have no territorial claims against, and shall seek no union with, any State or part of any State.

³³ See: The constitution of the Republic of Kosovo. Article 3.1. The Republic of Kosovo is a multi-ethnic society consisting of Albanian and other Communities, governed democratically with full respect for the rule of law through its legislative, executive and judicial institutions.

historical involvement of European powers in the dispersion of the Albanian people across different states.

The validity of the following map is doubtful however, it demonstrates the fact that the imagined Albanian nation (Anderson 2006) is not solely rooted in the Albanian nation-state but also imagined in the neighbouring countries of Greece, North Macedonia, Serbia, Kosovo and Montenegro.



Figure 4 Map of the Greater Albania. Taken from www.orientalreview.org.

The imagination of an Albanian nation developed around 1900 (Babuna 2000, 67) Under Ottoman rule ethnic Albanians found a common denominator in their shared language which allowed them to bridge the three religions amongst which they are divided, Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Islam (Babuna 2000, 67). The reason for Kosovo not being included into the borders of modern-day Albania is due to the Conference of London in 1913. During this conference large European powers recognized the independence of Albania from the Ottoman Empire (Draper 1997). The territory that was recognized to be part of this independent Albanian nation-state was however, significantly smaller than it was under Ottoman rule. The new borders separate large parts of the Albanian people from Albania and some of them have been

aiming for reunification of the territory that is seen as part of the Albanian nation (Claessen 2011, 38).

The past cannot be forgotten Pjeter tells me, “Our border with Albania is a violent border. No one asked us about it, it just happened and then we were colonized by first Yugoslavia and then Serbia.”. In the discourse on the Albanian nation, Kosovo’s declaration of independence is a continuation of oppression by foreign actors and the separation from Albania. Pjeter explains that VETËVENDOSJE is nothing new but simply a continuation of many movements which fought against colonizing regimes and for a reunification with Albania. Within the movement this translates to a fight for self-determination.

3.4 ‘Kosovo’s European path’

The word “Europe” is used in the context of EU accession. After all, almost all of geographical Europe is either in the EU or in the process of joining.³⁴

Emina, employee at the Ministry of European Integration.

‘Europe’ is a dynamic and hard to define concept (Davies 1997). Generally understood Europe includes the Western part of the Eurasian landmass, together with a number of islands located not too far from the mainland. Precisely where the division lies between Europe and Asia is however, is subject to debate (Guibernau 2011, 32).

This debate took a new turn with the birth of a ‘European project’. After WO II a common goal arose from the national interests of several European states in Western-Europe. From a position of friction, which Anna Tsing (2005, 4) defines as awkward, unequal, unstable but also creative qualities of interconnection across difference, West-Germany, Italy, France, Luxemburg, Belgium and the Netherlands signed the Paris Agreement in 1951. The agreement established the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and would lead to, in the words of French minister of foreign affairs, Robert Schuman who first proposed the ECSC in a declaration on the 9th of May 1950;

The pooling of coal and steel production will immediately assure the establishment of a common basis for economic development, which is the first step for a European federation, and which will change the destiny of these regions which have long been

³⁴ Questionnaire Ministry of European Integration, 17-04-2019

devoted to the production of arms to which they themselves were the first to fall constantly victim.

The OCSC would be the onset for what is now the European Union and the 9th of May has been named Europe Day. This collaboration of European states did not necessarily have any large ideological goals of 'Europeanness' or any such supranational cultural or historical values. It was most of all an economic collaboration (Waever 1993, 174 in Armbruster 2003, 888). Collaborations according to Tsing (2005, 13) however, create new interests and identities. Over the next decades the concept of 'Europe' came to be more and more intertwined the legitimation of further cooperation between the increasing number of European states that came to be part of the 'European project' that as of today consists of 28 member-states. Tsing (2015, 13) argues that new interests and identities created through collaboration are not always to everyone's benefit. She states that in standardizing a particular kind of knowledge, truths that are incompatible are suppressed. In this she directly relates to Foucault (1977, 40) who argues that discourses, or bodies of knowledge, are inherently subject to power relations. The increasing presence of the concept of 'Europe' was largely repressed by many Eastern European states directly in the first decades after WO II. Here, different political and ideological structures were created that made for a harsh East-West division. The fall of these structures at the end of the Cold War made an end to the tangibility of the divide and made for the start of a process of redefining the 'European project' (Armbruster 2003, 888). Maria Todorova (1997) therefore argues that it is not symbolic geography that creates politics, but rather that the reverse. 'Europe' ends where politicians want it to end, making the classification of what is 'European' and 'non-European' on the geographical entity of Europe not a matter of geography but of politics.

Geographical 'Europe'³⁵ has always had to compete with notions of Europe as a community. In the absence of overarching political structures, that community could only be defined by overarching cultural structures. Until the Enlightenment this structure was that of Christendom, during the Enlightenment this structure was dropped and 'Europe' was designated with more neutral connotations (Davies 1997). 'Europe' obtained the status of a political and moral ideal that suggest a political structure based on "the rule of law which upholds universal human rights; democracy by representation; a mitigated rather than a free-for-all form of capitalism and the existence of a social welfare system." (Armbruster 2003,

³⁵ Herby I refer to the dynamic and hard to define concept of Europe. From here onwards I will use the concept without

887). The weight put on this interpretation of ‘Europe’ can be easily recognized in current debates on the status of non-EU states in relation to the EU. In this regard, back in 2003 Heidi Armbuster (2003, 887) put forward the example of the relation of Turkey to the EU based on the Islamic heritage as well as the critique on the country’s handling of Human Rights. A discussion that, due to Turkey’s current political climate, is still a discussion today. With the EU having become an established institution and a powerful actor on the European continent and on the world stage, the interpretation of the concept of ‘Europe’ has been largely influenced and propagated by the EU.

As Kosovo declared independence on the 17th of February in 2008, it came to be heavily intertwined with the ‘European project’ that is the European Union. As mentioned in the first paragraph, one of the conditions for Kosovo’s independence was an internationally supervised statehood. Upon declaring independence, the supervision of the Kosovo state was transferred from UNMIK, who had administered the territory of Kosovo, to the EU (Vardari-Kesler 2012, 157). The EU consequently deployed its largest civilian mission in its history in the form of the European Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) and set up the International Civilian Office (ICO). EULEX’s mission is the alignment of Kosovo’s rule of law institutions with EU best practices while on its ‘European path’ (EULEX-Kosovo, n.d.), and ICO supervises the implementation of the Ahtisaari Plan by the Kosovo state (Perrit 2010, 167). Both in the language of these European institutions in Kosovo and in that of the Kosovo state itself the EU and ‘Europe’ are equated. EULEX’s ‘European path’ and the ‘European integration’ mentioned within the Ministry of ‘European integration’ both refer to the creation of a closer relation to and an eventual ascension into the EU. Such use of language is a form of social practice and a way in which particular views of the world are put forward that promote certain kinds of practices, ideas, values and identities. (Machin and Mayr 2012, 2). The language used by both institutions conflates the EU with ‘Europe’, a conflation captured by Dorien Claessen (2011) in her notion of ‘EUrope’ and contributes to a discourse that perpetuates a view of Kosovo as located outside of this ‘EUrope’ and its population as non-EUropean.

3.4 Arranged discourses

During my fieldwork I have experienced Pristina to be a place in which the Kosovar, Albanian and European discourses described above struggle over the determination of what is involved in the belonging to Kosovo. In various ways these discourses present themselves in the public spaces of Pristina. When first arriving in Pristina these presentations are most notable through

a direct outward expression of symbols by the incredible amount flags that one encounters. There is no turn you can take in Pristina without catching a flag somewhere in your field of vision. In understanding the intricate ways in which discourses are present in the everyday lives of Kosovo-Albanian students in Pristina, the concepts of banal nationalism (Billig 1995) and blatant nationalism (Benwell 2014) are very useful. Although referring to nationalism these concepts have escaped its original national register and are deployed on other spatial dimensions such as local, transnational and global. The all-around presence of flags in Pristina is a great example banal nationalism. Banal nationalism refers to the ‘banal’ ways people experience nationalism with symbols and discourses lingering ‘underground’, remaining visible, but unnoticed (Billig 1995, 3). The discourses in Pristina however, do not solely linger underground. Large events such as the celebration of Independence Day described in the opening vignette to this thesis in chapter one and Europe Day described in chapter two can be seen as more blatant expressions. Blatant nationalism complements the banal nationalism by drawing attention to the signs and symbols of nationhood that are overtly referenced and discussed in everyday settings, focussing on ecstatic forms of nationalism, mass events designed to celebrate or commemorate the nation (Skey and Antonsich 2017, 4).

Being filled with the expressions of discourses, Pristina constitutes Foucault’s complex field of play in which he describes discourses to be dispersed and relating to one another (McHoul and Grace 2002, 45). According to David Snow (2013, 207), these relations are aspects of meaning-making processes and culminate into arrangements. Over the course of my fieldwork in Pristina, I have observed a multitude of banal and blatant expressions in which I have come to recognize two prominent arrangements. The arrangements I observed are the arrangements that interlink the Kosovar and Albanian discourses and the arrangements that interlink the Kosovar and European discourse.

As I mentioned, the most notable expressions of the discourses, is through the all-around presence of flags. At first sight one might not directly see anything in the way these flags are portrayed however, they are telling about the ways in which the discourses are intertwined. On the 27th of March while moving towards the Fadil Vokri football stadium for a friendly match between Kosovo and Denmark the arrangements became strikingly clear to me;

Although a friendly match, there are quite a few people on the move. We follow the stream of people that flows from ‘Boulevardi Nënë Tereza’ towards the ‘NEWBORN’ sign. People are dressed up red scarves with the Albanian doubled-headed eagle, blue scarves with the Kosovar symbols, hats with the same symbols and some are blowing

on a loud whistle while others are singing songs in Albanian I can't understand. We pass the NEWBORN sign and move up the stairs behind it, to the Palace of Youth and Sports. As we walk up the stairs I gain an overview of the people passing the stalls selling merchandize to support the Kosovar team in front of the NEWBORN sign, the street filled with cars and the grey EULEX office on the other side of the car filled street. It occurs to me that, in the enthusiastic crowd both Kosovar and Albanian symbols are omnipresent and in front of the EULEX office two Kosovo flags and two EU flags hang alternately and still from four high flagpoles.³⁶

This experience was striking as I felt and shared the emotions of excitement and enthusiasm of the crowd while moving towards the football stadium to cheer on the Kosovo football team. The overview on the steps towards the Palace of Youth and Sports however, made clear the divide between the buzzing crowd surrounding the NEWBORN sign and still hanging combination of Kosovo and EU flags in front of the grey EULEX office. The arrangement of the Kosovar and European discourse one encounters mostly in relation to the formal structures of Kosovo. The arrangement of the Kosovar and Albanian discourse is much more present in the informal social structures of in Pristina as illustrated by the stitched together flag that is a much-seen sight in Pristina.



Figure 5 Stitched together Kosovo and Albanian flag. Taken on 17-02-2019.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

³⁶ Field notes 21-03-2019

Identification in the newborn Kosovo state

Identification is intertwined with a sense of belonging. As posed in the introduction, the question of ‘Where do I belong?’ cannot be isolated from the question ‘Who am I?’. This intertwinement makes the question of identity pop up throughout the literature on a sense of belonging, in both place-belongingness as well as the politics of belonging.

People that have a strong attachment to a place often have strong feelings of belonging to that place (Vanclay 2008, 3-11). Such attachment to place is related to the extent in which an individual has positive feelings towards their local environment. According to Vanclay (2008, 3-11), place attachment is much the same as place-identity, arguing that place-identity refers specifically to the extent to which a person’s identity is vested in a place. Colin Goodrich and Kaylene Sampson (2008, 257-258) state that; “As repositories of complex sets of social and cultural constructions, places become central to identity construction as people draw on the range of social processes, symbols and values to describe themselves.” (Goodrich and Sampson 2008, 257-268). For this reason, place-identity is considered to be a substructure of one’s self-identity and to consist of cognitions about the physical world. These cognitions refer to memories, ideas, feelings, attitudes, values, preferences, meanings and conceptions of behaviour and experience which relate to the variety and complexity of physical settings which define an individual’s everyday life. An individual however, does more than just experience one’s physical environment. The individual is in a continual interaction between one’s needs and desires and the capacity of the physical setting to satisfy these needs and desires. From these ‘good’ and ‘bad’ experiences, the cognitions emerge that constitute place-identity

(Proshansky, Fabian and Kaminoff 1983, 59). Place therefore, is inextricably linked to identification and, as put by Vanclay (2008, 3-11); “We would be lost without it.”. Still, it is important to note that, as with a sense of belonging, the physical setting is not the sole formative feature of identification. Identification is not solely a matter of one’s experience with a physical setting but springs from the intersection between a place and the people that live in that place. Identification is also determined by what other people do, say and think.

What people do, say and think constitute the discourses that are central in the politics of belonging explored in the previous chapter. As stated by Antonsich (2010, 649), one’s personal, intimate feeling of belonging to a place always has to come to terms with the discourses of socio-spatial inclusion and exclusion at play in that very place. This reflects an emotional investment and a desire for attachment, captured by Elsbeth Probyn (1996, 19) as; “Individuals and groups are caught within wanting to belong and wanting to become.”. A desire that is encapsulated in the narratives people create to express who they are. According to Hall (1996, 4), such narrativization of the Self is what constitutes identification. He, as will I in this chapter, understands identification as consisting of a suturing of the individual into discourses. A suturing that is never a total merging with the discourse but is rather the articulation of a point of attachment to the discourse through narrativization of the Self (Hall 1996).

Understanding identification to be deeply intertwined with the conditions of a place and the dynamics of the discourses on belonging, this chapter will explore the identifications of Kosovo-Albanian students in Pristina. It will become clear how belonging takes up an active role in the identification of Kosovo-Albanian students with the Kosovar, Albanian and European discourse.

4.1 Hyphenated Kosovo-Albanian

The stance of Kosovo-Albanian students towards the government of the newborn Kosovo state is critical. Kosovo-Albanian students perceive the government to contribute in a large part to their disempowerment by limiting their opportunities of participation in Kosovo’s decision-making processes. Despite formally expressed intentions such as the ‘The Law on Youth Empowerment and Participation’ of 2009, which intended to promote and consolidate the participation of youth in decision-making processes. Kosovo-Albanian students perceive reigning nepotism and corruption to keep them out of decision-making processes. The frustration with their lack of participatory opportunities in Kosovo’s decision-making processes make that Kosovo-Albanian students have mixed feelings regarding the place that is Kosovo.

In my interactions with Kosovo-Albanian students this mix of emotions was an inevitable part of any conversation on Kosovo.

I meet up with psychology students Nora, Vlora, Mirlinda, Lendina and Besarta in front of the Faculty of Philosophy where most of their lectures take place.³⁷ These five students were willing to continue a group conversation on their lives in Pristina after I had led a discussion on the topic of identification during one of their lectures. We move to one of the many cafés on the tiny walkway just to the side of the university campus which is filled with more cafés and lunch places than one might think is possible and is packed with students in between classes. We sit down and as the conversation evolves from pleasantries to their feelings towards Kosovo Nora mentions; “We have like a cognitive dissonance. We love this country but we don’t love what is going on in this country because we feel like we have no power to affect that.”. Besarta nods and adds; “The political system like, doesn’t let you make an impact in your country. So, that’s the problem, not because we don’t love our country. We are very attached to this place, but we are not noticeable for them.”. The ‘cognitive dissonance’, using Nora’s words, is illustrative for the struggle of Kosovo-Albanian students to relate to the Kosovo state. A struggle that can be recognized in their identification with the civic national discourse deployed by the Kosovo state in the nationalization of its territory.

Stuart Hall (2002, 28), argues that a pure civic nation-state cannot effectively exist. Every nationalism, even a civic nationalism, requires identification with the state on the part of the citizen. An identification that is based on the embeddedness of the political system in cultural meanings. Hall exemplifies his argument by stating that it is not possible to understand ‘American’ without understanding the ‘American way of life’. The civic national discourse of the Kosovo state has left out any culturally specific connotations referring to any of the communities that make up Kosovo’s population. In a seminar I attended at RIT, a social-psychology professor described the state’s national discourse therefore as an ‘empty pool’.³⁸ Such an ‘empty pool’ leaves undefined what constitutes ‘Kosovar’ and the ‘Kosovar way of life’ and leaves it open to interpretation.

The previous chapter outlined Pristina as the complex field of play in which the Kosovar, Albanian and European discourses interact and form arrangements. In this field of play, the ‘open pool’ that is the Kosovo state discourse forms arrangements with both the Albanian and European discourse. Two arrangements that fill the ‘pool’ with different connotations. The arrangement I observed to be most present among Kosovo-Albanian is that

³⁷ Group conversation, 25-04-2019

³⁸ Field notes, 20-03-2019

of the Kosovo state discourse with the Albanian discourse. In this arrangement the ‘empty pool’ of the Kosovo state discourse gets filled with Albanian connotations. During the same seminar as the one in which the social-psychology professor described the Kosovo state discourse as being an ‘empty pool’;

From my seat somewhere two thirds of the way back into the classroom I have a decent view over the room and am able to follow the discussion as it moves around past the students surrounding me. I am in the middle of a seminar at RIT which has been constructed to feature a discussion on identification related to my research. While furiously writing in my notebook, trying to capture the most interesting parts of the discussion, my gaze is directed towards the front of the classroom when the professor grabs the attention again. She confronts the class with their use of language in a recent group assignment. In this assignment she had noticed that most students had used the term ‘Kosovar’ to refer to Kosovo-Albanians and when referring to Kosovo-Serbs had only used the term ‘Serb’. One student, to my left on the second seat from the front, responded defensively by stating that he was pretty sure his group had not used these terms in this way. He continued by stating that he stood very much behind the use of ‘Kosovo-Albanian’ and ‘Kosovo-Serb’. Another student two seats in front of me to my right vocally agreed. In her continuation of the discussion however, she seemingly unwittingly continued to use the term ‘Kosovar’ to refer to Kosovo-Albanians by stating putting ‘us as Kosovars’ against ‘Serbs’ when referring to Kosovo-Serbs.³⁹

The student’s seemingly unwitting use of ‘Kosovar’ as referring to Kosovo-Albanians illustrates how Kosovo-Albanian students create a relation to the ‘empty’ Kosovo state discourse by infusing it with cultural meaning from their own community. It is illustrative for the deeply segregated environment in which Kosovo-Albanian students spent their everyday lives and presence of the discourse on Albanian nationalism in Pristina. This segregated make-up of Kosovo, I have described in the second chapter of this thesis through the parallel education systems in which students in Kosovo spend a significant amount of their time. Kosovo-Albanian students in their everyday lives are barely in direct contact with any other of the other communities that make up Kosovo’s population and with it, any other possible cultural connotation attached to the ‘empty pool’ that is ‘Kosovar’.

³⁹ Fieldnotes 20-03-2019

Vlora attributes the Albanian infusion in the Kosovar identification to the history of the Albanian population; “I think the history keeps Albanian around, you know. The history is a big part of who we are.”. History constitutes an important aspect of the Albanian nationalist discourse present in Pristina as it asserts the territory of Kosovo to be part of an imagined Albanian nation that spans across multiple states surrounding the Albanian nation-state. Among most of the Kosovo-Albanian students I have been in contact with, an interpretation of history exists that prevents an all-encompassing equation of Kosovo-Albanians and Albanians from Albania. In one of the many brief encounters with Kosovo-Albanian students while watching Champions League football in one of the bars in Pristina, a student told me; “When you first heard about Kosovo, you probably thought; “Kosovo-Albanians? Ahh Albania!”. Immediately people link us with Albania. We are not completely the same with Albania. We have our own history, we have our own heroes, we have our own castles.”.⁴⁰

When mentioning identification with being Albania in the group discussion, Lendina states; “I don’t identify as Albanian. If were in a situation where I would have to mention only Albania or Kosovo, I would mention Kosovo.”. Lendina continues explaining that she experiences a big difference between the way Kosovo-Albanians view Albania and the way Albanians view Kosovo; “Over here we love the Albanian flag more than Albanians do themselves. They don’t even know our Independence Day and they don’t even know our prime-minister. They don’t care somehow.”. Lendina’s statement suggests a form of ‘othering’. With both what Lendina says about Kosovo-Albanians and Albanians and how she uses the word ‘they’ to refer to Albanians, she clearly creates two distinguished groups. She differentiates between an in-group from an out-group (Jackson 2012, 187). Following Jane Jackson (2012, 187), this othering allows Lendina to construct sameness and difference in order to affirm her own identity which she defines as being Kosovo-Albanian. While the sun roof is rolled out over our heads, Besarta tells me that one does not get around the identification with as Albanian in Kosovo. Vlora adds to that by mentioning that talk of, and political tensions around, ethnicity are so present that it is hard get around this identification.

4.2 Excluded Europeans

The everyday lives of Kosovo-Albanian students are deeply intertwined with the notion of Europe. The highly contested status of Kosovo’s statehood in the international arena makes for a limited external legitimacy, exemplified by the non-recognizing EU member states Spain,

⁴⁰ Field notes 16-04-2019

Cyprus, Greece, Romania and Slovakia, who deal with separatist movements on their own territory and make the EU unable to grant visa liberalization (Koeth 2010, 242). The place that is Kosovo is herewith characterised by a continuing absence of visa liberalization. A characteristic that heavily restricts the movement opportunities of Kosovo-Albanian students and their future. During my group conversation with psychology students Nora, Vlora, Mirlinda, Lendina, and Besarta, Vlora stated; “Our generation needs it. We need to see, we need to improve. You cannot keep us in borders for the rest of our lives of like a generation. That just damages an entire generation of youth”⁴¹. Besides the restrictions put on the movement opportunities of Kosovo-Albanian students the notion of Europe is a prominent part of Kosovo’s national discourse that can, in Pristina, often be found to form an arrangement with the European discourse.

The notion of Europe, is part of Kosovo. Kosovo however, is not considered to be a part of this European notion by to most of my research participants. Kosovo-Albanian students struggle to see themselves as Europeans. When questioned on their identification with Europe, most of my research participants responded like Vlora; “I cannot possibly identify as European. How can I? I’m not treated as one.”. The perception of European identification among Kosovo-Albanian students goes hand in hand with the opportunities provided by the EU. Lendina states; “Our perception of the European identity is that, if you have a European identity, you have more opportunities and you can grow in personal terms and professional terms.”⁴². These two statements made by Vlora and Lendina reflect the two dimensions out of which European identification is made up. Sylke Nissen (2006, 167) argues that European identification consists the affective and the utilitarian dimension. The affective dimension expresses a feeling of attachment with Europe and the European Union. The utilitarian dimension reflects approval of the European Union based on cost-benefit considerations. Kosovo-Albanian students find themselves outside of the European community and feel they are not missing out on the benefits they perceive it to offer.

Monteserrat Guibernau (2011, 40) puts an emphasis on the later dimension of European identification and states that European identification is based on sharing a specific political culture and a benefitting from the economic advantages derived from EU membership. An emphasis I recognized among the few Kosovo-Albanian students I met that had spent considerable time in the EU. In café Sonder, on a tiny side road up the hill behind the campus

⁴¹ Group conversation 20-03-2019

⁴² Group conversation 20-03-2019

of the University of Pristina, I meet with Jorik, a recent architecture graduate.⁴³ During his studies, Jorik explained to me, he had worked hard and went through a lot of bureaucracy to realise his goal of studying in the EU. Jorik participated in no less than two Erasmus exchanges and did his masters in Vienna but confided in me that it was both hard work and a bit of luck. There had been an error with the accreditation of the credits he had earned on his first Erasmus trip to Portugal and was permitted to join in another Erasmus exchange to Ireland on a full scholarship. Jorik tells me that he feels European but recognizes that this feeling is not shared by the majority of people in Kosovo. His opinion is that there is not necessarily a common history or identity that everyone has to experience but one should at least have the opportunity to move freely, travel, study and work.

Not being able to partake in the opportunities that come with being a European, the utilitarian dimension of European identification comes to be in the way of identification with Europe and directly affects its affective dimension. In the accounts of Kosovo-Albanian students on their experiences of having movement opportunities limited by their position outside of the EU, hide such feelings of exclusion. Upon hearing that I was a student at the University of Utrecht, Vlora recounted that she had applied for a program at the university before. She had been accepted however, had not been able to go and follow the program due to the high tuition costs for non-EU students. Full of frustration she tells me;

So, if I am eligible, or like professional enough to be a student at your university, why would you expect me to pay 15.000 euro? How on earth would I be able to pay that? The average salary here is 200 euro per month. It's just not fair. It's humiliating because they know I will not be able to go but they give you a glimpse. Like, you are accepted but you're a non-EU.

Lila Leontidou, Hastings Donana and Alex Afouxenidis (2005, 389) argue that the EU border inherently elicits feelings of exclusion. Borders create different spatialities and various exclusions and inclusions that have a strong influence on people's identifications. A border that is clearly experienced among Kosovo-Albanian students, because although Europe is present in Kosovo Kosovo is still "the Balkans.", according the Jorik, "It's at the border of Europe."

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⁴³ Interview Jorik, 13-02-2019

Conclusion

This thesis has sought to explore the formulation of a sense of belonging to the newborn Kosovo state, through the active role of place and discourse in the identification among Kosovo-Albanian students in Pristina. In a world in which forces of globalization and fragmentation are increasingly putting pressure on the hyphen that once so firmly linked one's belonging to the nation-state (Anderson 2006). Kosovo-Albanian students are formulating a sense of belonging while navigating through the complex context of their everyday lives in Pristina. This thesis has built on Marco Antonsich's (2010) argument that belonging and identity are inherently intertwined and uses his framework of the two analytical dimensions of belonging, that of place-belongingness and the politics of belonging.

In the introductory chapter of this thesis I first outlined the larger context of this research, its theoretical framework as well as the methodology and operationalization. I put forward the questions on the formulation of a sense of belonging that arise when considering the Kosovo state to be built in a world in which the state is subject to the forces of globalization and fragmentation that constitute the crisis of the hyphen. These questions are especially relevant for Kosovo's young generation that is working to shape their future in, and relation to the Kosovo state. In the context of a majority Kosovo-Albanian populated Pristina, this, the forces of globalization and fragmentation, has made for a focus on Kosovo-Albanian students. In approaching the questions on the formulation of a sense of belonging among these students, the active role of belonging in identification, as argued for by Antonsich, takes central stage. Antonsich's two dimensions of a sense of belonging are applied to Kosovo through the context

of Pristina in the first second and third chapter while the last chapter focussed on the identification among Kosovo-Albanian students. The ethnographic data on which this thesis is built is collected through participant observation, interviews and group conversations.

In the second chapter, the 'place' that Kosovo is outlined as is experienced by Kosovo-Albanian students through the locality of Pristina. An experience that is deeply influenced by Kosovo's minimalist statehood which lays at the base of the most significant characteristics to Kosovo-Albanian students attach meaning. Kosovo's minimalist statehood has made that Kosovo-Albanian students have come to deal with isolation to Kosovo due to a continuing absence of EU visa liberalization, disempowerment through a lack of opportunities to participate in decision-making processes and segregation as most prominently experienced through parallel education systems. Kosovo-Albanian students in Pristina have however, proven to be no passive recipients of the place they live in but actively contribute to transforming their most criticized characteristics of Kosovo, by engaging in place-making through civic engagement.

The third chapter has taken Pristina to be a complex field of play in which the three dominant discourses of Kosovo's nationalization, Albanian's liberating nationalism and the European presence struggle over the determination of what is involved in the belonging to Kosovo. In an attempt to reconcile past conflict, the Kosovo state, conditioned by the Ahtisaari Plan, has aimed to nationalize its territory under a neutral civic national identity. The discourse put forward by the Kosovo state seeks to unite Kosovo's greatly in size varying communities by portraying them as equals and by adhering to an overarching European identity. Kosovo's nationalizing discourse however, has not been successful at enunciating unity but has instead enunciated division along community lines. This division along community lines and the reference to a European identity in Kosovo's national discourse can be observed to make for two common arrangements of the discourses in Pristina. The Kosovo national discourse gets meaning only when combined with the Albanian discourse or the European discourse.

In the fourth chapter of this thesis, place-belongingness and the politics of belonging are brought together in the identification of Kosovo-Albanian students. Antonsich's two dimensions of belonging greatly condition these identifications. Kosovo-Albanian students struggle to identify with the newborn Kosovo state due to a lack of participatory opportunities in Kosovo's decision-making processes and the lack of cultural connotations of the 'empty pool' of Kosovo's national discourse. In the majority Kosovo-Albanian community of Pristina, in which Kosovo-Albanian students live their everyday lives due to the deeply segregated make-up of Kosovo's society. Albanian cultural connotations fill up the 'empty pool' of the

Kosovo national discourse, making of the undefined ‘Kosovar’ a ‘Kosovo-Albanian’. The overarching European identity deployed in Kosovo’s national discourse as a means to unite the diverse communities of Kosovo, misses its mark. ‘Europe’ as a dynamic concept has become largely influenced by and thought of in terms of the EU. For Kosovo-Albanian students, European identification is dependent on being able to partake in the opportunities that come with being an EU citizen. The continuing absence of EU visa liberalization for Kosovo therefore, prevents European identification.

Using Antonsich’s two dimensions of a sense of belonging, this thesis has given an ethnographic account of how Kosovo-Albanian students navigate the complexities of the place and discourses involved in the community that constitute the newborn Kosovo state. The characteristics of the Kosovo state and the arrangement of discourses present in Pristina condition the identification of Kosovo-Albanian students, and reflect the complexity of their relation to the newborn Kosovo state. As put by Vlora;

Everybody is looking for a way to make it work for them.⁴⁴

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⁴⁴ Group interview at UP 25-04-2019

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