Everyday Ethnicity

Ethnicity in Practice in a Divided Kosovo

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To all those hospitable strangers that became friends
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Acknowledgements

It was in the summer of 2011 that I drove into Kosovo for the first time. From an old German touring car, I overlooked the land that had entered my consciousness so many years before. When was I was eleven years old, I was a 7th grader in the Dutch school system. In our school in 7th grade we started to watch the national kids news every Friday morning. It was 1999 and during those Friday mornings I was introduced to Kosovo. I had seen images of the Bosnia war on the television, but while gazing at the long lines of refugees in the snowy hills of Kosovo, recognizing hollow-eyed kids of my own age suddenly turned the word war from something abstract in to something that happened to children just like me. It made me understand that war was not something without a name or face, but that it happened to children living normal lives quite similar to mine, going to school, playing football, up until that day that their parents told them to pack their bags and leave their houses. Why did these things happen? Why did neighbors suddenly fight each other? I could not get it. Driving into Kosovo for the first time brought back the images and questions from those Friday mornings. In ways, this thesis is a product of my determination to come to terms with those questions that sparked in me all those years ago.

That summer of 2011 I ended up in Kosovo on accident, one could say. If it had not been for my Australian friends Zac, Mark and Brendan, who called me and rather compellingly, invited me and my friend to visit them and their friend Chelsea in Pristina. I told them I was travelling to Istanbul, and that did not have time, but as they would not take no for an answer, we eventually gave in. I had already developed a taste for the Balkans in earlier travels, but the hospitality I was greeted with in Kosovo charmed me into coming back over and over again. This thesis is dedicated to all those people in Kosovo who have been so good for me. There is no way of thanking all those amazing people in Kosovo that have taken me into their houses, have guided me through Pristina and the rest of the country, introduced me to their friends and their families, took me places, listened to my never ending questions and patiently explained, again and again, situations and events happening. All those times translating things for me and teaching me their language, telling me stories about their past and their hopes and dreams. Therefor, first and foremost, my gratitude, respect and thanks go out to those people in Kosovo that have somehow helped me to write this thesis and even more, helped me to feel at home in Kosovo.

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I want to thank my supervisor Stefan van der Poel for his continuous faith in me and my project, however crazy it sometimes seemed, and all his efforts in guiding me. Chris Lamont for helping me get an internship in Kosovo, his support and critical remarks on my work. James Leigh for the many times we discussed the design and difficulties of my research and Monika Baar for stimulating me to keep doing research on Kosovo. Maarten Duijvendak and the Research Master program Modern History and International Relations at the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen for granting me the possibilities, space and freedom to conduct a research like this. My classmates for listening to all my stories about the Balkans and their supportive comments on my plans and specifically Benedikt Bäther for his proofreading of my thesis and his sharp and funny remarks. And the local library in Dokkum for having a place for me to work and giving me free coffee on occasion.

This thesis has been long in the making, and I want to sincerely thank my mother and stepfather for bearing with me, for letting me stay in their house and the support they gave me, even when I did not always seem to appreciate or notice it. My little brother and sister for enduring my presence and moods. And my father for supporting me, even during periods of illness. The same counts for the boys, they know who they are, for (almost) always listening to me, putting me up in their houses and attempting to visit me in Kosovo. For all my amazing and beautiful friends supporting and stimulating me to keep going and on occasion getting my mind of work and relax. Thanks also to Christiaan and Klaas at Oosterhout for helping me find and keep my balance. Special thanks go out to Aukje and Pieter who let me stay in their beautiful house during the summer of 2014 and Rienk-Jan Benedictus for making my thesis look organized and pretty. And to Sophia Rokhlin, my muse and unrelenting inspiration. Without all you lovely friends and strangers, this thesis would not have happened.
The map shows the locations of Kosovo Serbs. An Albanian majority inhabits the rest of Kosovo. The map does not give information about other minorities living in Kosovo. By Sergey Kondrashov (2013). Based on the data of the 2011 census conducted by the government of the Republic of Kosovo. http://ask.rks-gov.net/eng/.
This map has been gratefully copied from Ger Duijzing, *Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2000) xiv.
Ibid., xv.
A Note on Names

The issue of place names is a tricky one in Kosovo. In writing something about Kosovo, decisions have to be made on what names are used and in what form they are presented. It is not possible to come up with a system that will not cause some offence to some or other of the people in Kosovo or as possible other readers. The decision has been made not to take in account the sensitivities of the Albanians or the Serbs (or others) but to shape it in the most practical way possible for English readers. This is not because of lack of care towards the sensitivities but because there is no failsafe system possible other than choosing one or the other side. There is no bias in the decisions made, other than a bias for practicality.

The form ‘Kosovo’ is used throughout the thesis and not the Albanian ‘Kosova’ because this is the name used internationally, just as ‘Spain’ is not ‘España’. As is mentioned in chapter two, there is also the usage of Kosovo as just a part of that region, the other part being Metohija for Serbs and Dukagjin for Albanians. This distinction is not made in the text; Kosovo is used for the whole territory of the post-1945 ‘Autonomous Province’ in Yugoslavia of which the borders still largely correspond with the contemporary ones.

The issue becomes more complicated with the names of places within Kosovo. Many places in Kosovo have both a Serbian and an Albanian name. And even when at the moment most places only use the Albanian name, this has been different in the past as recent as the 1990s. Sometimes the names do only differ in spelling such as with Pristina, for which again the English form is chosen throughout, but is spelled Priština in Serbian and Prishtina/Prishtinë (depending on the context) in Albanian. Some places however have completely different names, such is the case in Uroševac/Ferizaj, of which the former is the Serbian one and the latter the Albanian. There are only few occasions, such as Prizren, where they are written exactly the same in both languages.

The decision for one spelling or the other, in absence of a common English form, will be based on the context. In majority Albanian places, usually the Albanian spelling will be used, as the same counts for Serbian places. Ferizaj will thus be called by its Albanian name, while Gračanica will have its Serbian spelling. When discussing the Serbian Orthodox Patriarchate, it would be strange to say that this is located in Peja, the Albanian spelling for the town the Serbs call Peć. In some occasions both names will be given, but for the sake of efficacy this is minimized, in other occasions decisions have been made on either the contemporary situation or context. Also designations for peoples have been used practically. This means that in some occasions there will be referred to Kosovo Albanians or Kosovo Serbs and in others just to Albanians or Serbs.

The word Kosovars is not used often, but when it is used, it refers to all people living within the borders of Kosovo without discrimination to ethnicity. Although the word Kosovars is often perceived as a designation only for Albanians of Kosovo, as Kosovars in the eyes of the Serbs are always Serbs and if they are not Serbs they must be something else

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4 This name issue is a sensitive issue for both Albanians and Serbs. Especially Albanians view the widespread use of the name ‘Kosovo’ as a reference to Serbian domination of the territory and insist that today it should be called ‘Kosova’.

5 The borders and boundaries of what we now call Kosovo have often shifted throughout the course of history.
the decision was made to use it practically. Personal names are given in the modern spellings of the relevant language or as found in the literature. Foreign-language names are sometimes given in translation and in other occasions mentioned and explained in the notes. No expertise on this part is claimed by the author and any inconsistencies can only be caused by the negligence of the author, however never by bias.

In line with the framework of the thesis, the use of ‘the Serbs’ or ‘the Albanians’ does not entail a conception of distinct, bounded groups. When the text refers to someone as Albanian or Serb, this means that he or she would consistently and unambiguously identify him or herself as Albanian or Serb. This points at merely a nominal categorization and does not tell us anything about the salience of such an identification for the person or others.
Introduction

Having left Kosovo a couple of hours before, I found myself in a bus slowly traversing the Frisian countryside I call home. With my nose against the window, I tried to look for things that had changed in the scenery I knew so well, but other than the expected changes of the seasons, I could spot none. There was however something that kept catching my eye. It was the blue and white striped flag, dotted with red water lilies that are often mistaken for hearts. It was the Frisian flag that drew my attention, and while its presence was all but new to these lands, suddenly they seemed to be everywhere. I had just finished months of field research in Kosovo and continuous ethnographic observations had peeled my eyes and perked my ears for, well basically anything. Yet, just like in Kosovo, national symbols such as flags are easily noticed. What astonished me was not so much that I noticed all those Frisian flags dotting the landscape, but rather the fact that I had never really noticed them before! When I got back home, I asked some friends who were not from Friesland, if they ever noticed these flags. Incredulous they answered me that of course they had. The fact that these flags had not been salient, or even visible, to me as a Frisian, whilst they were experienced as very visible by my non-Frisian friends was an unexpected confirmation of my work of the previous months when I had researched ethnicity in the challenging setting that is Kosovo.

Kosovo is a new and contested country on the Balkan Peninsula, mainly known for the so-called ‘ethnic’ conflict of the late 1990s. It was the last conflict in a line of wars that ripped up Yugoslavia, and it even led to NATO waging its first war in its history against Serbia. The Balkan wars of the 1990s, of which the Kosovo War of 1999 was the last, had shocked and puzzled the West. The cruelty and bloodiness of these civil wars between people that had lived together in a prosperous country for decades was something the West grappled with to understand. Explanations soon offered by journalists and scholars pointed at the deeply rooted differences between ethnic groups and the long history of bloodshed in these regions. They sketched images of primitive Balkan people who had harbored but suppressed ancient ethnic hatreds for decades under the yoke of Yugoslav rule, but were now free to let the hate flow. Shortly after more sophisticated accounts appeared of how leaders, later called ‘ethno-entrepreneurs’, could mobilize the masses into war. Yet two things remained clear: these conflicts were inevitable and it was ethnicity that lay at the heart of them. While this research is no attempt to prove that ethnicity is meaningless or that history is irrelevant, it strongly disagrees with assumptions of ethnicity being central to these conflicts and the overall importance of ethnic ties.

This thesis is an attempt to gain understanding of the role of ethnicity in Kosovo. It is not an investigation into the nature of ethnicity, nor is it a research on the causes of conflict in Kosovo. Rather, this thesis has sought to understand when, where and how ethnicity actually works in Kosovo. And more specifically, how it works in the everyday lives of ordinary people. It aims to provide a corrective to the primordial and overethnicized understandings of ethnicity that are so often found in scholarly work as well as in public
discussions. Such overethnicized accounts assume the centrality of ethnicity to societies and conflicts. This assumption is challenged here.

In this thesis it will be argued while conflict between ethnic groups has deeply influenced and scarred Kosovo, ethnicity is not always, not easily and not automatically central to the experience and enactment of day-to-day life in Kosovo. In other words, ethnicity matters, but it does not always matter. When, where and how is ethnicity experienced and enacted in Kosovo? When does ethnicity become salient to Kosovars and when does it not? Given the changes in political dominance over the past three decades, how has this changed over the years? Is ethnicity the main perspective through which Kosovars organize and understand the world around them, or are there other categories of vision and division too? These basic questions about ethnicity in Kosovo have guided this research and have served not to establish how much or how little ethnicity matters in Kosovo, but rather how it works.

These aims and questions are informed by an approach that is found in the work of Rogers Brubaker and his colleagues on Cluj in Romania. In his Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town Brubaker has set out to try his theoretical work in an empirically grounded analysis on how ethnicity works. The research provides both a study of the workings of ethnicity and nationhood in Cluj as well as an approach to ethnicity more in general. The underlying perspective of his work is that ethnicity is:

> ‘not a thing, an attribute, or a distinct sphere of life; it is a way of understanding and interpreting experience, a way of talking, a way of formulating interests and identities. Nationhood, similarly, is not an ethnocultural fact; it is a frame of vision, a cultural idiom and a political claim.’

Taken in this way, ethnicity exists in and through many different forms and shapes. Accounts of ethnicity in Cluj, Kosovo and elsewhere often focus on those forms of ethnicity that are easy to see; the nationalist claims and loud political debates, the national symbols such as flags and monuments. And yes, these are ubiquitous in Kosovo and hard to miss. Yet, it is harder to see how these flags and claims are seen and heard by ordinary Kosovars. While these conspicuous forms of ethnicity are easy to see, perhaps all too easy, they might not be seen in the same way, or at all, by Kosovars themselves; just as I experienced in Friesland myself. Moreover, focusing on those forms of ethnicity that are all too easy to see might obscure other forms of ethnicity. Brubaker argues that if we want to understand how ethnicity works, politics of ethnicity and nationalism are important but they need to be put in the context of everyday ethnicity. Focusing on the discreet and inconspicuous counterpart of nationalist politics, everyday ethnicity, we are led to ask different questions. Questions about how ethnicity works in practice, where ethnicity happens in the everyday lives of people and how it influences their daily lives. With this Brubaker heeds the call of Eric Hobsbawm who called for research on ethnicity and nationalism integrating views ‘both from above and from below’:

> ‘The view from below, i.e the nation as seen not by governments and the spokesmen and activists of nationalist (or nonnationalist) movements, but by the ordinary persons who are the objects of their

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7 Ibid.
This leads us to a second point. Many works on ethnicity, even constructivist ones, tend to take (ethnic) groups as the basic building blocks of the social world, the main protagonists of (ethnic) conflict and the fundamental units of analysis. Brubaker argues that this ‘groupism’ is notoriously robust in our thinking, but that it almost automatically leads to using the same vernacular and substantialist understandings of ethnicity that are so central to nationalist politics. Focusing on categories, which are at best a potential basis for groupness and group formation, instead of on groups, leads us to ask questions about processes and relations between categories and groupness, rather than assuming them.

Brubaker has conducted his research in what he calls ‘a setting marked by sustained and highly charged ethno-political conflict’ that is Cluj. In many ways Pristina and Cluj are comparable. They both have a long history of different religions and ethnicities living side by side and at the same time of ethnic and nationalist contestation. Both cities experienced communist regimes and their downfall. And in both cities the breakdown of communism gave way to a rise of ethnic tensions and nationalist contention. But while in Cluj the situation remained mostly limited to explosive nationalist rhetoric, in Pristina and Kosovo it led to political repression of the Albanians by the Serbian regime and eventually to war and segregation. If Brubaker calls Cluj a challenging and unlikely setting to approach with a decidedly non-groupist account of ethnicity, examining Kosovo, the poster child of ethnic conflict and sustained ethnic segregation, with this approach seems a ridiculous undertaking.

Yet this is exactly what this research has done. The research has focused on the many different forms and shapes through which ethnicity works in the everyday lives of ordinary people in Pristina and Gračanica. This study of everyday ethnicity in Kosovo makes use of data gathered during several stays in Kosovo between 2011 and 2014, but is primarily informed by extended field research conducted between February and June 2014. This field research in Kosovo aimed to address the less obvious forms of ethnicity. Or in other words, the forms and shapes ethnicity takes in everyday practice. This research has been aware of the pitfalls of over-ethnicized accounts and careful not to force ethnicity upon the subjects and the situation, but to let it emerge, when it emerges. Doing so this research takes serious the warning of the anthropologist Thomas Eriksen when he emphasizes that if one goes out to look for ethnicity, one will surely ‘find’ it.

The data for this research consists of eighteen lengthy, formal and recorded interviews and extensive ethnographic observation, including many unrecorded inter-

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9 Brubaker et al., *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town*, 7.
10 Ibid., 9.
11 Ibid., 358.
12 Ibid., 9.
views, informal conversations and observations, in Pristina and Gračanica. The focus of this research is on the city of Pristina, but included the town of Gračanica. Gračanica is a Serbian enclave, a ten-minute drive outside of Pristina, and in ways an extension of the old Pristina. While before 1999 the Serbs were a minority in Pristina, they made up a substantial part of the city’s population. After the political oppression of the Albanians in the 1990s by the Milošević regime and the war that followed, almost all Serbs left the city in the revengeful aftermath of the war. Some moved to Belgrade, Mitrovica or other cities in Serbia, but many fled to the nearby Serb village of Gračanica, which soon became an enclave, or ‘ghetto’ in the words of many Serbs living there.

Many of the subjects of the formal interviews are born and bred in Pristina, but Pristina being the capital and Kosovo a country characterized by much migration, the interviews also include people that were born elsewhere. The interviewees include Albanians and Serbs, as well as a couple of subjects of mixed descent. These interviews were usually open-ended and did not focus on ethnicity, but rather on the life stories of the subjects and their everyday lives today. The field research was of course intended to gather information about ethnicity in practice, but as this is rooted in everyday life, there was a lot of attention for general information about the everyday problems, joys and interests of people. It often provided unexpected insights in either the everyday lives of people or into the workings of ethnicity in these daily lives, as well as give an essential context about life in Kosovo.

These interviews and observations have provided the data for the core of this thesis; the analysis of the many forms that shape the experience and enactment of everyday ethnicity in Kosovo. This analysis will show that when ethnicity matters a great deal to Kosovars and life in Kosovo, Kosovars more often than not do not frame their everyday cares and concerns in ethnic terms nor is ethnicity experienced continuously or often relevant to their experience of everyday life. This finding is at odds with most over-ethnicized accounts of Kosovo and ethnicity that tend to emphasize the centrality and power of ethnicity to peoples lives. The experience of everyday problems and predicaments, such as the lack of jobs, the quality of education, water and electricity cuts, is hardly ever cast in ethnic terms by Albanians today. And when Serbs experience ethnicity more easily and are more likely to cast their problems in ethnic terms, often they do not and instead put the blame on their ‘own’ politicians for their incompetence or corruption. These accounts are not so much concerned with the causes tensions and problems in Kosovo, but rather with how people perceive them, understand and explain them. They look at when ethnicity becomes salient in interaction, rather than looking at the nominally mixed interactions. They look at when ethnic terms are used to understand a certain situation, and when other categories are employed to categorize people and events. Such accounts provide important insights, a corrective to overethnicized accounts of life in Kosovo and a better position to understand the processes of ethnicity in everyday life.

14 Eighteen formal and recorded interviews have been conducted, with in total twenty-one persons. Of these four are Kosovo Serbs, two Albanian-Serb, one Albanian-Bosniak, one Gorani, one Albanian from Albania and the other twelve Kosovo Albanians. Fourteen of them were men and seven of them woman. The interviews generally lasted between one and three hours, but some were longer and others consisted of multiple sessions. More elaborate information on the gathering of data and the methodology used can be found in the ‘Note on Data’.
A wide range of different forms of everyday ethnicity will be examined, ranging from the experience of everyday problems, to processes of categorization and identification, the role and dynamics of language, the ways in which institutions and organizations create and reproduce ‘ethnic worlds’ and how people talk about politics amongst each other on a daily basis. The research looks at private enactments of ethnicity and the experience of ethnicity in interethnic interaction. But it also observes what other categories and identifications – other than ethnic ones – matter to people’s lives, and might take more prominence for certain people and at certain times. These include differentiations between urban and rural people, between civilized people and uncivilized folks, and between religions. This selection is by no means exhaustive. Given the wide range of issues and the complexity of the matter, this study is understood to be a preliminary research that utilizes an innovative, new and promising approach to ethnicity and provides a first exploration of the benefits such an approach has to our understanding of ethnicity in general and of everyday ethnicity in Kosovo specifically.

This analysis of the less conspicuous forms of ethnicity found in the people’s everyday lives is preceded by a discussion of the key approaches to ethnicity in chapter one. This chapter focuses primarily on the main debate found in literature on ethnicity, the debate between primordial and constructivist accounts of ethnicity. While it becomes clear that constructivism has rightly critiqued primordialist accounts that take ethnic ties as pre-social, biological and natural, it will be argued that besides these substantialist primordial accounts, more sophisticated primordial approaches exist and that they might hold more value than has been recognized by constructivists. It is this debate that leads us to the theoretical work of Brubaker that focuses on everyday ethnicity that emphasizes that investigations into ethnicity should look at the processes and dynamics of how ethnicity works, rather than assume the centrality of ethnicity and ethnic groups.

Having established the theoretical framework, chapter two continues to provide the context and contours for the analysis of everyday ethnicity in Kosovo. It first of all provides a sketch of the situation in contemporary Kosovo and a general outline of the main protagonists in this research, the Albanians and the Serbs. This is followed by a discussion of the national question in Kosovo. In this part Kosovo will be characterized as an ethnic shatter zone where conflicts have been prevalent and widespread – however just as widespread as coexistence. It follows the ideas of Ger Duijzings, who argues that a frontier zone such as Kosovo is characterized by conflict and coexistence and that for a long time conflicts did not center on ethnic divisions at all, but either on other categories or just on the defense of certain autonomies or interest of local elites. In the analysis we will see that this is still largely the case today.

Ethnic contention and nationalist claims have however fulfilled a central role in the past two centuries, and to get a clear image of the context of these conflicts the main myths and claims are described in this part. The last part of this chapter deals with the historical context of Kosovo from pre-Roman times, the Battle of Kosovo and the Ottoman invasion of the Balkans, life under Ottoman rule, the rise of nationalism and nation-states, the creation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and later, after the Second World War the Social Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, to the war of 1999 and the declaration of independence in 2008.

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This brief historic overview serves as a context to the analysis as well as a corrective to nationalist claims and a hint at processes and dynamics of ethnicity over the course of the centuries.

The analysis forms the core of this study and aims to examine and show the many different everyday forms and practices through which ethnicity is produced and reproduced. Focusing on how, when and where ethnicity ‘happens’ or does not ‘happen’ in the lives of ordinary people, this analysis looks at a wide range of issues of everyday life in Kosovo. From the worries and wishes of people, the ways they get by and the ways by which they hope to get ahead to frustrations and complaints about the government and life in Kosovo. From the institutions and organizations that create and produce the social worlds Albanians and Serbs live in, to the categories they use to understand and interpret the world around them and the roles language, bodily cues and so on play in this. From the ways people talk about politics and politicians to common sense knowledge, stories and jokes. It is in these daily experiences and routines that ethnicity ‘happens’, and this chapter tries to sift out the many different ways and moments in which it does or does not.

Taking this perspective we focus on the inconspicuous and often neglected or obscured ways through which people experience in their daily lives. Gaining a better understanding of these processes will challenge overethnicized and groupist understandings of ethnicity in Kosovo and elsewhere. It allows us to look at the workings of ethnicity, of how, where and when ethnicity ‘happens’. And it will show that even in a country where ethno-political contestation has led to such a devastating and dramatic event as war, a disjunction exists between how ethnicity is used and utilized in the political realm and how ethnicity is experienced and enacted by ordinary Kosovars in everyday life.

Or in the words of Hobsbawm, that the cares and concerns of ordinary people are ‘not necessarily national and still less nationalist’.16 Even in Kosovo.

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I

Theoretical Framework

1.1 Introduction

Images of the destructive siege of Dubrovnik trickled into people’s living rooms in the early 1990s, rudely replacing the still fresh holiday memories many people in Western Europe had of the old Yugoslav, or rather Croatian, city. If this was not shocking enough, it did not take long before reports about concentration camps, ethnic cleansing and massacres came in from what used to be Yugoslavia. Srebrenica shocked the Western world, as it showed that bloody ethnic conflict was not confined to the far Rwanda, but that exactly a year after the gruesome events in Rwanda, mass killings had happened in Europe’s backyard.

While the West grappled with the violence and sought for explanations, journalists sketched the first images of ancient hatreds between primitive Yugoslav ethnic groups reemerging after a hibernation of some decades. Scholars explained the historical and cultural inevitability of ethnic violence in the Balkans given the long history of animosity and cultural vault lines, or pointed at least how the leaders of ethnic groups made clever and strategic use of the plethora of historical grudges and cultural diversities waiting to be utilized.

These explanations summarize in brief the two approaches to ethnic conflict on the Balkans. The first focuses on the ‘ancient hatreds’ as the main cause of ethnic conflict and bloodshed in Yugoslavia. This image is still powerfully present in journalistic accounts and common understanding of the Balkans. The basic idea is that the long history of violence and profound cultural differences are deeply rooted in the culture and society of the Balkans and that the political control and prosperity of Yugoslavia just temporarily subdued these ethnic hatreds. This explanation was convenient to the West as it exoticized the conflicts and constructed the Balkans as the internal ‘Other’. Whatever happened there would never happen in the civilized West.17 A second, and more sophisticated explanation commonly found in scholarly accounts pointed at elites who mobilized ethnic groups with the use of ethnic symbols and historical memory. The idea is that the so-called ‘ethnic entrepreneurs’ use these ethnic symbols to manipulate ethnic groups into violent conflict, in other words ‘play the ethnic or national card’, in order to enhance their interests.

There are clear differences between these two explanations, but they have two things in common. First, both of them create distance between the Balkans and the West. Especially Western Europe, still traumatized by the nationalism of the 1930s and 40s and still celebrating the victory of the Cold War and the reunion of Germany was ready to embrace a peaceful and economically prosperous future and could not ignore this sudden violence inside Europe. These explanations exported the problems to the primitive periphery of Europe and allowed for the illusion that such a thing could never (again)

happen in Western Europe. Yet the second element in common to both explanations is of more interest here. Both of them see ethnicity itself as the main cause of war. Whether it spontaneously erupts or is a slumbering power waiting to be misused by ethnic entrepreneurs, it is the power of ethnicity that harbors the causes of conflict.18

If this is true, what then is ethnicity exactly? What in the nature of ethnicity allows it to be so powerful that it drives people into war? In the remainder of this chapter we will look at two of the main approaches to ethnicity: primordialism and social constructivism. These approaches will be briefly introduced and put under scrutiny before introducing the theory of Brubaker as a way of reconciling these two apparently opposing approaches. This will eventually lead to the idea that rather than asking what ethnicity is or how it causes violence, we should asking how ethnicity works.

1.2 What is ethnicity?

If the cause of ethnic conflict lies in the power of ethnicity, we need to understand what ethnicity is. Ethnic conflict presupposes that there are groups who have are in conflict with each other and that these groups are ethnic. It is thus ethnicity that binds these groups together. While much confusion exists among people what ethnicity exactly is and what it consists of, these ethnic perspectives do count among the strongest perspectives through which we see and understand the world. This is illustrated in a quote from The Economist ‘If you are born poor, you may die rich. But your ethnic group is fixed’.19 As apparent as the importance and influence of ethnicity is, as elusive it is as a concept. More than forty years after the first mentioning of the term ethnicity in the Oxford English Dictionary not much consensus has been reached within the literature on ethnicity.20

The famous theorist Max Weber had written about ethnic groups however long before the term came to popularity. In his Economy and Society from 1922 he defined ethnicity as a subjectively experienced sense of commonality based on the belief of common ancestry and shared culture.21 An ethnic group is then ‘a cultural community based on a common belief in putative descent’.22 While ethnicity as a term gained quick popularity, the question whether ethnic groups are ‘real’ or not started to surface repeatedly in the literature. Michael Moerman, in a study on ethnic relations in Thailand, realized there was a problem when he had trouble answering the question ‘who are the Lue?’, the ethnic group he was focusing on. His problem was one of demarcation, of boundaries. While many of the criteria such as language, common culture, political organization seemed sufficient initially;

18 Gagnon Jr., The Myth of Ethnic War, 200.
they quickly turned out to be too porous. Moerman came to the conclusion that ‘someone is Lue, by virtue of believing and calling himself Lue and acting in ways that validate his Lueness’.23 The question of how real ethnic groups are leads us to important questions concerning ethnicity and one of the longest running debates in the field of ethnicity’ the primordialism debate.24

1.3 Primordialism

Beliefs in the idea that social categories – such as ethnic groups – are natural, inevitable and unchangeable facts seem to be deeply rooted in peoples common-sense understandings of the social world.25 The anthropologist Francisco J. Gil-White experienced this first handedly when: ‘recently, my Russian teacher, herself a Russian Jew, told me that to her I am a Jew, because I am descended from Jews. She will not budge, and maintains this view despite being aware that (1) I have to go back four generations (perhaps more) to find an ancestor who practiced Judaism (after that they are all Roman Catholic); (2) I did not grow up with a Jewish identity; and (3) my parents and I did not even know that any of our ancestors were Jewish until I was about ten years old, when a genealogy buff in the family uncovered this information.’26 It is the kind of belief in blood ties illustrated here that we could call primordialism.27

It is exactly this idea of primordialism, combined with hints of Orientalism, which lies at the base of the explanations of ethnic conflict as ‘ancient hatreds’.28 However, the historical claims by nationalists who attempted to connect their contemporary struggles with ancient history have been proven false numerous times by scholars and the essentializing perspectives that the cultures of the Balkan region are characterized by blood thirst are dismissed as oversimplified.29 These critiques might discard the primordialist understanding and explanations of the causes of ethnic conflicts, these critiques do not tell us anything about the nature of ethnicity itself.

Primordialism then is often portrayed as the understanding that objective entities such as ethnic groups exist ‘with inherent features, such as territory, language, recognizable membership, and even common mentality’.30 This idea of real and natural bonds was soon to be opposed by social constructivists that denied the realness of these bonds and

23 Michael Moerman, ‘Who are the Lue: Ethnic identifications in a complex civilization’, American Anthropologist, 67 (1965) 1215-29, 1219, as quoted in Eriksen, Ethnicity and Nationalism, 11-12.
24 Fenton, Ethnicity, 71-72.
28 Orientalism is the well-known notion of Edward Said where he illuminated the Western tendency to emphasize and exaggerate the differences between the West and the Eastern or Arab world, in which the latter if often portrayed as backward, uncivilized, violent and dangerous. Edward Said, Orientalism (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).
29 Cederman, ‘Nationalism and Ethnicity in International Relations’ 534, Eric Hobsbawm has been one of the most notable scholars to refute these historical claims. Eric Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalism since 1780 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) and Eric Hobsbawm and Terence O. Ranger ed., The Invention of Tradition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
30 Valery Tishkov, Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in and after the Soviet Union. The Mind Aflame (London: Sage, 1997) 1, as quoted in Fenton, Ethnicity, 73.
emphasized the constructed and instrumental nature of groupness. This debate between primordialists and constructivists has been at the core of much of the literature on ethnicity. Constructivists have critiqued primordialists’ arguments with good reason for seeing ethnicity as something static and failing to account for the malleability of ethnic ties. This debate has grown stale by now however, argues Brubaker, for the dismissal of primordialism has become a routine gesture. There is however little consensus over what primordialism exactly is. While some forms of primordialism are quite rightly discarded, others so-called primordialist accounts have been misrepresented and even used as straw men to strengthen their own, often constructivist, accounts. The key elements of the primordialist approach will be illustrated by a discussion around the alleged and mistaken primordialism of Clifford Geertz.

As a theoretical concept primordialism was one of several attempts to understand the nature of social ties in different societies. One of the most influential sources of supposed primordialism can be found in the seminal work The Interpretation of Cultures by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz. In the essay ‘The Integrative Revolution’ Geertz argues that in many new, post-colonial states, the primary attachment of people is to others who are seen to be of the same ‘race’, ‘who are kinsmen and women, who speak the same language, or whose sense of a collective past and future is based on shared experience of a region, the same religion, or on a community of culture and custom.’ Geertz argues further that these are the real and immediate communities to which people feel that they belong: ‘The multi-ethnic populations of the new states tend to regard the immediate, concrete and meaningful sorting implicit in such “natural” diversity as the substantial content of their individuality’.

Taken at face value, this quote seems to underline Geertz primordial and essentialist position. Geertz gets even more explicit:

‘By a primordial attachment is meant one that stems from the “givens” – or more precisely, as culture is inevitably involved in such matters, the assumed “givens” of social existence: immediate contiguity and kin connection mainly, but beyond them the given-ness that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language ... and following particular practices. These congruities of blood, speech, custom and so on are seen to have an ineffable, and at times overpowering, coerciveness in and of themselves. One is bound to one’s kinsman, one’s neighbor, one’s fellow believer, ipso facto; as the result not merely of personal affection, practical necessity, common interest, or incurred obligation, but at least in great party by virtue of some unaccountable absolute import attributed to the very tie itself. The general strength of such primordial bonds, and the types of them that are important, differ from society to society, and from time to time.’

Three central elements can be inferred from this passage. First, that primordial ties are ties not reflected upon: they are largely taken for granted (by the members of an ethnic group).

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34 Fenton, Ethnicity, 80.
35 Clifford Geertz The interpretation of Cultures (New York: Basic Books, 1973) 258, as quoted in Fenton, Ethnicity, 80.
36 Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures, 259-260.
Second, these ties are felt as deeply rooted and as invoking obligations towards other group members. And thirdly, the tie itself is of absolute importance.\textsuperscript{37} Somehow this relationship seems more important than other ones. At the core of Geertz argument lies the idea that these (ethnic) relationships seem to have something special to them, their primordiality, that makes them different from for example contractual relationships.

While Geertz work did not attempt to define ethnicity, but rather tried to understand the nature of different social ties, the literature has often mistakenly assumed that he did define ethnicity. This has led to a misrepresentation of his position as taking ethnic ties as pre-social, biological, purely emotion and unreasoning – exactly the crucial and criticized elements of what primordialism is taken to be.\textsuperscript{38} This misrepresentation of Geertz in many discussions stems from a overlooking of the crucial distinction between \textit{perceived} 'givens' and \textit{actual} 'givens'. As Brubaker points out, in defense of Geertz and the dismissed 'primordialist position', it's the participants, the members of ethnic groups who are the real primordialists when they treat ethnicity as naturally given and immutable, and not the researchers such as Geertz.\textsuperscript{39} By misrepresenting the arguments of Geertz and other primordialists, constructivists have used primordialism as a straw man. They have portrayed primordialists as 'analytical naturalizers' rather than 'analysts of naturalizers'.\textsuperscript{40}

The fact that primordialism has often been misrepresented does however not mean that primordialism is the 'right way' to understanding ethnicity. There is an important difference between theorists that take certain perceived 'givens' more serious than constructivists and substantialist and banal primordialism practiced either by journalists and some scholars or by the nationalists themselves. The following part will look at the important correctives and innovations that the tradition of constructivism has brought into the field of ethnicity and nationalism. Moreover, the fact that theoretical primordialism is a tradition that should be taken seriously should not obscure the fact that banal primordialism should be regarded with much suspicion and caution. Primordial accounts of belonging utilized and misused by elites such as conservative politicians or ethnic entrepreneurs have caused much havoc in the Balkan and elsewhere and are rightly criticized.\textsuperscript{41}

\textbf{1.4 Constructivism}

While primordialism is attributed to positively answer the question whether ethnic groups are real or not (often mistakenly as we have seen), constructivists deny that ethnic groups are real. Rather, the core argument of the constructivist position is that groups are socially constructed. The authors belonging to the constructivist tradition are well known, and rightly so as they made way for the argument that identities are not given or natural, but that they are (to some degree) created, sustained and made relevant through political action. This tradition includes the works of Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson and Eric

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{37} Fenton, \textit{Ethnicity}, 82.
\item \textsuperscript{38} Fenton, \textit{Ethnicity}, 83.
\item \textsuperscript{39} Brubaker, \textit{‘Ethnicity as Cognition’}, 49.
\item \textsuperscript{40} Ibid., Fenton, \textit{Ethnicity}, 83-84, 88-90 and Jenkins, \textit{Rethinking Ethnicity}, 45.
\item \textsuperscript{41} Nationalist movements in the 1930s and 40s, as well as nationalist right wing movements in Western Europe today are guilty of just such primordial accounts of national identities being that are under threat by the European Union or Islam and should be regarded with the same caution.
\end{itemize}
Hobsbawm, and when these works are primarily focused on nationalism, they have had much influence on the field of ethnicity.\textsuperscript{42}

Gellner sees the national unit as being synonymous with an ethnic group (or at least an ethnic group that makes claims to a state): ‘in brief’ nationalism is a theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones.\textsuperscript{43} But while Gellner sees this congruence of political and national boundaries as the premise for a nation-state and thus nationalism, he argues that nationalism was born out of the necessity for the modern, industrial state.\textsuperscript{44} With the education of a workforce, nations supported industrialism while this industrialization and centralization in turn encouraged nationalism. Benedict Anderson, in addition, argues that national identities are shaped by ‘print-capitalism’, which created vernacular reading communities. Through this process something that Anderson calls ‘imagined communities’ are created; communities of people that do not know each other, have no interaction yet perceive themselves as belonging to the same group.\textsuperscript{45} Eric Hobsbawm is another scholar that is associated with the tradition of constructivism. His notion of ‘invented traditions’ is well known. These invented traditions are products of deliberate social constructions serving the interests of certain elites. A notion of course closely related to ideas of ethnic entrepreneurship.

Steve Fenton argues that while these constructivist accounts provide important correctives to primordial ideas of ethnicity, their language of ‘invention’ and ‘imagination’ might go a little too far. He writes that all inventions and re-inventions of identities have some social realities, such as language or religious difference that form the base for these constructions.\textsuperscript{46} Some constructivist accounts are called instrumentalist, as they point in the direction of social constructs that serve the interests of certain elites. These accounts emphasize the malleability of ethnic ties. One of these theorists, Frederik Barth, wanted to look beyond the ‘cultural stuff’ that make up the material, and focused on the dynamics of ethnic boundary making.\textsuperscript{47} Abner Cohen takes it further, and really presses for the ways in which ethnic groups are useful instruments for fulfilling personal and collective interests.\textsuperscript{48} These instrumentalists rightfully criticize the failure of primordialism to account for change, but are themselves unable to account for the endurance of ethnicity and the deep emotional attachments that come with ethnic ties.

\textsuperscript{42} Ethnicity and nationalism, just as the terms ethnic groups and nations, are closely related and often intertwined. It will suffice here that ethnicity does not equal nationalism and that ethnic groups do not equal nations nor states. The distinguishing mark between nationalism and ethnicity is nationalism’s relation to the state, as it makes territorial claims while ethnic groups do not necessarily pursue statehood. When political leaders of an ethnic group make demands for a state such a movement becomes by definition a nationalist movement. For a more elaborate discussion of the relationship between ethnicity and nationalism see Eriksen, \textit{Ethnicity and Nationalism}, 7, chapter 6-8.


\textsuperscript{46} Fenton, \textit{Ethnicity}, 74-75.


\textsuperscript{48} Hutchinson and Smith, \textit{Ethnicity}, 33.
Constructivist theories have been exceptionally successful, have dominated the field of ethnicity for a long-time and inspired many insights into the nature of ethnicity. The American sociologist Rogers Brubaker argues that while the constructivist tradition is very respectable, it has grown clichéd. ‘The idea that ethnicity is constructed is commonplace; how ethnicity is constructed is seldom specified in detail.’49 Brubaker was one of the first – but not the only one – to voice his dissatisfaction with the lack of innovation in the field of ethnicity and the failure of constructivist approaches to synthesize.50 Moreover, the debate between primordialism and constructivism that has been central to the field for so long has grown stale, argues Brubaker, agreeing that substantialist ideas about ethnicity, especially outside of the academia, are surprisingly robust. But the fact is that not many respected scholars have substantialist ideas about ethnicity and that many constructivist approaches have used primordialism falsely and routinely as a straw man. He argues however that sophisticated primordialism and constructivism need not to be mutually exclusive, but that they can be seen as complimentary and leading to different questions: ‘on the one hand, how groups are conceived, and folk sociologies constructed and sustained, on the other hand, how ethnicity works in interactional practice’.51

To this Brubaker adds that while most constructivist works have so avidly criticized the substantialist assumptions of some primordial approaches, many constructivists themselves actually make use of a substantialist and ‘decidedly nonconstructivist “groupism.”’52 In the remainder of this chapter we will look at what Brubaker means with this ‘groupism’, how we should avoid it and how instead of investigating the nature of ethnicity, we might ask seemingly naïve and basic questions about how, when and where ethnicity works.

1.5 Beyond groupism53

The bulk of Brubaker’s work centers on the importance he puts on the difference between groups and categories. In distinguishing between groups and categories, he is not the first, but as he argues, the difference is all too often forgotten. It was Frederik Barth who argued that ethnicity is not so much shared traits or cultural stuff, but practices of classification and categorization, in other words: boundary making. This includes practices of self-classification and the classification of and by others. Richard Jenkins, among others, developed this idea further. Jenkins emphasizes the dynamics between self-identification and external categorization, with attention to different individual, interactional and institutional levels, as well as contexts, informal and formal, in which these processes of categorizations take place.54

Fenton has also pointed out, ‘we should be alert to the possibility that the phrase ‘ethnic group’ may carry much complexity in the word ‘group’, the apparently innocuous

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52 Brubaker, Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town, 7.
53 Borrowed from Rogers Brubaker.
54 Rogers Brubaker, Loveman, Stamatov, ’Ethnicity as Cognition’, 32.
half of the phrase. The variation extends from groups within a real corporate existence to the diffuse identity of a mere category. So instead of focusing on ethnicity, perhaps we should look at what actually constitutes a group. Therefore puts Brubaker this innocuous part of the twins under scrutiny. If with a group, we mean a collectivity that is mutually interacting, mutually recognizing, with some sort of identity, solidarity and capacity for action, it should be clear that this is not the same as a category argues Brubaker. A category can only be a potential basis for group-formation, or ‘groupness’, as he likes to call it. This term – ‘groupness’ – he borrows from Charles Tilly. Jenkins, upon whose work Brubaker built with his approach, accentuates the contrasting processes of identity production, both from the inside and from the outside. He writes: ‘One of the most enduringly useful distinctions we employ for this purpose (that is; the classification of human collectivities – DD) is that between groups and categories. A group is a collectivity which is meaningful to its members, of which they are aware; a category is a collectivity which is defined according to criteria formulated by the sociologist’. A group therefore is a collectivity that is conscious of itself and bounded by processes of internal definition, a category on the other hand is externally defined.

When we distinguish consistently between groups and categories, argues Brubaker, we can problematize the relation between the two. The idea is that instead of presuming the relation between categories and groups, we should ask questions about the ‘degree of groupness associated with a particular category in a particular setting and about the political, social, cultural and psychological processes through which categories get invested with varying degrees of groupness’.

It is argued that when one starts with categories rather than groups, it influences the kind of questions we ask. Taking groups, we rather automatically start asking questions about what groups want, need, or do. What they think of others and themselves, and how they act towards others. According to Brubaker, taking groups as our basic units of analysis leads us to using the same substantialist language of attributing agency, identity, interests to groups used by nationalists themselves. When we, on the other hand, start with categories we are led to ask questions about processes and relations, and not about substance. This is what he calls going beyond groupism; going beyond ‘the tendency to take discrete, sharply differentiated, internally homogeneous and externally bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts and fundamental units of social analysis’.

With this approach, Brubaker attempts to synthesize a wide array of approaches to ethnicity and nationalism. The aim is to ask how people and institutions do things with categories. This question includes looking at how (political) elites limit access to scarce resources such as jobs or education by excluding outsiders, but also looks at more everyday actions such as identifying or classifying oneself or others. Furthermore, it allows us to research the ‘organizational and discursive careers of categories – the processes through

55 Fenton, Ethnicity, 71.
56 Brubaker et al., Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town, 11.
58 Jenkins, Rethinking Ethnicity, 54.
59 Ibid.
60 Brubaker et al., Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town, 11 and Brubaker, ‘Ethnicity without groups’, 169.
61 Brubaker, ‘Ethnicity without groups’, 164.
which they become institutionalized and entrenched in routines’, which Brubaker takes from Tilly but has close connections to Barth and other constructivists.\(^62\) It also makes us look things such as ethno-symbolic elements signaled by John Armstrong and Anthony D. Smith, as categories are embedded in culturally powerful and symbolically resonant myths, memories and narratives.\(^63\)

Does this distinction and critique actually make a difference? Brubaker thinks it absolutely does. He argues that whilst the discussion might seem to be only addressing the ivory towers, he believes this view can have serious implications. First, he mentions that sensitivity to framing dynamics can alert us to the risk of over-ethnicized and overly groupist interpretations of conflict situations. This observes the fact that coding biases always and that they are to be put under scrutiny as much as possible. This framing (already made popular by Irving Goffman in the 1970s) is the tendency that coding practices are strongly influenced by prevailing discourses, both to the actors as well as the analysts.\(^64\) It means that, for example in the situation of Kosovo, there is a strong coding bias in the ethnic direction, while, as Brubaker mentions, that ‘what is represented as ethnic conflict – such as the violence in the former Yugoslavia, may have as much or more to do with thuggery, warlordship, opportunistic looting and black-market profiteering than with ethnicity’.\(^65\)

A second implication is that with this perspective we should be able to understand that, recognizing the centrality of organizations in ethnic violence, and their leaders’ tendency to speak and act in the name of ethnic groups, we should not confuse groupist rhetoric, for example these group leaders, with actual groupness. Thirdly, inspired by a classic distinction by Max Weber, that ethnic leaders might well have to live off politics, as well as for politics.\(^66\) As a fourth implication, Brubaker puts forward the important idea that when we develop sensitivity to observing the waxing and waning of groupness, it could lead us to see that groupness might be more the result of conflict than its underlying cause. This is of importance as most analytical attention and policy interventions are aimed at the groups and their reconciliation, at providing minorities with as much rights as possible and then hoping then will be all right.\(^67\) While attention to the processes through which ‘groupness tens to develop and crystallize and those through which it may subside’ might well lead to different analyses of ethnic conflict and more effective policy interventions. Brubaker further especially hints at having attention not only for growing groupiness, but specifically for declining curves of groupiness.\(^68\) The last implication is closely related to the previous point and holds the idea that a non-groupist approach can bring into focus what he calls the intra-ethnic mechanisms. These mechanisms are of critical importance in the

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\(^62\) Brubaker, ‘Ethnicity without groups’, 169.


\(^66\) Brubaker, ‘Ethnicity without groups’, 176.


\(^68\) Ibid., 176-177.
creation and sustaining of interethnic violence: practices such as in-group 'policing', monitoring, and sanctioning that often generate and sustain groupness.  

Brubaker has worked out this approach to ethnicity by Brubaker theoretically in his book *Ethnicity without Groups*. It is on this theoretical framework that he has built his opus magnus, *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town*, which in his own words is a 'theoretically informed case study and an empirically grounded analysis of how ethnicity works'. These two works form an important theoretical perspective and an instructive methodological approach for studying ethnicity. They provide a synthesis of different existing approaches and a reconciliation of primordialists and constructivists, and thereby a perspective that gives us opportunities to discuss and analyze ethnicity in new and different ways.

This however does not mean that there is no critique. Holly Case pointed out in her review of Brubaker’s book on Cluj, that the book seems to give the impression that this is the way how ethnicity works, with transnational and transhistorical applicability implied by the authors. Case points out that this is a bold statement considering the temporal and geographical rootedness of the case study. Case touches a good point here. When reading the book readers might think of the violence happening during Brubaker’s fieldwork in Cluj some hundreds of kilometers away. As Case writes: ‘would the analysis and results in *Nationalist Politics* have been different in the context of a study of Sarajevo in the early 1990s?’ This is an important and interesting point.

Further, she addresses the question of the transhistorical value of the research; questioning whether ethnicity would have 'worked' in the same manner in 1900 as it does now. These are two interesting points. Yet, I think that the latter point, however important to ask, misses the point of Brubaker’s idea. Brubaker, I believe, attempts to investigate how group processes work, and while the ‘cultural stuff’ these groups work with will differ over time, the dynamics of groupness do not necessarily. It is these dynamics of how, when and where ethnicity works that the focus is on and a better understanding of how the waxing and waning of (ethnic) groupness works could make this approach valuable for our understanding of ethnicity in different times and places.

The first point about transnational implications is a crucial question, and in fact my main reason to take this theory and methodology to Kosovo. It is precisely the question of how well this approach will work in different places and situations, especially places scarred by recent 'ethnic' conflict that provides the main impetus to bring this research to Kosovo. Moreover, I think the underlying point of Case is that time and place matter. This exactly taps into Brubaker’s idea of having attention for increasing and declining curves of groupness. Kosovo fifteen years after the war is not the same Kosovo as it was 10 years ago, or that it will be in ten. Yet, while the points mentioned by Case are crucial ones, I think that Brubaker does not imply that this is the way ethnicity works in general. I believe it is an

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69 Ibid., 177.
72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
invitation to take his approach and to try it in as many different places and contexts possible. And it is exactly this that I have aimed to do with this thesis.

What are we studying when we study ethnicity and ethnic conflict? Brubaker suggests that we should not frame our analysis in terms of ethnic groups, but that it will be better to look at ‘practical categories, cultural idioms, cognitive schemas, commonsense knowledge, organizational routines and resources, discursive frames, institutionalized forms, political projects, contingent events and variable groupness’ in order to get better a understanding of how ethnicity works.\textsuperscript{74} Taking this perspective, Brubaker notes, we may not end up studying ethnicity at all, and by ‘raising questions about the unit of analysis – the ethnic group – we may end up questioning the domain of analysis: ethnicity itself’, but that is an argument for another occasion.\textsuperscript{75}

Given the enormous body of literature that exists on ethnicity it would be rash to pretend that this brief sketch of the theoretical landscape of ethnicity has been comprehensive by any means. However, it has attempted to shine some light on the main approaches and arguments in the field and has argued that Brubaker’s perspective to approach ethnicity without groups provides for an important innovation both theoretically as methodologically. And especially Kosovo, the poster child of a country divided by ethnic conflict, is in dire need of an approach that shakes off the groupist thinking and that, instead of focusing on the assumed power of ethnic bonds, looks at how ethnicity works.

\textsuperscript{74} Brubaker, ‘Ethnicity without Groups’, 186.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.
II

Putting Kosovo in context

Nationalist contention and ethnic strife in Kosovo and the wider Balkan region cannot be understood without the historical context they are born out of. In order to resituate ethnicity in Kosovo in its everyday context, it is important to first get familiar with the situation in Kosovo at the moment, the nationalist claims that have been (and are still being) put forward by politicians and academics, and the historical material that supports (or questions) those claims. This chapter will therefore be split in three parts, where the first part describes in brief the contemporary context of Kosovo, which could be viewed as an introduction into Kosovo anno 2014. The second part will focus on the issue of the national question on the Balkans and the nationalist claims that have been put forward by the two main contesting groups in Kosovo, the Albanians and the Serbs. The final part takes up the historical context of Kosovo from the pre-Roman times all the way to Kosovo’s declaration of independence in 2008, looking at the key events along the way as well as paying attention to shifts of dynamics and dominance over the years. These three parts are deeply linked and provide an essential background to understanding ethnicity and ethnic conflict in Kosovo.

2.1 Kosovo now

2.1.1 A contested republic

If someone who has never heard of Kosovo would look up the place, she would learn that Kosovo is a state that has fairly recently unilaterally declared its independence from Serbia. This happened on the 17th of February 2008, when the province that had been autonomous – yet legally still a part of Serbia under the UN resolution 1244 – broke away from Serbia, declaring the independent Republic of Kosovo76 with the support of the U.S. and the majority of the EU states. Serbia however continues to contest this independence and is supported in this by countries such as Russia and China, but also by EU states like Spain, Greece and Romania.77 Reasons for not recognizing the Republic of Kosovo are the support of Serbia, which is one of the motivations for Russia, but the main reason is that most of the non-recognizing countries themselves have minorities or regions that have potential ambitions.

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76 Or ‘Kosova’ for the Albanians. See the Note on Names for a discussion about choices of place names and other possibly disputed terms.
77 Recognition of Kosovo is still a complex and contested issue. As of August 2014, 108 countries across the world have recognized Kosovo, which amounts to roughly half of the UN member states. The twilight status of Kosovo creates many diplomatic problems for the government and for its citizens, mainly in the form of difficulties with acquiring visa for travelling. The fact that five EU member states do not recognize Kosovo, whilst the EU policy towards Kosovo remains positive an aimed to integrating Kosovo with the rest of the region is problematic as well. It remains to be seen how this process will continue. Today the process is in a bit of an impasse and changes are likely to occur only under the weight of the great powers and world events.
to declare independence and they view Kosovo as a dangerous precedent (and/or oppose the arrogance of ‘the West’ by disregarding the sovereignty principle of states when it suits them).

The independence of Kosovo is a direct result of the breakup of Yugoslavia and the ensuing conflicts that led to NATO waging the first war in its history against the remainder of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, interfering with the conflict in Kosovo and creating a UN administration after Serbia (as the main actor within the FRY) pulled back from Kosovo. The interference and the UN administration that followed, while heavily criticized by many (also by the Albanians), are widely viewed as a victory for the Kosovo Albanians that make up a majority of Kosovo’s population and preceded the declaration of independence. The international presence in Kosovo is still large, KFOR, the international peace keeping mission is still going strong and UNMIK, the UN interim administration, is still in place but performs only a minor role after the declaration of independence. The EU takes up a larger role, mainly in the form of EULEX, a police mission deployed to enhance the rule of law and to ensure security. Although Kosovo has gained de jure sovereignty with the declaration of independence, it is clear that the influence of the EU, the US and other international players on the governance of Kosovo is still very large.

Kosovo today is a landlocked country in the Western Balkans, a region that has been a contested frontier zone between various cultural spheres and mighty forces over the centuries. This has made the Western Balkans, and the Balkan Peninsula at large, into what Ger Duijzings has called an ‘ethnic shatter zone’, a region diverse with different ethnicities and groups, changing borders and clashing cultural spheres.

While one of the main aims of this thesis is to avoid groupism and groupist thinking, it is not possible to understand the nature of the conflict without some rudimentary knowledge about the people of the Western Balkans and Kosovo, especially the Albanians and Serbs. For while the lands of Kosovo have been inhabited and contested by many different peoples and groups, it have been the Albanians and Serbs that have played the most prominent roles over the centuries. Before looking at the nationalist claims of these groups, it would make no sense in trying to understand these claims and conflicts without some knowledge about these peoples.

78 Which by that time only still consisted of Serbia and Montenegro.
79 While NATO forced Serbia to retreat from Kosovo and the repression against the Albanians in Kosovo stopped, which was seen rightly as a victory for the Albanians, the Albanians were heavily disappointed with the agreements they were forced into after the war and the way the UN administration, UNMIK, ruled the country, without them having much say in the rule of the territory. Many Albanians viewed UNMIK as just another foreign ruler, denying them the control of their lands. The large influence the international community still has on proceedings in Kosovo, even after the independence, leads to many Albanians saying that their country is colonized and that the government is just a puppet-government.
80 Western Balkans is a fairly new denomination created by the EU designating the Former Yugoslavia minus Slovenia, plus Albania. Tim Judah, Kosovo. What Everyone Needs to Know (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008) xv-xvii.
2.1.2 Peoples of Kosovo®

Who are the Albanians and the Serbs? This question is as charged as it is tricky. Demographics is one of the favorite tools used by politicians and others to claim rights to Kosovo, and should always be looked at and used with care. This does however not mean that there is nothing we can say about these peoples.

What do we actually talk about Kosovo, when we talk about Kosovo? Kosovo is made up of two regions that are now lapsed together as Kosovo. The eastern part is Kosovo proper, the fields. And to the west we find the plain that the Serbs call Metohija meaning monastic lands, after the Serbian monasteries there and the Albanians call Rrafshi Dukagjinit, the Dukagjin plateau. The name 'Kosovo' comes from the Serbian word Kos, meaning blackbird, which is the base for the name Kosovo Polje that means 'Blackbird Field'. The Serbs, today and for most of the communist period, know the province as Kosovo and Metohija or Kosovet. Albanians however never used Metohija as it refers to the Orthodox and Serbian past of these lands, and prefer to call it Kosova, the Albanian version of Kosovo, to emphasize its unity.

2.1.3 Albanians

The Albanians of Kosovo are part of a Albanian nation that stretches from the 'mother country' Albania to areas of all the neighboring countries such as Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia, Southern Serbia and Northern Greece, as well as to old diaspora communities in Italy and Greece, and newer ones in Turkey, Western Europe and the U.S. The question of how many Albanians there exactly are, whether we talk about Kosovo specifically or the Albanian nation at large, is one of the hardest to answer. The last census in Kosovo in which Albanians participated was in 1981, where the total population of the province in Yugoslavia was put on 1.58 million people, of whom 77.4 percent were Albanians and 14.9 percent Serbs and Montenegrins, with the remaining percentages representing a myriad of small minorities such as Roma, Bosniak, Gorani, Macedonians and so on. Much has happened in the years since, and even the UN stated that it is really hard to provide strong

® Accounts of Kosovo sometimes make it seem as if only Albanians and Serbs live in the area, yet Kosovo is home to a many peoples such as Turks, Bosniaks, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian, Gorani, and other smaller communities. These groups have long often long lived in Kosovo and either have been living in the cities for centuries, such as the Turkish, who are descendants of Turks dispatched by the Ottoman government, or in other areas like the Croats, who are Catholic Slavs and were centered around the area of Janjevo. It would be interesting to take these groups into account as well, and there would be good reasons to do so, yet the choice is to focus on Albanians and Serbs as the two 'groups' that play leading roles in the region.

Judah, Kosovo. What everyone needs to know, 30.

The Albanian diaspora is one of the largest in the world. There are the old Albanian diaspora communities such as the Arbëresh in Italy, that have been living there for centuries and newer diaspora communities that have been settled in different places in the U.S., Western Europe and Turkey from the nineteenth century. The migration often happened in waves following conflict, and was common to Albanians all over the Southern and Western Balkans as well as to other Balkan peoples. It was however the lack of statehood that was an extra push for many Albanians. The collapse of Communism and the Kosovo War of 1999 have led to the latest waves of migration, and economic reasons still push young people from all over the Balkans towards migration.

People were quite free in choosing their ethnicity or minority in this census, besides Albanian and Serb that made up the two largest denominations, the groups range from Muslim and Bosniak, to Montenegrin, Gorani, Gypsies (or Ashkali, Egyptian and Roma being the three separate groups making up the then-called 'gypsies'), Macedonian, Turks, Croats and even 'Yugoslavs'. Julie A. Mertus, Kosovo. How Myths and Truths Started a War (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999) 316.
and reliable data. Due to migrations, political interests, large diaspora populations with two passports, the officials numbers fluctuate enormously, for Kosovo Albanians sometimes well under and sometimes well over 2 million. Foreign journalists, as well as many international actors, therefore use for Kosovo as a rule of thumb an estimate of a population of 2 million, where the Albanians make up roughly 90 percent, the Serbs 6 percent and the remaining 4 percent by the other minorities.

While for most peoples of the Balkans religion is a defining feature, this is not the case for Albanians. This is something they pride themselves in, and is accompanied by the rather clichéd quote that ‘the religion of the Albanians is Albanianism’. To be Serb is to be Serbian Orthodox, even when one is not religious, just as being Croat entails being Catholic and being Bosniak means being a Slav with a Muslim background. It is however not true that Albanians are not religious at all, to the contrary. The majority of Albanians in Kosovo is Muslim, as is the case in Macedonia, while many Albanians in Montenegro and Northern Albania are Catholic, and in the South of Albania one can find Orthodox Albanians. Enver Hoxha, the dictator of Communist Albania, declared Albania to be the first atheist state in the world, which had large negative consequences for the presence and acceptance of religion in the country.

Religion and the Albanians is an intriguing subject, but what binds the Albanian nation together is language. Which is to some degree the cause of the relative insignificance of religion in relation to idea of the Albanian nation and nationalism. The Albanian language is what all Albanians have in common and is what binds them. Differences do exist within the language in the form of two main dialects, the Gheg of the North, which is also spoken in Kosovo and the dialect of the south, Tosk. The Albanian nation might be strongly bonded by their language, their national awareness developed much later than in most surrounding nations.

A major reason for this was the absence of a national church as found with the Serbs, Greeks and Bulgarians, as many of these churches crafted and developed the sense of nationhood in opposition to the Ottoman domination. The lack of such a church meant that it was not until the 1870s that the Albanians started organizing, by that time the Montenegrins and Serbians had already gained independent states. It was mainly the rise of these states, and their hunger for expansion, and not so much the crumbling Ottoman domination, that made clear to the Albanians that they had to organize.

The independent state of Albania was declared in 1912 from, in the words of Mithat Frashëri (1880-1949), ‘a shattered array of clans’. This Albanian state ended up not containing the whole of the Albanian nation, leaving much out of its borders. This is a common phenomenon in the Balkans where more often than not, political borders do match the cultural ones, allowing for the national contention that has caused so much havoc in the region. And while Albanian nationalism is well developed nowadays, much of the words of Fatos Lubonja (1951) an Albanian journalist and intellectual, still hold true to some degree

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86 With many disruptive events that either confused or literally destroyed databases on populations, the utilization or straight-out misuse of these data, incompetent governments, distrust of governments, inaccessible rural areas and large diaspora groups with double passports, it is incredibly hard to come to any hard figures on the exact built up of the population in Kosovo. Judah, Kosovo. 2.
87 Judah, Kosovo, 3.
and create divisions and tensions within the nation: the Albanians ‘identified themselves within the limits of their village, region or bajrak and recognized to some extent the central government in Constantinople, or its representatives in the provinces, but they had very few spiritual, economic or intellectual ties with one another’.  

Albanians are still a nation that is shattered over different countries, and while there are some politicians that call for a united or ‘Greater Albania’ (or warn against it, such as e.g. Serbian politicians), it does not seem that the Albanians themselves are too enthusiastic about it. It actually seems that a distinct Kosovo Albanian identity is developing slowly but surely.

2.1.4 Serbs

The Serbian nation has had and still has a great influence over the Balkan Peninsula. Both the Serbian people as the borders of the Serbia have moved around the area over the centuries, the last shifts of the borders occurred only years ago during the wars of the 1990s. This thesis is about Kosovo, but it would make no sense to leave the Serbian state and the surrounding region out of the picture. The Serbs in Kosovo are only a tiny part of the bigger nation. Besides Serbia and Kosovo (which in the eyes of most Serbs still is Serbia), Serbs live in Bosnia (Republika Srpska), Croatia, Montenegro, Macedonia, as well as abroad in diaspora communities all over the West. The wars that followed the breakup of Yugoslavia led to the migration and fleeing of enormous amounts of people across the Balkan, with estimates of 600,000 Serbs ending up as refugees from Croatia and Bosnia in Serbia. The question of how many Serbs left Kosovo in the wake of the Kosovo war of 1999 is a charged one, with estimates fluctuating between 100,000 and 230,000.  

Serbia has moved, grown, shrunk, disappeared and reappeared many times. From the first Serbian Kingdom in medieval times to the Ottoman domination of the area over the course of 500 years, to the reappearance of a Serbian state in the 19th century and its later place within the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia of the second half of the twentieth century. More attention to claims to Kosovo will be given in the next parts, but it is important to note that in the story of the Serbian state and nation much attention is given to Kosovo as being the birthplace of the Serbian state in the middle ages and it being the heart of the nation as it is home to the Serbian Orthodox Patriarchy. A key element of the Serbian nation is, as noted above, the binding factor and importance of the Serbian Orthodox church. It is one answer to the question that fuels many political and academic debates, of what makes a nation a nation. Where their common language unites the Albanians, being Serb means being Serbian Orthodox, even when one is not religious. There are, of course, exceptions, but in general it is religion that has contributed greatly to making the Slavs of the Balkans who they are today.

In contemporary Kosovo Serbs are the largest, however still a small minority. Many Serbs have migrated to Serbia proper, and the Serbs remaining in Kosovo are concentrated

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90 Albanians of course do not recognize the central government in ‘Constantinople’ anymore, but it stands as a metaphor for any central government. Fatos Lubonja, ‘Between the Glory of a Virtual World and the Misery of a Real World’, Albanian Identities. Myth and History, ed. Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers and Bernd J. Fischer (London: Hurst, 2002) 91 and Judah, Kosovo, 10. The Turkish word bajrak means banner. The bajraktar was the local chief during Ottoman times. Malcolm, Kosovo, 16.

91 Judah, Kosovo, 14.
in the contested Northern part of Kosovo, including the divided city of (Kosovska) Mitrovica and around the country in municipalities or enclaves such as Gračanica and Štipce. Most of them uphold their ties with Serbia and do not recognize the independence of the Republic of Kosovo. Most shops use Serbian dinars, not the Euro used by the rest of the country, and maintain separate Serbian institutions, often alongside Kosovar ones.

2.2 National Questions

2.2.1 Ethnic shatter zone

In the minds and eyes of most Serbs and Albanians, as well as many journalists and academics that deal with Kosovo, what exists is the idea of ‘a deeply rooted and unbridgeable rift between Serbs and Albanians, more “ancient” and clear-cut than the divisions in Bosnia’ writes Ger Duijzings.\(^92\) Noel Malcolm, who has written a respected history of Kosovo, also notes that ‘at first sight this looks much more like a genuine “ethnic” conflict. The basic division is, in the first place, an ethnic one in the full sense. [...] Serbs and Albanians are linguistically quite separate. Together with the differentiation in language goes a range of other cultural differences, many of them linked to religion. [...] With both languages and religion setting people apart, all the conditions seem to be present for a primary conflict of peoples’.\(^93\) Both authors point out that while many Serbs and Albanians endorse this idea to an extent, and that the ‘ancient ethnic hatreds’ definitely seem to exist, it is grossly misleading.

Conflicts have been prevalent and widespread in the Balkan region for many centuries, but whether they are the product of ‘ancient hatreds’ is to be seen. The cultural and political landscape of South Eastern Europe was very fragmented and political and cultural boundaries rarely coincided. This was hardly a problem for most of Kosovo’s history, even more so, ‘for most of human history, this idea [...] would have been incomprehensible’, writes Rogers Brubaker.\(^94\) It was only in the nineteenth century that this concept of ‘nationality’ or nationalism came to development, asserting that political authority should be based on nationhood. This led to cultural nationalisms becoming politicized, and politics becoming ‘culturalized’, ‘the ideal of the nation-state gained ground, envisioning the seamless joining of the imagined community of the nation with the organizational reality of the state’, which led to the rise of national questions, mainly in the ethnically fragmented areas of Eastern Europe in the vast, loosely integrated, polyglot, polyreligious Habsburg, Ottoman and Romanov Empires.\(^95\)

This national question emerged in the Ottoman empire, of which Kosovo was a part, in the period when the empire saw the transition from the system of millets that divided the population according to religion, to a system based on cultural and linguistic identification.\(^96\) This could be called the empire’s transition to a multinational state, and

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\(^92\) Duijzings, Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo, 8.

\(^93\) Malcolm, Kosovo, xxvi and Duijzings, Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo, 8.


\(^95\) Brubaker et al., Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town, 29. Nationalism of course also exists and existed in Northern, Western and Central Europe, but in distinctly different ways.

while it is tempting to think that the Ottoman Empire has always been a multinational state, this would be ‘to mistake religious and linguistic heterogeneity for multi-nationality’.97

In most of the Ottoman times (and before) Kosovo was a pluralistic society in which different ethnic groups coexisted, many languages were spoken and many religions were represented. And when from the first half of the nineteenth century Albanians have probably formed a majority in Kosovo, Serbs and Montenegrins, as well as other ‘groups’, have formed important and large minorities. Instead of seeing Kosovo as either Albanian or Serbian ‘ethnic’ territory, Duijzings has proposed that we see this kaleidoscopic society that Kosovo is and has been as an ‘ethnic shatter zone’ in which many different groups lived alongside each other.98 This does not mean that Kosovo has ever been a ‘melting pot’. The mixing was spread over the region as a whole, meaning that different groups inhabited the same space, but still lived quite separate and segregated lives, especially in the countryside. Most villages were ‘ethnically’ pure or homogeneous, while the cities were much more mixed; yet even in the cities and towns the groups lived separately in different neighborhoods or mahalle.99

Duijzings does not deny that Kosovo is a segregated society with a long history of conflict, but he challenges that only conflict is important in this respect. He states that very often these conflicts did not center on ethnic categories and that these categories were often far from clear. According to him it is both conflict and coexistence that characterize a frontier zone such as Kosovo. Rather than one or the other, both elements have been present and been mixing in many different ways over the ages. He points out three main elements of a frontier society that are present in Kosovo: the first is that due to focusing on conflict, many signs of coexisting and symbiosis have been ignored. Despite conflict, there has been intimate contact between Albanians and Serbs in many different ways. Duijzings mentions here some instances of contact, such as in mountain areas of Northern Albania and Montenegro, where there existed strong and intimate links between Albanian and Montenegrin clans. Even when in Kosovo the divisions seem clearer, there is a difference between central state ideology (and nationalism) and frontier practice, where divisions are much less clear and have a different dynamic to them.100

Secondly, it has not always been the ethnic categories that were the most salient in Kosovo. In the everyday lives of people in Kosovo other divisions have been much more important; divisions such as between clans, religions, language, political orientation (ideologies such as Communism) and city-countryside. Thirdly, group identities in general, and in Kosovo specifically, are not set in stone. Groups and the ways they are divided have been changing over time and have never been fixed. Contact between groups and external influences have caused assimilation, conversion, and adaption, just as it has caused the fortification of divisions. Duijzings has focused on many of these cases in his work, with special attention for religious assimilation and coexistence, where people would visit the same shrines and sacred places despite being of different beliefs.101

97 Brubaker et al., Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town, 30.
98 Duijzings, Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo, 10.
99 Ibid. A mahalle is a Turkish word from Arabic meaning neighborhood or quarter.
100 Duijzings, Religion and Politics of Identity in Kosovo, 11-12.
101 Ibid., 13.
Yet, when the Ottoman Empire began to change and cultural nationalism increasingly started to turn into political nationalism, nationhood and ethnicity became more and more dominant. And as nationhood became increasingly salient, political actors started to make claims in the names of ‘their nations’. These claims often were inspired by myths and history, and as the spirit of nationalism was growing, so did the ‘evidence’ for these national claims. Myths were crafted or changed to better suit the purpose, histories either newly written or ‘nationalized’. This is not to say that none of these historic enterprises are to be taken serious, but they surely are seriously subjective and serve the purpose to fortify the divisions between nations and the unity between the people within the nation. Or in the words of the famous Albanian writer Ahmed Kadare: ‘to convince them that they had a splendid history and that the national calamities were not a reason to cool them down about the fatherland, but on the contrary, to stand closer to it’.

These nationalist claims were to play an important role in the nineteenth and twentieth century and remain to be salient to both much of the politics as well as to ordinary people in Kosovo. Much historic writings, by Serbs, Albanians as well as foreign academics have been dedicated to find the truth about these claims and nationalized histories. In the end however, as Tim Judah rightly points out, ‘in the Balkans or elsewhere, what matters is not historical truth but what people believe it to be. Today statues of Serbian kings and heroes in Albanian-controlled parts of Kosovo have disappeared, to be replaced by Albanian ones.’

2.2.2 Myths and claims

To understand and make sense of the situation in Kosovo, the politics and the people themselves, it is necessary to have some knowledge of the position that Kosovo takes up in the stories told to and by the Albanians and Serbs and thus what place Kosovo takes in their minds and hearts. In contesting who has the most right to Kosovo many different arguments, myths and claims can be heard. One of the first and most persistent ones is the argument of ‘who was there first’.

We know that the Slavs, the ancestors of the Serbs and other Slavic people, started migrating to the Balkans from the second half of the sixth century A.D. More and more tribes settled in the area and over time gained more coherence, until a Serbian kingdom emerged in the 12th century under the rule of Stefan Nemanja, the founder of the Serbian royal dynasty. The Albanians on the other hand say they were in Kosovo long before any Slavs settled there, as they believe to be descendants of the Illyrians and the Dardanians, both people that inhabited the area before the Romans conquered it. The Albanians claim that they have long inhabited these lands and that the Serbs invaded it. The Serbs pose exactly the opposite, saying that from during the Serbian rule of those lands, the Serbs were a majority. There might have been some Albanians, the Serbs say, but the Albanians only started moving into Kosovo en masse after the Ottoman victory against the Christian forces

102 Misha, ‘Invention of a Nationalism’, 41.
103 Ahmed Kadare, Kombi shqiptar ne prag të mijëvjecarit të tretë (Tirana: Onufri, 1998) 12, as quoted in Misha, ‘Invention of a Nationalism’, 41.
104 Judah, Kosovo, 25.
in Kosovo in 1389. The Serbs also point at the Slavic roots of the names of most places in Kosovo, including the name Kosovo itself.\textsuperscript{105}

Kosovo takes up a special place in the hearts and minds of Serbs. This has a lot to do with the Serbian Nemanjić dynasty, which played a most important role in shaping the Serbian nation that was just a collection of scattered tribes and chiefs before. The Serbs view Kosovo as the heart of their nation because of the central role it plays in the Serbian narrative. Kosovo was at the core of the Nemanjić kingdom and the place where the Serbian Orthodox church was born, has its most sacred churches and still houses its Patriarchate.\textsuperscript{106} The church and the Serbian monarchy are tied together through the tradition of Serbian royals building churches and monasteries, but even more so by the central role of Stefan Nemanja’s son, St. Sava, as one of the founders of the church. In 1219 the Serbian Orthodox church received autonomy or autocephaly, which was to play a crucial role in the self-understanding of the Serbians and put the Serbians firmly in the ‘Eastern’ or Orthodox world.\textsuperscript{107}

The famous battle of 1389 of Kosovo at the ‘Blackbird Field’ is of great importance to the Serb narrative as well.\textsuperscript{108} Surprisingly, not much is known about this battle, other than that it was a confrontation between an alliance of peoples on the Balkans and the Ottoman invaders, that prince Lazar, the commander of the allied Balkan peoples, died as did the Ottoman sultan Murad. While this battle is often seen as a defeat for the ‘Christian’ forces, it was more of a draw.

The Ottoman march was however not halted, and would continue in the decades after the battle, turning the Serbian state into a vassal state. The Ottomans did not leave for the next 500 years, and the fact that the Serbs did not forget about their state, their share in the battle and the importance of Kosovo, was due to the fact that while the state was gone, the church continued to exist.\textsuperscript{109} Combined with a tradition of epic poems commemorating the battle, meant that the Serbs reproduced an image of regaining a state of their own at some point, and had the material to inspire this claim. And by the time of the 500th anniversary of the battle in 1889 the Serbian had actually reemerged, missing a crucial part however: Kosovo.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[105] The truth is obscured to say the very least, Noel Malcolm writes that the origins of the Albanians have been the subject of a bewildering mass of conflicting claims and theories, yet, in a thorough discussion of the origins he poses that Albanians might indeed have links with the Dardanians, or at least have lived in the area for a long time as nomadic pastoral tribes, yet he also agrees that by the time of the Serbian kingdom there seem not have been many Albanians in Kosovo. Moreover Malcolm states that: ‘When a Serb today reads about the arrival of the early Serbs, he may not be wrong to suppose that he is reading about his ancestors; he he cannot be right to imagine that all his ancestors were in that population. The equivalent is true for the Albanians, and indeed for every other ethnic group in the Balkans’. Judah, Kosovo, 18-19 and Malcolm, Kosovo, 22-40.
\item[106] In fact, the Serbian Kingdom and thus the Serbian Orthodox Church had its earliest foundations in the region of Rascia (Sandžak), in Studenica and other places. According to Malcolm, the cradle of Serbian monasticism in the first two or three generations of Nemanjić rule was located where the cradle of the Serbian state has been as well; not inside Kosovo, but further to the North and West. It was only later with when the Patriarchate settled in Peć and with the churches of Gracanica, Decani and Prizren that Kosovo gained real importance. Malcolm, Kosovo, 46.
\item[107] Judah, Kosovo, 19 and Malcolm, Kosovo, 12-13.
\item[109] Judah, Kosovo, 21.
\end{footnotes}
All of these stories and elements continue to be at the core of Serbian claims to Kosovo. They are accompanied by more contemporary claims such as the violation of Serbian sovereignty with the unilateral declaration of independence by Kosovo and the position of the Serbs in Kosovo nowadays. The Albanians do not think highly of this Serbian narrative, which is nicely summarized and illustrated in a quote from Ahmed Kadare:

‘Any discussion of Kosovo today begins with the cliché “sacred territory for the Serbs”; the “cradle of the Serbian nation.” ... The core of [Serb] mythology goes as follows: at the time of the Battle in 1389, the Serbs were a majority in a region that was at the heart of their Kingdom; the Albanians only came into the territory after the Battle. This is a crude distortion and its effect in any public discussion on TV or elsewhere is to preempt any Albanian from putting across a different view or attempting some clarification of history... the Battle of Kosovo was not a confrontation between Serbs and Turks. It was a battle fought by all the people of the Balkans united against an invader. All the histories list the names of the Balkan peoples who fought alongside one another against a common disaster: Serbs, Bosnians, Albanians and Romanians. The Battle which should have been preserved in memory as a symbol of friendship between Balkan peoples, was appropriated by criminal Serbs to serve their purposes.’\footnote{Lenard Cohen, Serpent in the Bosom. The Rise and Fall of Slobodan Milošević (Boulder: Westview Press, 2001) 4, as quoted in Judah, Kosovo, 24-25.}

The Albanian claims to Kosovo are of a very different kind but there are parallels in how the myths and narratives formed over time. As every nation seems to need a heroic leader or father, the Albanians found their hero in the medieval Skanderbeg. Skanderbeg was a son of an Albanian chief that was a vassal to the Ottomans, and was send to Istanbul as a janissary.\footnote{A janissary was usually a son of a Christian nobleman, who was taken hostage and brought to Istanbul to be converted to Islam and trained to become a part of the elite forces of the Sultan.} He fought successfully for the Sultan and rose through the ranks, at some point however he returned to Albania, converted back to Christianity and rebelled against the sultan, liberating parts of Albania and withstanding repeated attacks and sieges of Ottoman forces.\footnote{Interesting detail is that Skanderbeg’s daughter married a Serbian prince, and that Skanderbeg himself both fought and allied with Serbians at different times. Judah, Kosovo, 26.}

Two Albanian writers, Fatos Lubonja and Piro Misha, point to Skanderbeg being a convenient hero for several reasons. Lubonja argues that Skanderbeg was the right historical figure that could unite the Albanians, replacing Turkey as their defense against Serbian and Greek expansionism, and would raise sympathy in the Western world, as he was a Christian hero also known there.\footnote{Even more so, as Misha makes clear, Skanderbeg never really fought for all Albanians, Kosovo and large parts of the south were never included. The Christian element of Skanderbeg, however convenient for sympathy from the West, needed to be downplayed to Albanians themselves, especially the mainly Muslim Albanians in Kosovo. Consequently, he became the symbol of ‘Albanianism’ and of the myth of the continuous struggle of Albanians against foreign powers.\footnote{Skanderbeg stands prominently in the center of Pristina today, regardless of his ambivalence as a national hero. Skanderbeg is an important figure to Albanian nationalism, but has no special connection to Kosovo.} Until recently, Kosovo Albanians had no special narrative for claims to Kosovo, other than the ancient roots of the Illyrians and the fact that they made up a majority of the people...} Even more so, as Misha makes clear, Skanderbeg never really fought for all Albanians, Kosovo and large parts of the south were never included. The Christian element of Skanderbeg, however convenient for sympathy from the West, needed to be downplayed to Albanians themselves, especially the mainly Muslim Albanians in Kosovo. Consequently, he became the symbol of ‘Albanianism’ and of the myth of the continuous struggle of Albanians against foreign powers.\footnote{Skanderbeg stands prominently in the center of Pristina today, regardless of his ambivalence as a national hero. Skanderbeg is an important figure to Albanian nationalism, but has no special connection to Kosovo. Until recently, Kosovo Albanians had no special narrative for claims to Kosovo, other than the ancient roots of the Illyrians and the fact that they made up a majority of the people...} Until recently, Kosovo Albanians had no special narrative for claims to Kosovo, other than the ancient roots of the Illyrians and the fact that they made up a majority of the people...

\footnote{Lubonja, ‘Between the Glory of a Virtual World and the Misery of a Real World’, 92.}

\footnote{Misha, Invention of a Nationalism, 43.}
living there. However, a new national hero was created in the 1990s, this time specific to Kosovo. This new hero, Adem Jashari (1955-1998), or the ‘legendary commander’, was a prominent fighter of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). In 1998 his house and the houses of several other KLA fighters were attacked. This happened in the town of Prekaz, tucked in the inlands of Kosovo called Drenica, where they were besieged and attacked by Serbian police and military forces for three days. Jashari and 51 members of his and his neighbors were killed in the action and the event sparked the surge of violence and eventually the Kosovo War of 1999.115

Stephanie Schwandners-Sievers and Anna Di Lellio argue that Jashari represented the ‘continuous resistance’ embodied by Skanderbeg before, and became the most prominent of martyrs for Kosovo Albanians. He and the other Albanians that have died in the struggle are no victims, but martyrs, or dëshmorët e kombit (martyrs of the nation) who should not be confused with shadid (Islamic martyr of Jihad).116 Schwandner-Sievers and Di Lellio point out that while the Jashari’s are Muslim like most Kosovo Albanians, they are seen as martyrs in the original sense of ‘witnesses to the cause’. This cause was the national cause, and Jashari forms the center of a founding myth for Kosovo, his besieged and ruined house is turned into a shrine and his name and picture can be found all over Kosovo.

The legacy of the KLA, the suppression of the 1990s and the historic memory of continuous suppression throughout the centuries have given the Kosovo Albanians a narrative and eventually nationhood as they, supported by the United States and many states in Europe, declared their state. The above was just a brief look at how some of the national myths and claims to Kosovo by both Albanians and Serbs have been created. These and many other claims have been and are still the subject of both academic and political contention and play an important role in the minds of many people.

2.3 Historical context

After some main characteristics of Kosovo and its people and the myths and claims put forward by the Albanians and Serbs, it is about time to give some historical context to all of this. As a thorough discussion and description of Kosovo’s history would take up a book in itself, this part will be only a brief oversight of some main events throughout the centuries that are important for the understanding of present-day Kosovo. This historical sketch will start at the Battle of Kosovo and fly through the centuries only to slow down for some more detailed descriptions of Kosovo after the Second World War and the breakdown of Yugoslavia, leading up to the Kosovo War of 1999 and declaration of independence in 2008.

2.3.1 1389-1918

1389. A key date in the history of Kosovo and a key date in the history of the Balkans and Europe in general. According to Malcolm however there are two popular assumptions about the great battle of Kosovo: ‘one that it was this Turkish victory that destroyed the medieval Serbian empire, and that the defeated Serbs were immediately placed under Ottoman rule.

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Both are false.\textsuperscript{117} These two assumptions ignore that Serbian rule was crumbling after the death of Tsar Dušan in 1355, and that the Serbian state survived for another seventy years when the Ottomans consolidated their control of the area with the fall of Smederevo in 1459. It was then that the Patriarchate in Peć was dismissed, until it was reestablished in 1557 by sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, due to the efforts of the grand vizier Mehmed Sokullu, a Bosnian Serb called Sokolović by birth (who installed one of his family members as the first patriarch).\textsuperscript{118} This is a crucial event for the survival of the Serbian Orthodox Church and therefore the preservation of the idea of a Serbian nation.

In 1683 the Ottomans stood at the gates of Vienna, terrifying the whole of Europe. An alliance of Catholic forces however managed to halt the Turkish march into Europe and Habsburg forces swept into the Balkans, calling up Christians to revolt against the Ottomans.\textsuperscript{119} While many did, the Habsburg forces lost at Kacanik, in the South of Kosovo, leading to a return of the Turks and a terrible revenge. This was the start of the ‘Great Migration’ of the Serbs from Kosovo, the exodus of tens of thousands of Serbs led by their Patriarch Arsenije the Third, to the Habsburg Empire who had invited them.\textsuperscript{120} An event of seminal importance to the Serbs as this was when they lost their majority and influence in Kosovo. This is also contested by Malcolm, who argues that most of this myth is actually false or gravely distorted, and that the whole situation was very confused with some Serbs and Albanians rising against the Ottomans together, and other Serbs refusing to rise, nor did the patriarch actually lead the exodus or was this a demographic shift for the whole of Kosovo as the town of Prizren already housed a majority of Albanians and Muslims.\textsuperscript{121}

The centuries that followed were characterized by a slow conversion to Islam in Kosovo as well as the rest of the region, more among Albanians than among Serbs. While this period not characterized by large historic events, there were many revolts and wars though where in which Serbs and Albanians would participate. This happened mostly in the countryside, where tribes cherished their independence and would revolt against military service, high taxes or attempts to disarm the villages. This last point is especially sensitive to Albanian men, as their gun is viewed as part of their identity and pride. Which proves to be a recurring reason for resistance and revolt to this day.\textsuperscript{122}

The tide turned in the Balkans when in the 19th century ‘Christian’ states started reemerging from the Serbian revolt of 1804 onward. This was to be the century of the rise of nationalism and the decline of the Ottoman Empire, now widely called the ‘Sick Man of Europe’.\textsuperscript{123} This led up to \textit{de facto} independence of Serbia within the Empire from 1867 onwards, after many different clashes and the Turkish-Serbian wars of 1876-1878. This last war coincided with the Russo-Turkish war, and was settled with the Congress of Berlin in 1878, which formally recognized Serbia as an independent state. During this war Serbia started expanding southward from their territories around Belgrade and eventually

\begin{footnotes}
\item[117] Malcolm, \textit{Kosovo}, 58.
\item[118] Judah, \textit{Kosovo}, 32.
\item[119] Malcolm, \textit{Kosovo}, 139.
\item[120] Judah, \textit{Kosovo}, 33-34.
\item[121] Malcolm, \textit{Kosovo}, 139-162 and Judah, \textit{Kosovo}, 34.
\end{footnotes}
conquered Niš. The Albanians came late to the game, only started organizing themselves when they were confronted with the expansionism of their two new and ambitious neighboring Christian states, Serbia and Montenegro. Albanians were dislocated from Niš and the area around it, houses were burned, and many fled to Kosovo, which was not yet under Serbian rule.

Under this threat the Albanians finally made their first steps towards unity and an Albanian nationalism with the League of Prizren that was established in 1878. These Albanian leaders only called for an Albanian province or vilayet under the rule of the Sublime Porte as a protection against those foreign forces and some more Albanian autonomy. There were however some leaders calling for independence and as these voices grew louder the League took greater command of Kosovo. The Ottomans, who initially were sympathetic to the League, turned against them, crushing the rebellion in 1981. This was the end of the League, but Albanians had seen that they could unite themselves and started to gain some understanding of the Albanian nation being one. The Albanians started organizing some education, studying Albanian history, writing histories and myths, developing national literature and poetry and the like. At the same time the Serbs were way ahead, having gained their independence, more and more calls were made by nationalist politicians and academics to regain what was by this time more and more seen as the old heart of Serbia: Kosovo.

The Ottoman Empire crumbled down further and as the Balkan territories grew more instable by the year much unrest and many revolts followed. By 1908 the Young Turks had taken over the helm of the Empire, and when Albanians greeted this with joy at first, they later realized that a centralized state would not grant them what they wanted; Albanian language schools and power and privileges at home.124 There was however discord within the ranks of the Albanians, where urban, intellectual and Westernized Albanians wanted an independent, secular Albanian state, most of the traditional and rural Albanians merely wanted these privileges and religious (sharia) and traditional laws under the rule of the Sultan. When finally the Sultan was removed from the Porte in 1909, these rural Albanians rose in revolt and much of Kosovo followed, leaving Kosovo in unrest until 1912.

This year, 1912, is a crucial year in the histories of both Albanians and Serbs. In the chaos of the First Balkan War, in which Serbia, Montenegro, Greece and Bulgaria fought against the Turk and the independent state of Albania was declared on the 28th of November, by Ahmed Qemal in the Albanian coastal town of Vlore. This day, known as Flag Day, is still celebrated by most Albanians as their national day. This was a victory for Albanian nationalism, but one that was immediately trumped by other events on the battlegrounds; the liberation or conquest of Kosovo by the Serbs, depending on whom you ask.

It left the Serbian nation in euphoria, and soldiers walking onto the fields where the Battle of Kosovo had raged more than 500 years before experienced ‘indescribable excitement’. Or in the words of one of their officers: ‘The spirits of Lazar, Miloš, and all the Kosovo martyrs gaze down on us. We feel strong and proud, for we are the generation which will realize the centuries-old dream of the whole nation; that we with the sword will

124 Judah, Kosovo, 37.
regain the freedom that was lost with the sword’. The Serbian euphoria was paired with a swift occupation of Kosovo and brutal and ruthless revenge on the Albanians, who in their eyes represented the century long occupation and would pose a threat to the new Serbian dominance of Kosovo.

The Albanians tried to resist but were crushed by the Serbian and Montenegrin forces, and many took to the hills, from where rebels or kaçaks such as Isa Boletin would undertake guerilla attacks until well into the 1920s. The years after 1912 left the Balkan and indeed much of the world in constant conflict, from which a new kingdom would emerge in the Balkans. This new kingdom, declared on the 1st of December 1918, was the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, which would be renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929.

2.3.2 Two Yugoslavia’s

The new state of Yugoslavia consisted of Croatia, Dalmatia, Vojvodina, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Slovenia, Kosovo and Macedonia, and was the most ethnically diverse state of Europe with the exception of the Soviet Union. The new country was largely dominated by the Serbs, whose state was at the core of the Kingdom, as was their army and the Serbian Karadjordjević royal family.

The Albanians of Kosovo kept resisting the Serbian rule of their lands, as it was clearly the Kingdom of the South Slavs, in which the Albanians had little place. The Yugoslav government pressured the Kosovo Albanian population to emigrate or assimilate (forcing many to add Slavic suffixes to their names) and suppressing the use of Albanian language and its education. Many Albanians were deported to Turkey and Albania, and the Yugoslav government actively stimulated the settlement of Serbs in Kosovo replacing the Albanians and ‘colonizing’ the area. They settlers were lured by special privileges and free pieces of land, which indeed attracted many Serbs and other Slavs to Kosovo.

The issue of education continued to play, and would recur from time to time over the course of the twentieth century. The Yugoslav government actively suppressed secular Albanian-language schools, a measure that did not apply for Yugoslavia’s two other big minorities, the Germans and Hungarians. The interwar years in Kosovo were years of suppression and colonization by the Yugoslav state, where even mass deportations were contemplated and organized. A deal with Turkey in 1938 aimed at deporting 200,000

126 The Kingdom will be called Yugoslavia from this point on for reasons of simplicity. Malcolm, Kosovo, 264.
127 Mertus, Kosovo, How Myths and Truths Started a War, 285 and Judah, Kosovo, 41.
128 Yugoslavia means ‘land of the South Slavs’
130 As usual exact figures are not known, but it is estimated that in 1939 some 59,000 Serbian colonists had settled in Kosovo, making up about 9.3 percent of the total population. The estimates on how many Albanians left Yugoslavia and how many left for Turkey are even less clear and estimates vary from some thousands to far more. Judah, Kosovo, What everyone needs to know, 45-46.
131 Judah, Kosovo, What everyone needs to know, 44. Muslim religious schools were however not banned. According to Denisa Kostovićová the reason for this was to undermine feelings of Albanian national identity, as a religious identity less of a threat. Some of these schools secretly supported the Albanian cause, and provided Albanian books and classes, a practice of underground education that was to return in the 1990s. Denisa Kostovićová, “Shiolla Shqipe” and Nationhood. Albanians in Pursuit of Education in the Native Language in Intervar (1918-41) and Post-Autonomy (1989-98) Kosovo’, Schwandner-Sievers and Fischer, eds. (London: Hurst, 2002) 159.
Albanians from Yugoslavia was inspired by the words of a historian from Belgrade, Vaso Čubrilović, who argued that at a time that ‘Germany can expel tens of thousands of Jews and Russia can shift millions of people from one part of the continent to another’ it should be possible for Yugoslavia as well to dispose of its Albanians. This deal was only prevented by the start of the war.\textsuperscript{132}

The Second World War would mean the end of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. By the time the Germans occupied the bulk of Yugoslavia in 1941, the Italians had already laid their hands on Albania for two years. The Italians attempted to get the support of the Albanians by promising them a united Albanian state if they would cooperate. To some extent this happened indeed. Kosovo was divided among the Germans, Bulgarians and Italians, and the Italian part was united with the rest of the Albanian lands under Italian rule, but with some autonomy. The Serbs have been always eager to point at the collaborating of the Albanians with the Italians, and later with the Germans when the Italians capitulated in 1943. While there is some truth to this, the reality is much more confused, as there were many Albanians revolting against the Italians as well. Fact is that many Serb villages were attacked and burned in revenge to the years of oppression before, and violence would ensue throughout the war years.

While in Albania and Yugoslavia resistance grew and fighting groups such as communist partisans and nationalist cetas could be found, in Kosovo the Albanians viewed the Serbs as the real enemy.\textsuperscript{133} This is one of the main reasons that the communists or Partisans never got a significant force in Kosovo, as many Kosovo Albanians associated the mainly Serbian Partisans with their prime enemy. Those that did decided to fight on the Partisan side did so as they acted upon the promise of the Partisans that the Albanians would get the right to self-determination and would be included in a Communist Albanian state. They were to be betrayed and Yugoslav forces returning to Kosovo found both allies and enemies in the Albanians, as some fought on their side and others, especially in the Drenica area, resisted. It was thus not only a Serb-Albanian conflict, but also one amongst Albanians.\textsuperscript{134}

Kosovo now entered a hectic period. The Partisans won, and a second Yugoslavia emerged, a Communist one this time. Kosovo was annexed to Serbia, breaking the promise and against the will of the Albanians. Nationalist Albanian ‘Ballist’ forces would try to resist this for a couple of years to come, but would be heavily repressed. The new president of the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito, had told the Albanian communist leader Enver Hoxha in 1946 that ‘Kosovo and the other Albanian regions belong to Albania and we shall return them to you, but not now because Great Serb reaction would not accept such a thing’.\textsuperscript{135} This period was marked by confusion and oppression on both the political as the everyday level. Yugoslavia eventually broke with the Soviet Union in 1948 and as Hoxha remained loyal to Stalin, the relation with Albania also turned sour and the border closed down hermetically. With a large Albanian community inside its borders that did not feel particularly loyal to the regime, the Yugoslav government tightened its grip on the

\textsuperscript{132} Judah, Kosovo. What Everyone Needs to Know, 46.
\textsuperscript{133} The word ceta means an armed band, usually organized by Serbian or Bulgarian people. A member of a ceta is called a chetnik
\textsuperscript{134} Judah, Kosovo. War and Revenge, 30.
province even stronger than in the rest of the new country. State institutions and the police were dominated by trusted Serbs and Montenegrins and villages were raided for suspects and arms.

This period came to an end when Aleksandar Ranković, Tito’s trusted, Serbian, head of security was purged in 1966 after suspicion of nationalism (which was feared and persecuted by the Yugoslav leader). He had been the main man holding the iron grip on Kosovo, and the Yugoslav hold of Kosovo (and the rest of the country) changed. This started the ‘Albanization’ of Kosovo the Serbs feared so much. They had, in the previous years, already complained about the influx of Albanians from Albania into Kosovo when the borders were not closed yet and that Serbian settlers from the interwar period were not allowed to return to Kosovo. While this is only partly true, after 1966 the province did indeed turn more and more distinctly Albanian.\footnote{Judah, Kosovo. What Everyone Needs to Know, 51-53 and Malcolm, Kosovo, 324.} Albanian education started to flourish and an Albanian-language university was even founded in Pristina in 1968. This was one of the demands of the Albanians. The other demand was that Kosovo would become a republic within the Federation with full equality to the other six Yugoslav republics. This demand was rejected on the ground that Albanians were different. They were a ‘nationality’, a nation with a motherland outside of the Yugoslav borders as opposed to the ‘nations’ such as the Serbs, Croats, and even the small nation of Montenegrins. All republics of Yugoslavia had the important right to secede if they wanted to, and a nation with a different motherland, and with their background as not being Slav and resisting Yugoslavia, would not be given this chance.\footnote{Judah, Kosovo. What Everyone Needs to Know, 53-54, Mertens, Kosovo, xx, Malcolm, Kosovo, 325.}

That the Albanians gained more power in Kosovo does however not mean that oppression now befell the Serbs, as Malcolm points out: ‘there was no intimidation on the scale of the massive searches for weaponry in the mid-1950s, and nothing like the atmosphere of surveillance created under Ranković, when every Albanian who bought the official Albanian-language newspaper Rilindja was registered by the secret police’.\footnote{Malcolm, Kosovo, 327.} This was the beginning of Kosovo’s and Yugoslavia’s golden age. Yugoslavia started to flourish and Kosovo with it. The new Yugoslav constitution of 1974 changed the status of Vojvodina and Kosovo. They continued to be a part of Serbia, but were de facto almost a full federal entity, in fact only short of the right to secession. Kosovo had its own parliament, government, bank and police, a growing population and economy and only few Albanians continued to resist Yugoslavia. Pristina turned into a modern city and even when Kosovo was still the most underdeveloped part of Yugoslavia, it did develop rapidly into ‘modernity’ compared to the pre-war situation. The growing influence of the Albanians on Kosovo did however worry and anger some Serbs in Pristina and Belgrade.

All of this was to change soon. On the 4th of May 1980 Tito died and left the country in shock and confusion. When we look in retrospect, it was in Pristina where Yugoslavia showed its first cracks. In March and April of 1981 protests engulfed Pristina and Kosovo. They had started in the university as complaints over food, but quickly turned political. Secessionist slogans mixed with the original ones over food and the police and the military cracked the protests down. The protests did not cease immediately, the province was locked
down and in the end officially 57 people were reported dead, the communist party of Kosovo was purged and a new period of repression had commenced.\textsuperscript{139}

2.3.3 The 80s and 90s

1981 was a turning point. The death of Tito and economic decline meant that nationalist grievances grew louder all over Yugoslavia and Communist power began to recede. Increasing amounts of Serbs started leaving Kosovo after 1981, and complaints of Serbs about Kosovo started more and more discussion about the province. It is true that there were frequent occasions of hostility towards Serbs in Kosovo, churches and graveyards were sometimes vandalized and pressure for them to leave grew.\textsuperscript{140}

This pressure, paired with an economic push from the underdeveloped Kosovo to places such as Belgrade with higher chances of jobs, did cause a steady flow of Serbs from Kosovo. It also sparked scandals such as the 1985 ‘Martinović case’, in which the Serb farmer Djordje Martinović was brought to the hospital with injuries to his rectum caused by a beer bottle. He claimed to have been attacked by two Albanians who had tied him up and inflicted this injury on him. While Albanian sources provided different explanations of an accident during an act of self-gratification, the incident caused an outrage on Serbian side and whatever the truth may have been, provided them with a story of victimhood and a call for protection.\textsuperscript{141}

With a growing amount of stories of Albanian violence against Serbs in Kosovo, either made up or real, and louder complaints and protests, their call was answered with the ‘Memorandum’. This Memorandum was a document by the Serbian Academy of Sciences, and another turning point in the history of Yugoslavia. In essence it was a manifesto of Serbian nationalism drawn up by some Serbian academics.\textsuperscript{142} With all of this on the table it was just waiting for someone to pick up the opportunities that were there for the taking. This man would turn out to be Slobodan Milošević.

In April 1987 Milošević, the head of the Serbian Communist Party and sidekick of the Yugoslav president Stambolić, went to listen to the complaints of protesting Serbs in Kosovo Polje, just outside of Pristina. This event would mark the start of the rise of Milošević star. In a prearranged situation, Serb protesters were clashing with the police (mainly Albanians as they were Kosovo police), when Milošević came out of the building where he was having a meeting and said: ‘No one should dare to beat you!’\textsuperscript{143} ‘This sentence enthroned him as a Tsar’, said Šoljević, a Kosovo Serb leader, and two years later it sure looked like this when Milošević spoke at the 600\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo on the June 28 1989.\textsuperscript{144} By this time Milošević was president of Serbia, he had succeeded in purging the Kosovo Albanian Communist leaders and abolishing Kosovo’s autonomy, which sparked protests, first in the mines of Trepča and later all across Kosovo.

\textsuperscript{139} Judah, Kosovo. What Everyone Needs to Know, 58.
\textsuperscript{140} Judah, Kosovo. War and Revenge, 42-43 and Mertens, Kosovo, 98.
\textsuperscript{141} Malcolm, Kosovo, 338. For more on the ‘Martinovic Case’ and the myth building around it see Julie A. Mertens, ‘Impaled with A Bottle’, Kosovo. How Myths and Truths Started a War, 95-121.
\textsuperscript{142} Malcolm, Kosovo, 340-341.
\textsuperscript{143} Judah, Kosovo. War and Revenge, 53.
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid.
Things went quick from this point. Yugoslavia collapsed. By 1991 Serbia, under the flag of Yugoslavia, was at war with Slovenia and Croatia, and Bosnia would soon follow. These terrible and bloody events would obscure the events in Kosovo. Serbia took full control of Kosovo and established a police state. It was in these years that both Albanian and Serbian politicians laid the foundations for the years to come. Serbia passed many laws to ensure the control of Kosovo and the oppression of Kosovo. In 1990 they encouraged Serbs who had left Kosovo to return and pushed out most Albanians from their jobs in state institutions, making the majority of the Albanian population unemployed overnight.145

The authorities shut down the Albanian-language media and most dramatically in the field of education, where, according to Denisa Kostovičová in her article on *Shkolla Shqipe*, Albanian-language schools in Yugoslavia, ‘the financing of all Albanian schools, including 21,000 teaching staff, ceased. The closure of companies that published textbooks and teaching materials in Albanian followed.’146

The Albanians, under the lead of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) responded by going underground. The LDK had been founded in 1989 and would play a major role in the years to come as leaders of the Kosovo Albanians. After the abolishment of the autonomy, the LDK had declared the ‘Republic of Kosovo’ and took the lead. This republic, complete with a government under the lead of president Ibrahim Rugova, would continue to exist for years and give direction and funds to the parallel institutions they created. This is quite an impressive feat as they indeed maintained a government structure (of which most members resided in exile), and collected money from the diaspora and others so they could support the fully parallel health and education institutes.147 Besides working to ensure Albanian education and the survival of other parallel institutions, Rugova and his government lobbied internationally for attention for the human right violations in Kosovo. And although Rugova was called the ‘Gandhi of the Balkans’ sometimes for his policy of peaceful resistance, the other wars in the crumbling Yugoslavia would continue to obscure the situation there.148

There were some other parties in Kosovo, but the majority of the Kosovo Albanians supported the LDK and its policies. In fact it was remarkable that the Albanians of Kosovo, historically inclined to violent revolts, stayed relatively peaceful for such a long time. This should be contributed mainly to the strength of Serbian control (while they closed an eye to many parallel institutions and notably to Rugova driving around Pristina), the lack of weapons in the hands of Albanians and the policy of the LDK.

This however was to change. Two events are of great importance here. The first is the failure to include Kosovo in the Dayton peace agreement of 1995, ending the Bosnian war. The LDK had always counted on international help to better the situation in Kosovo, the exclusion of Kosovo in the Dayton agreement made clear that these hopes were in vain. Not only did this sweep away hope to some kind of resolution to the conflict, Serbia saw most of

145 Malcolm, Kosovo, 62.
147 Judah, Kosovo. War and Revenge, 70-71
148 Rugova was a special person and an interesting, ‘a Gandhi’ he was however not. His path of peaceful resistance was not a deep spiritual path or a great philosophical conviction, but rather a pragmatic calculation. A position that in the end still lead to violence and did not necessarily play out well for him. Despite the critique on him he did however become the first president of post-war Kosovo in 2000. Rugova died in 2006 of lung cancer.
the international sanctions against the country lifted and with the wars in Bosnia and Croatia ended, could divert all attention to Kosovo. At the same time the men that for a long time had disagreed with the peaceful resistance policy of Rugova, realized that the time for action had come.

These men were the men of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) that had been founded in 1993 but only really became active in the course of 1996. At this time the KLA was still a small band of armed men, with some direction and support from Albanians abroad and with some limited military training they received in Albania. The KLA’s activities only really gained momentum when violence picked up and in some lucky coincidence arms were suddenly available. These weapons came from Albania, as the country had just collapsed in anarchy due to the financial pyramid schemes that came to an end. Not receiving any pay, soldiers left their military bases and armories, making available hundreds of thousands of guns.

While the situation in Kosovo was growing even grimmer and the repression stronger, things appeared to be changing. Massive student demonstrations in Pristina grew as big as 20,000 before police violence beat them down. Albin Kurti, the student leader and later leader of Vetëvendosje or Self-Determination, a movement that opposed the UN rule in Kosovo after the war, ignored requests of Rugova to stop the protests. The LDK and their policies were losing support quickly, and even though Rugova was still held in high esteem, more and more Albanians started to support the KLA and the idea of active resistance. The first KLA men had fallen during actions against Serbian police by this time and international attention was slowly drawn more to Kosovo. The discord between the LDK and the KLA was clear as Rugova kept ignoring the existence of Albanian fighters and clearly did not know how to handle the new situation. The KLA was far from well organized at this point or ready for a full confrontation with the Yugoslav army (JNA). The U.S. special envoy to the region, Robert Gelbard, visited Kosovo in 1998, criticizing the Serbian police violence but calling the KLA a terrorist organization. This was a most welcomed cue for Milošević to act harder upon these terrorists. In early March 1998 the Serbian police and army surrounded the house of one of the KLA leaders Adem Jashari in the village of Prekaz. A three-day siege followed leaving 51 dead, including women and children. Everybody knew things were about to change.

The Serbian police dug in, the KLA started to take territory in the area of Drenica and violence all over the country started picking up and flows of refugees started moving around the country. American and European diplomats tried to interfere but these attempts failed and violence continued. International public opinion turned against the Serbian state as they started to see more and more footage of Kosovo Albanian refugees and hear stories of massacres. Richard Holbrooke, the American diplomat that had talked Milošević into Dayton, was brought in to end the spiral of violence, but after many talks and meetings of Serbs and Albanians in the town of Rambouillet no treaty was signed. Europe and the U.S, haunted by images of Srebrenica, decided that action had to be taken against the Serbs, even without a UN resolution.

The dice had been thrown; NATO waged the first war in its existence. The bombing started on the 24th of March and would last for 78 days. The bombing cited an increase of

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149 Judah, Kosovo, 81-82.
violence in Kosovo as now there was nothing to hold back the Serbian army, and Milošević tried to make use of it to get rid of as many Albanians possible. NATO miscalculated the will of Serbia to endure the bombing and instead of a short campaign the attack turned into a slow war, with more and more refugees flowing out of Kosovo, more violations of human rights, bombing mistakes killing citizens and critique on NATO growing. After weeks of negotiations, the bombing stopped on the 10th of June 1999. The Americans and Russians had sealed a deal, and Milošević was forced to retreat from the province under the Security Council Resolution 1244.150

NATO troops entered Kosovo on June 12, followed in their wake by hundreds of thousands of refugees. Many houses and villages were burnt down and it is estimated that the war took some 10,000 lives.151 With Albanians pouring back into Kosovo retaliation started. Serbs as well as Roma and other non-Albanians were attacked, houses were taken or burnt, churches burnt and looted. The tables had clearly turned.

2.3.4 The aftermath

Chaos ruled in Kosovo in the months after the bombing had ended. Kosovo changed drastically overnight. Serbian institutions had collapsed, many Serbs had left, the Albanians had taken over and the KLA had established their influence in many areas of Kosovo, under the wings of the UNMIK institutions and the UN Kosovo Force peacekeepers (KFOR).

Not only did the administration change, physical evidence of Serbians was soon removed from most areas and towns in Kosovo. This did not happen in the Kosovo Serb villages that had now turned into enclaves under KFOR protection. These enclaves, such as Gračanica, is where many Serbs from Pristina fled to if they did not decide to leave for Serbia. Serbs from other places in Kosovo also moved to one of these enclaves, to Northern Kosovo that was still largely in Serb hands or Serbia proper, leaving only a couple Serbs that stayed in the places they had lived.

The status of Kosovo remained unclear, the UN held on to a policy of ‘Standards before Status’, which entailed that first peace, stability and rule of law should be present in Kosovo before any talks about status could be even thought about. The situation in Kosovo grew quieter, until the country was suddenly shook up by the events of March 2004. An assault on a Serbian man sparked days of protests on both sides that turned into violence, stimulated by the Kosovo media. 19 people were killed, 11 Albanians and 8 Serbs, 29 Serbian churches were set on fire or damages, according to the UN 4366 people, mostly Serbs, had been forced to flee.152

These events led to the awareness of the international community that something had to change. The Finnish Martti Ahtisaari was brought in, who led Kosovo to a plan in which the Serb enclaves and the North would gain serious autonomy and be allowed to maintain links with Serbia, while Kosovo would move forward to independence. The

150 The UN resolution 1244 would see to the removal of Serbian forces from Kosovo, that would however stay a province of Serbia. It allowed international troops into the area and established the United Nations Interim Administration Mission (UNMIK). The resolution would shape the years to come for Kosovo and is an important argument of Serbia against the declaration of independence by Kosovo in 2008 as it is not in line with the resolution. The resolution was aimed at ending the bombing and was contradictory and unclear in other parts. It remains a point of dispute. Judah, Kosovo. What Everyone Needs to Know, 91, 94.

151 Judah, Kosovo. What Everyone Needs to Know, 91.

152 Ibid., 110.
Russians and the Serbs were not happy with these proceedings, but the plan was pushed forward anyways. The situation and status still being incredibly complex, Tim Judah writes that 'at the dawn of independence, Kosovo did not look as though it would be quite as independent as its people expected. The years of the UN protectorate looked as though they were giving way to those of something entirely new: a EU protectorate – at least in those areas where Albanians lived'.

On the 17th of February 2008, with the support of the U.S. and most EU states, Hashim Thaçi, the new prime minister of Kosovo, declared the independence of the Republic of Kosova. A deal had been made, Kosovo got its independence, but under the rules of the Ahtisaari plan, emphasizing the multiethnic, democratic and secular identity of the country. The new situation was confusing once more, having gained independence, but with some sort of autonomy for Serbian municipalities and EU supervision and policing. Serbia and Russia denounced the independence in strong terms, calling the EU an occupying force. In Serbia massive rallies were held against the independence of Kosovo, shouting 'Kosovo is Serbia', which was supported by the Serbian government and the Serbian Orthodox archbishop, who said: 'Kosovo and Metohija are the apple of our eye, the heart of our hearts, our holy city of Jerusalem'.

Today Kosovo is slowly progressing towards greater independence, as international presence is fading. EULEX and KFOR are however still present. The situation is still not clear; agreements have been made between the Serbian and Kosovo government but the future is far from certain, the North is still an issue of great dispute, Serbia still does not recognize Kosovo nor does Russia, China, and five EU member states. Internally the situation is also far from desirable. Although the country has stabilized and is regarded safe, the rule of law, especially in terms of organized crime and corruption is still heavily criticized. This last point is one of the major stumbling blocks for Kosovo's road towards EU integration as is the cooperation with Serbia.

The situation in Kosovo is far from settled, so much is clear. Politically, internationally, economically, much uncertainty and many problems persist. In this chaotic situation, nationalist claims from both sides maintain their strength and cleavages between Albanians and Serbs remain wide. What the future of Kosovo will look like will partly be decided on the international and regional political level, but will also depend on how the people in Kosovo itself will deal with the recent history, the changes and the current situation.

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153 Ibid., 116.
III

Analysis

3.1 Introduction

Present-day Kosovo is deeply marked by conflict and nationalist politics. The contours and context of these politics have been sketched in the previous chapter. The contours delineate the more audible and visible forms of ethnicity and nationhood in Kosovo. These contours are easy to see, and while these politics and their effects are all too real, it is the premise of this research that this image creates some sort of optical illusion. The attention given to the history, the politics, the claims and the affects of these has been far from exhaustive, but it gives the necessary background to the core of this study found in this chapter: the analysis of ethnicity in everyday life Kosovo.

Seeing only what is clear to see is taking the easy road and while many scholars and others do not intent to do so, the language of nationalists is all to often and all to easily assumed with the use expressions such as ‘the Albanians’ want this and ‘the Serbs’ did this. If we want to gain a greater understanding of how ethnicity works, we must not only look at nationalist politics and claims, in other words look at ethnicity and nationhood ‘from above’, but also at the meaning and experience of ethnicity by ordinary people in their daily lives. To look at what cannot be inferred from nationalist claims and contention; the experience and enactment of ethnicity by ordinary people in their everyday lives. With this perspective we approach ethnicity from below instead of from above, and engage not with how much or how little ethnicity matters but rather with how, when and where ethnicity works and happens – if it happens – in its everyday setting.

This analysis relies heavily on the work and example that has been offered by Rogers Brubaker and his colleagues Jon Fox, Margit Feischmidt and Liana Grancea in Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town. Stumbling upon this research on the city of Cluj in Romania, I was immediately triggered and inspired by both the underlying theory and perspective as well as the methodology. Reading this innovative work on ethnicity and nationhood there were many moments of excitement of reading a study that linked more to my experiences with ethnicity in Kosovo than the works I had thus far encountered. And while there are plenty of similarities between Transylvania and Kosovo, Kosovo’s recent and bloody conflict, strong ethnic division and segregation are not found in Transylvania. These differences made me wonder what kind of results and insights Brubaker’s approach would give in Kosovo.

And taking Brubaker’s approach is exactly what this research has done, be it on a smaller and humbler scale. Having taken the theoretically informed perspective that has been discussed in the theory chapter, much of the methodology of this research is also inspired by Brubaker’s approach in Cluj as the theory and methodology are interwoven with

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each other. This chapter will address the less obvious forms of ethnicity; the forms and shapes ethnicity takes in everyday practice. The research has been careful to not force ethnicity upon the people, but instead to let it emerge, when it does emerge. This approach takes the earlier mentioned warning of Eriksen serious when he emphasizes that if one goes out to look for ethnicity, one will surely “find” it and thereby contribute to constructing it.  

While the framework of the research has been inspired by Brubaker’s approach, the data has been gathered specifically for this research on Kosovo through extensive fieldwork in Pristina and Gračanica. The data on which the analysis is based has been collected in different trips over a period of three years, from 2011 to 2014, but the core of the field research has been a continuous stay in Kosovo and Pristina in the months from February to June 2014. In contrast to Transylvania, Kosovo is marked by a separation of Albanians and Serbs, especially after the war of 1999. Pristina, which in the past had a large Serbian community, houses hardly any Serbs today and many of them have moved to the nearby municipality of Gračanica. The focus of this research is on Pristina, but will include Gračanica, as it has become an extension of the old Pristina, a reality for Serbs who grew up in Pristina and one of the enclaves where a Serbian world in Kosovo continues to exist.

This chapter opens with portraits of life in Pristina and Gračanica. These portraits will give a first peek into the life in the capital of Kosovo and the Serbian enclave. The portraits will introduce some of the figures that will play a prominent role in the rest of the chapters and give a feeling of the daily lives and worries of people in Pristina and Gračanica. The portraits are followed by a section that is concerned with the everyday problems and preoccupations of people in Kosovo. These two sections form the basis and context for the following paragraphs that will deal with the many different ways in which ethnicity works.

The analysis is concerned with the question how, when and where ethnicity works. One of the core ideas behind this question is the distinction between nominal and experiential ethnicity. Nominal ethnicity is the understanding of ethnicity as something you are. Kosovars are Albanian or Serb when they identify themselves as such. Yet, belonging to one ethnicity or the other might not influence people’s everyday lives that much unless ethnicity is experienced. The following sections examine the various ways through which Kosovars experience, enact and embody ethnicity and the factors that shape this experience.

The fourth section of this chapter on categories will elaborate on this distinction between experiential and nominal categories. This paragraph will further outline how ethnicity is a perspective on the world and a way of acting in the world, and that ethnicity works in and through processes of identification and categorization. In doing so it will highlight the practices and processes through which ethnicity ‘happens’ in everyday experience and interaction and show how categorization pervades everyday life, but that not all categorization is ethnic – not even in Kosovo. Section five zooms in on how language practices shape the expression, enactment and experience of ethnicity in everyday

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155 In practice this is not always easy. It means that subjects need to be approached meticulously and that the subject of ethnicity is not brought to the fore by the interviewer. Most subjects were told that the interviews are life interviews, in order to gain a better understanding of everyday day life in Kosovo in the past and today. Ethnicity was definitely a part of these interviews but it was not presented or treated as the core topic. Thomas H. Eriksen, Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives (London: Pluto Press, 2002) 161.

156 A more elaborate account of the methodology used and the ways in which the data for this research has been gathered can be found in the ‘Note on Data’.

157 Brubaker et al. Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town, 208.
life. Language is the most clear and important vehicle of ethnicity in Kosovo and today one of the main causes of the segregation of Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs. This has however not always been the case. This paragraph looks at the ways through which language shapes the experience of ethnicity and how this has changed over the years from a Yugoslavia in which bilingualism and interethnic interaction was widespread to a situation of separation and non-communication.

The sixth section of this analysis turns to yet another factor that influences the experience of ethnicity. One of the main factors fueling the salience of ethnicity is the asymmetry and markedness experienced by members of the minority group. But this asymmetry and thereby the salience of ethnicity is reversed inside the so-called ethno-civil societies. These societies are understood as an ethnic ‘world’ inside the surrounding society, a world produced and reproduced by institutions such as minority-language schools, ethnic enterprises, media, associations and the like. In Kosovo a shift of asymmetry has taken place between the Albanians being the minority in Yugoslavia and the Serbs being a minority in Kosovo today. This paragraph looks at how an Albanian society existed within Yugoslavia and how a Serbian society in Kosovo exists today. The ways in which these ‘worlds’ are sustained and how they shape the experience and salience of ethnicity are examined here.

Interethnic interactions are rare in Kosovo today, but they do happen and back in Yugoslavia these interactions happened all the time. Section seven takes a closer look at these mixed interactions. The focus in this section is on when and how nominally interethnic interactions between Albanians and Serbs become experientially mixed. In other words, when does ethnicity become salient to those involved in the interaction and how does this happen? Section eight then looks at how migration and movement influences the experience of ethnicity. In this paragraph the focus will be on both the experiences of Kosovars going abroad as well as the international influence in Kosovo itself. It will become clear that migration and movement can have both heighten the awareness of ethnicity as well as decrease it.

The ninth and last section of this analysis turns to politics. But instead of focusing on the content and claims of nationalist politics, this paragraph examines how ordinary people talk about politics and in particular ethno-political topics. In listening to how people talk about politics, it becomes clear that even issues that are perceived as strongly ethno-political are not always discussed in ethnic terms and that even when Kosovars seem to support certain nationalist projects, on occasion the motivation for this support is not ethnic at all.

The analysis seeks to answer how, when and where ethnicity works in the everyday lives of ordinary Kosovars. It does so by examining a wide range of forms in and through which ethnicity is embodied, expressed and experienced in Yugoslav Kosovo and present-day Kosovo. It will show that even in a society that is so scarred by conflict and tension between two ethnic groups ethnicity is not as relevant as often is assumed to the experience of everyday life. This does not mean that ethnicity is structurally irrelevant or that it has not drastically influenced the lives of people living in Kosovo. Ethnicity matters in Kosovo, but by looking at when, where and how ethnicity ‘happens’, it also becomes clear that it does not always ‘happen’ in the everyday lives of ordinary people – even in Kosovo.
3.2 Portraits

3.2.1 Pristina

Pristina is a very different place now than it was twenty years ago. Driving into Pristina, we vaguely recognize the letters making up 'Beograd' under the red graffiti cross that has been sprayed over it. A large Albanian flag waves in the middle of the roundabout to welcome us; the message is clear, this is Albanian territory now. Pristina today is the capital of the Republic of Kosova, the new and contested state that emerged out of the UN protectorate that was installed after the war of 1999. The Brotherhood and Unity monument from Yugoslav times in the center of Pristina still stands, but in the shadow of the new Kosovo government buildings stands a statue of Skanderbeg on the new and shiny Mother Theresa Boulevard, symbolizing the transformation the city has undergone.

The city has changed enormously over the past years: in size, appearance and population. From a growing Yugoslav city to a city under fierce police control of the Milošević regime, from a city buzzing with UN cars and foreign soldiers to the capital of the youngest state in Europe. Pristina turned from a provincial backwater into a small but bustling city, with a population that almost doubled after the war. Not only did the population grow, it also changed. While Serbs were a minority in Pristina for most of its history, estimates are that Serbs made up about 13 percent of Pristina’s population until 1999. Nowadays just a handful of Serbs live in Pristina; most have left in the violent and chaotic wake of the war. Many have left for Belgrade or other places in Serbia, but a large group has moved to the municipality or enclave of Gračanica, about ten kilometers from Pristina.

This was different in the 1990s and before, when many of the apartments in the city center and the neighborhoods of Dragodan and Sunny Hill were inhabited by Serbs, and many Serbian shops, cafés and restaurants could be found around town. Today practically only Albanian shops and restaurants can be seen, the only exceptions being some places run by internationals (often also for internationals). The international presence is large and while a lot less than in the years before independence, UN and EULEX cars can still be seen driving through the streets and the KFOR base towering over the city is hard to be missed. Besides these large security organizations there are hundreds of other organizations around the country and in the city, adding up to such a significant amount that we could practically speak of yet another minority.

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158 Statistics in Kosovo are highly unreliable and no clear figures are given for the population of Pristina at 2014. Official figures of the government put the population of Pristina at 207,000 in December 2013, this however is no realistic figure as many people that live in Pristina are not registered there. The actual figure is much closer to half a million. OSCE, ‘Municipal Profile: Pristina’, March 2014, accessed 16 December 2014. http://www.osce.org/kosovo/13127?download=true.

159 Dragodan is the Serbian name for the area called Arberia in Albanian, yet many Albanians still refer to this neighborhood on the hill overlooking the city from the West as Dragodan. Sunny Hill is the English name for Bregu i Diellit, in Albanian, or Suncani breg in Serbian.

160 Once again, figures are hard to get by. This lack of data is caused by several reasons, the first of which is that most internationals living or staying in Pristina and the rest of the country do so on a temporary basis and do not register at the municipality or at the government. Even if they would want to, it is not easy and takes a lot of time to register, while often it is not needed, not even with stays longer than the officially permitted three months. Also, most contracts are temporary, and the internationals move around a lot. And if all internationals staying longer than three months (many interns do not stay longer, and many others stay for a while, go somewhere else, come back etc.) and they would register, it would still be hard to distinguish say EU or USA citizens from Kosovars holding those passports.
The city is chaotic. Distinctly Yugoslav buildings still sprawl along the contours of the town, the Grand Hotel stands as a reminder of those times just as the Boro Ramiz sports center, now adorned with a gigantic portrait of the ‘legendary commander’ Adem Jashari. Buildings under construction can be found everywhere town, taking hold, often illegally, of every free space in the city.

Lorik, a 37-year-old journalist born and raised in the old ‘Turkish’ part of town, resents the unorganized and corrupted building projects. According to Lorik, the city has changed a lot, and not for the better: ‘I mean, just look up, you’ve seen my neighborhood. Ten years ago, there was only one house that was two stories high, in the entire neighborhood. And then this is just one part of town. [...] I don’t know how they managed to fuck it up’. He complains a lot about how the city has changed, and how he does not understand how they managed to do such a bad job at it, but on the other hand he’s glad that ‘you don’t see barbed wires anymore, you don’t see people with automatic weapons, in uniforms, checking your ID’.

Lorik is born out of a mixed marriage of an Albanian father and a Serbian mother, who met during studies in Belgrade. One of those, as he says himself, ‘beautiful ex-Yugoslavia stories’. He speaks both Albanian and Serbian, and was raised in much of a Yugoslav way. He grew up in a small apartment in the old part of town until the government gave them a bigger apartment in the neighborhood called Dardania in 1986. Lorik’s memory of the old part of town is that of a mixed neighborhood, where Serbs, Albanians and Turks lived together, and very close there was a Roma mahalle. ‘It was mixed. Until 1991, everything was mixed’, Lorik says, ‘until Milošević, people knew who was what, but it really didn’t matter. I mean, you knew that Srce was a Serb, because his name was Serbian. You knew that Bajram was either Albanian or a Muslim, because his name was Bajram, and stuff like that, there was no real... it didn’t matter. Especially since 1974 until, uhh’.

Even though Lorik is mixed, due to the changes in the late 80s and 90s he ‘became’ more and more Albanian in the process. He had been going to Albanian-language primary schools in Yugoslavia and went to ‘high school’ in private houses during the years of the parallel school system of the 1990s. Due to his schooling, most of his friends were Albanians, but because he did speak Serbian and was half-Serbian he also had some Serbian friends. Lorik mentions a friend, Hana, 35 years old, who ‘is more or less the same mixture, [...] but because of all the shit that was going on, her father lost faith in Albanians and sent his daughters to a Serbian-language high school. So when we were all going to these private houses, she was going to a normal school. Which was uh, a pretty stupid move, when you look at it. Since she was, became like, for Albanians she became the one girl that is going into Serbian school and for the Serbs, she still had an Albanian name and surname, and so it wasn’t a nice position to be in’.

While outsiders pitied Hana for her position, she did not experience it as such at all. There were some occasions that she got remarks from people or that she felt that there was something going on, but most of the time she felt comfortable with both Serbs and Albanians and experienced no problems, at least not until the end of the 1990s. In these years the division grew harder and the war forced Hana to take refuge at her grandparent’s

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161 All names of interviewees are anonymized and changed into other names and potentially identifying details have been left out.
village in Central Serbia together with her mother and sister, while their father stayed in Pristina. It was only in these years that she experienced her mixedness more. Hana and Lorik’s stories give an interesting peek into both the Albanian and the Serbian worlds that existed in Pristina and how the relation between the two changed over the years, leading to choices to be made and sides to be chosen.

Today the situation in Pristina is very different from that of the 90s or the 80s. Most young people living in Pristina do not speak Serbian and have rarely met any Serbs in recent years. In the words of Bujar, a 25-year old Albanian guy from Pristina that grew up in the same neighborhood as Lorik, 'Yes, my parents speak Serbian. That was normal', 'And you?' I ask him, 'No, I don’t. Never learned it. It wasn’t needed. It happened when I was six, in first grade. It was war mentality. Patriotic. No Serbian, only Albanian'.

Bujar is from a different generation, and while his parents are from an old Pristinali family that was very integrated in Yugoslavia, Belgrade educated, with both his father and his grandfather working in state owned companies, the tensions of the 1990s made that he never learned Serbian. He went to one of Pristina’s best primary schools, now called Elena Gjika, which was attended by four different 'communities', Turkish, Serbian, Albanian and 'Magjup'. These four communities went at different times and to different buildings though, and were thus, besides living in the same neighborhood, divided. For Bujar, who has lived in The Netherlands for some years before from before the war until 2004, the 1990s are a period to forget, and according to him the focus should be on the Kosovo of now. He too however has nostalgic feelings sometimes for the Pristina of the old days, which was not as hectic and filled with pristinali te ri, new Pristina people from the other areas of Kosovo, also called, as he cheekily adds, katunar, villagers.

In the Pristina of 2014, the Serbs are not much of an issue for most Albanians in the city. Worries are about water and electricity cuts that happen everyday, about corrupt politicians and obtaining jobs. Frustrations are about the small but everyday issues, the lack of normality, about how much longer the so-called 'transition' will last: 'all of this is making me tired. Frustrated with the lack of law and respect for people’s space', says the 31-year old playwright Bora. She has an ok job, as she says herself, but it could be better if she would 'go into those structures, the nepotism, the people who know people, who employ people', Bora refuses this though.

To most Albanians ethnicity is not central part of their daily lives, and a lot less so than it was in the 1990s. People have many other things to worry about. This is not to say that ethnicity is not important to their lives. To the contrary, it has deeply influences their lives and still does. But this does not mean that Albanians experience ethnicity on a daily basis or that they explain their everyday cares and concerns in ethnic terms.

### 3.2.2 Gračanica

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162 It was 1995 when Bujar was in first grade.
163 Magjup is the Albanian word for what we now call Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, the equivalent of the English gypsy or Serbian Cigan. Today the expression is experienced as derogatory, but still frequently used in Kosovo. Many Albanians say they used to be able to use this word without problems, and that is has been just the past years that there has been protest against the usage.
164 Katunar is a frequently heard derogatory term for villages, in other words, people from the countryside of Kosovo or just as a term for an uncivilized person.
A mere fifteen-minute drive from the center of Pristina, suddenly Cyrillic letters and Serbian flags appear along the road to the city of Gjilan. The barbed wired walls surrounding the famous monastery become visible; we have entered the enclave of Gračanica. Serbian can be heard everywhere and the change for the coffee you buy in one of the many cafes along the busy street is given in Serbian dinars. It is impossible not to notice the completely different world we have entered.

This is Gračanica, once a small village around the famous and important medieval Serbian Orthodox monastery, now something between a village and a town. In many ways a sort of island isolated from the land around it. Gračanica is more of an archipelago of villages, making up a municipality mainly inhabited by Serbs, who have some sort of autonomy and many Serbian institutions alongside Kosovo ones. About 11-13.000 people live in the municipality, the majority of which is Serb. There are also Kosovo Albanians living in the municipality, but they are mostly situated in Albanian villages falling within the borders of the municipality.

Gračanica has been the cultural and administrative center for Kosovo Serbs living in the central parts of Kosovo for the past fifteen years. While the town has always been of great spiritual and cultural importance to Serbs and the Serbian Orthodox church, until the war of 1999 it was a rather peaceful and dull village in the countryside. Only after losing the war, the violence in the aftermath of the conflict and the administrative changes that happened, did Gračanica grow significantly as many Serbs from Pristina poured into the neighboring town. It was only then that Gračanica grew into an administrative center. The enclave of Gračanica really is a Serbian world separate from most of – Albanian-speaking – Kosovo, and only cut through by the road to Gjilan that is used by many Albanians. Gračanica is the main, but not the only one of these enclaves, with other Serbian enclaves in the south and east of Kosovo and of course the predominantly Serb North of Kosovo. Albanians rarely visit Gračanica, just like most Serbs do not venture out of the enclave besides occasional travels to Northern Mitrovica or Serbia or other important business that require them to visit Pristina.

Darko is a 35-year old Serb from Pristina. He now lives and works in Gračanica while his wife and daughter live in Belgrade, whom he visits during the weekends. He works for the Center for Peace and Tolerance (CPT), an NGO aimed at strengthening local institutions in Kosovo Serb dominated municipalities. Darko has lived a turbulent life, caused mainly by the war and its aftermath, and plays an important role in the cultural life of Gračanica. He is clear in his opinion; the enclave is a ghetto. He himself has a different life, he travels abroad and feels safe and empowered to go to Pristina: ‘my life is pretty good. But the life of others is fucked. Some people know it, others don’t. But it’s fucked’.

Chances for employment and education are bad in Gračanica or in Kosovo altogether for Serbs, and the healthcare in the enclaves is even worse than in the rest of Kosovo according to Darko. Work opportunities are scarce in the municipality, with only some jobs in institutions by either the Serbian or Kosovo government and some people that run small businesses. Serbs in Kosovo much depend on the Serbian government who provides them with a basic income and pensions etc., which is supplemented by some small agricultural work. It is an institutional twilight zone where some people have Kosovo passports, others have dual citizenship and some only have Serbian or outdated Yugoslav passports. Darko is
convinced it will only get worse in the future as Serbia is getting more ambivalent and hesitant, and the Kosovo government and the Kosovo Albanians just do not care about them.

Many young people, like Petar and Aleksandar, complain about how small their world is, and how boring it is. Petar sometimes visits Pristina, but only for work purposes as he works for an NGO called Serbian Democratic Youth. Aleksandar studied at the American University (AUK) and went to Pristina everyday, but lived in Gračanica and rarely ventured out anything besides commuting back and forth to the university. Both of them do not feel particularly safe in Pristina, and spend most of their time at home or at the Alternative Cultural Center (AKC) in the village, which is a hangout and cultural workspace run by the CPT. This AKC is an interesting place, as it is one of the rare places where not only Serbs come, but also internationals and Kosovo Albanians sometimes hang out.165

Gračanica in many ways is a Serbian mini cosmos, with its own money, language, media, politicians and cultural life. Its lifelines run to Serbia, and a strange relation with Kosovo institutions exists. This relation changes every year, as new agreements are reached and politicians of both Kosovo and Serbia change their course and influence (not to mention the whims of the international community). The Serbs of Kosovo and Gračanica do not want to live in the Republic of Kosovo and in many ways they do not. They live on an island of sorts, in a Serbian world, but surrounded by Kosovo, memories of former lives and an uncertain future.

3.3 Everyday Cares and Concerns

The portraits of Pristina and Gračanica sketched some aspects of life in the two places and some of the dynamics of interethnic interaction or the lack thereof. Ethnicity and nationhood matter in Kosovo; today for Serbs more than for Albanians, while in the past the reverse has been true. Serbs almost without exception understand themselves as ethnic Serbs and citizens of Serbia, and Albanians identify themselves with the Albanian nation and pride themselves in finally having freedom in Kosovo. Ethnicity matters and matters in many different and very real ways. Yet, it does not always matter and is not always experienced in the ways we might expect from a setting so marked and scarred by conflict between ethnic groups. The aim of this analysis is to resituate ethnicity in its everyday context and this part about the preoccupations of people will show that most problems and worries the people in Kosovo face on a daily basis are not specific to either one of the two groups nor are these problems always articulated in terms related to ethnicity.166

Making sure there is food on the table is always one of people’s primary concerns. What are the problems and predicaments of getting by in Kosovo? Dren is a 25-year old guy, originally from Mitrovica now living in Pristina. He works for the distribution branch of a big company in Kosovo. It is a fine job, and he is happy he has one, as many of the people his age do not. It is not easy getting by though. He earns about 350 euros a month, and while he

165 The AKC is takes up a central place in the lives of many young people in Gračanica, but is attended by people of many ages. It is sort of a youth community center that organizes many different sorts of events, from movie nights to band performances, from open atelier nights, language, painting and sculpting courses as well as discussion nights and many more. The place is frequented not only by people from Gračanica, but also attended by many internationals and sometimes Kosovo Albanians. The AKC also has collaborations with Kosovo Albanian artists on occasion.

166 Brubaker et al. Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town, 191.
has recently been promoted to manager, which increased his workload, his salary has not been changed. If you compare the salary to the average it is really not bad, but he has to work six days a week and has hardly any time off. I asked him if the salary was enough. Dren answered me: ‘No. Haha. There are two sick people in our family. Paying rent, you know, rent is 250 and then electricity, water...’. Not all of Dren’s money goes to his family, but he supplements the incomes from his father’s work (which is not a lot) and some money their grandfather who moved to the US sends them.

Dren’s friend Ull is having more trouble getting by. He and his mother live in a house in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, just outside of Pristina. They also moved from Mitrovica to Pristina, after Serb militiamen had killed his father in the winter of 2000. His mother is a gynecologist and earns about 300 euros a month. Ull works at a print shop for as much hours (sometimes up to 12 hours day) as he can next to his studies at the university. He earns 150 euros a month. They do not pay rent, as they bought the house in Fushë Kosovë. Both of them would have rather lived in Pristina, because they both have to commute now every day and Ull thinks his mother is getting isolated in the village. They can however not afford to buy or rent a place in Pristina. Not paying rent helps a lot, but still they have to pay electricity bills etc. While the price of electricity is relatively low in Kosovo, for more than half of the urban population of Kosovo it takes up between 10 and 30 percent of their income and is something that most people complain about. Ull says the money he earns lasts him about two weeks if he carefully plans his expenses. He hopes that he will earn more once he has graduated and he is happy that his girlfriend also studies and ‘is not very needy’, Ull jokes.

Rents, electricity bills and general expenses for products are complaints that are often heard, as they are high in Kosovo compared to their incomes. Ull mentions that the economy has gone down a lot after the war, which is something that most people have experienced. Even when the 1990s were rough on people, the economy has not grown much after the war, in contrary to expectations. Curiously, even when the boycotts on Serbia in the 1990s caused much economic disturbance, many Albanians worked in the private sector and did not get their incomes in the hyper inflated dinar but in the stable Deutsch Mark. Together with the incomes from family members abroad and families helping each other out, Zana tells me that many Albanians were better off in the 1990s, financially that is.

The economy has changed a lot in the past twenty years, as with most Eastern European countries that transitioned from communism. And while Yugoslavia did have a different economic system, the economy went downhill from the early 1980s and the wars and boycotts of the 1990s caused much trouble. Today the 30-year old Zana and her twin sister Blerta both have jobs in Pristina. They manage well, their jobs at a bank and a research company are good jobs. Yet sadly these contracts are not secure, as many contracts in Kosovo are not, causing a lot of uncertainty. This means for example for Zana that she is constantly changing functions at the bank and knowing she could be without work any moment. The sisters complain about the prices, as most people in Kosovo do: ‘like food, we have the same prices as in Germany for god sake’. Blerta adds: ‘and the taxes, we have the same taxes as Canada, and they have higher salaries, and for what we get, it’s super high.

Like I, I can't. Cause I don't pay my rent. My brother sends the money for us to pay the rent, so he pays the rent for us. If I had to pay the rent myself, I wouldn't be going out'.\(^{168}\) The fact that their two brothers live in Germany and Canada and help the family out makes that they, together with the incomes from their own jobs, are able to get by.

Petar is 28 years old and lives in the village of Kuzmin, a Serbian village in the municipality of Kosovo Polje/Fushë Kosovë but basically a part of the Gracanica enclave. He grew up in the town of Obilić, but moved with his family to their grandfather's village after the unrest of March 2004. Petar works for a local NGO and earned some extra money with monitoring during the last elections. His girlfriend has a job at the local municipality. Petar still lives at his parent's place, who built a house on the lands of Petar's grandfather, but intends to marry and move out soon. Both his parents used to work, his father at the railways and his mother at the power plant, but they have not been working ever since the war. They get some money from the Republic of Serbia, a sort of pension, which is their main source of income and is supplemented by some food and income from their vegetable garden.

To a large extent Dren, Ull, Zana and Petar face the same issues, low wages, rising prices and taxes, failing institutions and an uncertain future. And while their situations are deeply influenced by politics and events in the past, especially in the cases of Ull and Petar, none of them necessarily frame their problems in ethnic terms. While for both of their current situations are definitely caused by the conflict that changed their lives drastically, this does not mean that they experience or explain it as ethnic. This does not mean that ethnicity does not matter to them, to the contrary, but if we want to understand how ethnicity matters to people, it is important to see how little it matters to much of everyday experience. Petar does mention that the Kosovo government does not care for them, that the Albanian mayor of the Kosovo Polje/Fushë Kosovë municipality does not give a lot to their village and that he is grim about the future of Serbs in Kosovo. He nonetheless often blames the local Serb politicians for failing to improve their situation and recognizes that many of the everyday problems and predicaments in Kosovo are just the same in Serbia. The conflicts that we see as ethnic have deeply disturbed the lives of many people in Kosovo, and, today especially for the Serbs, it does influence their lives significantly. Yet, even in this setting the struggles of getting by are only sometimes seen in ethnic terms by Serbs and rarely by Albanians.

Complaints about getting by are often marked by a sharp 'us' and 'them'. One might assume that this us-them scheme is ethnic, but very often it is not.\(^{169}\) One such division is already pointed out by Petar that is the division between us, the ordinary people and them – those on top: the politicians and government officials. Complaints about everyday life problems in Kosovo are very frequently cast in this distinction, and politicians are seen as the cause for many issues due to their corruptness, incompetence or by only working to further their own interests. These complaints are shared by both Serbs and Albanians alike, but for Serbs these sometimes overlap with ethnicity as the government in Pristina is seen as Albanian. Yet, as we saw with Petar, even when there is overlap, this does not mean that it is necessarily or always seen as ethnic. There are Serbs in the Kosovo government and

\(^{168}\) One of their brothers lives in Germany and the other in Canada, hence the use of these specific examples in their story.

\(^{169}\) Brubaker et al., *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town*, 196.
parliament, but most Serbs do not trust that they do anything significant to better common Serb lives.

When the us-them distinction concerning ‘them on top’ for Serbs sometimes overlaps with ethnicity, for many Albanians it overlaps with the division between urban and rural people. A majority of the politicians in the current government are from the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), of which many are former Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) fighters and originally from rural areas such as Drenica. People from Pristina complain about how villagers flocked to the city after the war and now rule the city. They see many of the politicians as uneducated and uncivilized, only in charge because of their role during the war, which accounts for their incompetence and corruptness.

Corruption is one of the biggest problems in Kosovo and heard most commonly in complaints of people about their everyday life struggles. A shortage of jobs, corrupt politicians and tight family ties make that it is crucial that you know people, to have connections – or lindja as they say in Albanian. Samet, a 25-year old Kosovo Albanian guy, who grew up in Bor, Serbia, has called his punkband Me te Njofteshem, ‘with connections or familiarity’ in Albanian, after this practice of having to know people in order to get a job. The band makes songs that basically mock all they dislike in Kosovo. They make fun of the government and of politicians and mostly of villagers:

David: Do you write political texts?
Samet: Well, not so much, more, we try to.
David: Satirical.
Samet: Like, allegories and stuff.
David: So you do do politics?!
Samet: Well, micro politics! We all hate katunars, so we made a song about that. On the other hand, we all love food, so we made a song for, kind of salad.
David: Shopska salad?
Samet: No Shopska, Russka! With mayo! We praise the things we love with that band, and spit on things we hate. We talk about social life.
David: What more things do you guys hate?
Samet: Well, we hate katunars most. We hate that we don’t have a place to hang out, or the fact that every other big concert is hiphop, or rap oriented. There aren’t any, gigs or concerts, for our taste, you know, we don’t ask much.

Darko mentions that while corruption prevails all over Kosovo and the region, if even Albanians are having a hard time getting a job, how on earth would Serbs get a job at most businesses in Kosovo, considering they definitely usually do not have the right connections and would be the last ones on Albanian’s list. Most of the complaints from the Serbs I have talked to are the same as those by Albanians. Yet, due to the recent conflict and the segregation Serbs are hardly ever accepted into jobs around Kosovo. There are official quotas for places reserved in institutions for Serbs and other minorities. According to Darko these quota are never met, but Emir, half Bosniak, half Albanian, often joked about how he would like to be labeled as Bosniak minority, as it would grant him benefits and a higher chances for a job.

Even if such jobs are sometimes available to the people of Gračanica, resistance and taboo exists on Serbs working for the institutions of the unrecognized Republic of Kosova. The 45-year old Nemanja, a Serb born and raised in Pristina who now lives in Gračanica,
does work for the Kosovo government. His decision to work at the Ministry of Culture of Kosovo is however often criticized by others, although he does not care about that. He is an architect and loves his work, plus it is the only way for him to earn some money even when he is highly critical of the current position of the Serbs in Kosovo and of the independence of Kosovo altogether. He is a pragmatic guy, and that is why he works for the Kosovo Government. He is an architect and wants to practice his craft, which he would not be able to if he would refuse working for the government. He has Albanian friends, but at the same time he says harsh things about most of them, and complains incessantly about what the city looks like and what ‘they’, the Albanians have done to it. On the other hand he complains about the Serbs, how they do not do anything to better the situation and how the Serbs ’would hang me for most things I say’ and look down on him for doing the work he does. He and his Gorani friend Fikret agreed: it is not about now. Not about politics or ethnicity, but about the kids, the future and education. ‘That’s the only hope we have, to be and to stay civilized, all of us’, Nemanja says.

Albanians also complain of corruption, but besides the benefits that minorities get, this complaining rarely involves ethnicity. Commonly complaints are about katunar taking many of the jobs and the nepotism by politicians from the countryside, or about the snobby pristinali for holding all the businesses and granting each other the jobs. In getting by and coping with the situation, problems are clearly more readily cast in ethnic terms by Serbs today. When Kosovars account for success of others, the tendency is to suspect corruption and other non-moral behavior by those who have gotten rich. If you are rich you probably took advantage of people somehow or you have used your connections and the corrupted system. ‘They’ on top and ‘us’ down here do however not necessarily coincide with ethnic distinctions, and rather often do not. The overlap between the government and the Albanians makes it easier for Serbs to cast their everyday problems in ethnic terms, they however often do not, and blame corrupted and incompetent politicians, prominently their own. Albanians rarely see their everyday issues as related to ethnic issues. Albanians tend to explain and experience their everyday problems as caused by corruption and incompetence – a tendency common to all Kosovars – and see this as related with other distinctions of which the urban-rural one is the most prominent.

This section has deliberately focused on the ways in which ordinary people in Kosovo account for their everyday problems and predicaments, in other words how they experience and explain these issues. Contrary to the tendencies of many scholars of ethnicity and most nationalists, it has been tried to avoid an overethnicized view of everyday life experience in Kosovo. This is not to downplay the influence and significance of nationalist politics or the conflicts that have happened and the ways they have influenced the lives of people. But to understand how ethnicity matters to people, it is crucial to understand that very often ethnicity plays a little part in how people understand and experience their lives and their daily problems. Taking such an approach allows to see

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170 Sometimes the lines between what everyday issues are and the larger political question that influence their lives are of course vague and blurred. Some issues, such as Visa Liberalization is linked by the EU to progress and stability in the region. One of the prime things meant by this is the ongoing dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia. Thus, when the dialogue with the Serbs for some reason is obstructed, this has an influence on the politics but also indirectly on their everyday lives as the Kosovars are still very restricted in their freedom to travel due to visas. Because of the clear link between these issues influencing their lives and Serbian politicians, these issues are more readily and often cast in ethnic terms.
better the other perspectives besides ethnic ones through which people understand, such as moral and rural categories. This does not mean that ethnicity and nationhood do not matter, but it means that taking a different perspective allows for seeing the other dynamics that are at work as well as putting the ethnic aspect of their lives in perspective and context. Just as Hobsbawm warns us that the cares and concerns of ordinary people are ‘not necessarily national and still less nationalist’.

3.4 Categories

In this study ethnicity is taken as a modality of experience, and not as a thing or an attribute that a person possesses. Ethnicity is a lens through which we see the world, a way of acting and a way of talking; ‘a skilled practical accomplishment; a cognitive, discursive, or pragmatic frame; a way of understanding and interpreting experience’, in the words of Brubaker. While ethnicity is an important perspective or lens through which we understand the world, it is not the only perspective at work. Rather, there are usually many different perspectives at work at the same time, taking more or less importance depending on the situation and the issue.

As mentioned, besides ethnicity there are other terms through which people explain and experience their everyday concerns. In explaining who gets what and why, Kosovars usually look at social connections, political power and moral corruption, which is sometimes connected to other divisions such as between urban and rural people for example. Only sometimes these explanations are cast in ethnic terms, more readily by Serbs today than by Albanians, which points at an asymmetry in the experience of ethnicity in Kosovo.

Taken as a modality of experience, ‘ethnicity is not a continuous but intermittent phenomenon’. Ethnicity happens at some moments, by which is meant that people only sometimes understand and experience situations as ethnic, rather than continuously. People become ethnic at certain moments and instead of people having ethnicity, they might be doing ethnicity. People’s experience of the world around them is not defined by their ethnicity: sometimes ethnicity becomes salient and at other times it does not. At the same time the way we experience the world cannot be split into ethnic and non-ethnic issues. Our experience of daily matters often depends on how we categorize the experience or interaction. Categorization here means that we perceive and characterize someone as a member of a particular category. Such a category could be ethnic, for example Albanian, Serbian or Roma, but also includes a myriad of other categories such as male and female, poor and rich, urban and rural, Muslim or Christian. Ethnicity is tied up with many of these categories and it operates in and through these categories. It is this section that the processes and practices of categorization are focused on. The process of identification

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172 Ibid., 207.
173 Ibid.
174 Ibid., 208.
175 Ibid.
176 Brubaker distinguishes two aspects of everyday categorization; a cognitive and an interactional aspect. In other words, it is both a mental process and a social practice. The cognitive aspect emphasizes perceiving (seeing or hearing) and conceiving (imagining and remembering) of a person as a member of a particular category. Of course, cognitive and interactional aspects of ethnicity are often at work at the same time. The
and categorization in relation to ethnicity is incredibly complex and this section will therefore only bespeak some of the main ways in which categorization influences the ways Kosovars experience everyday interactions. By examining and considering the processes and practices of categorization in Kosovo it will become clear that while ethnicity works through numerous acts of categorization, not all categorization is ethnic.\textsuperscript{177}

### 3.4.1 Asymmetry

The categories ‘Albanian’ and ‘Serbian’ are seemingly parallel to one another. These respective categories seem to refer to the two basic ‘kinds’ of people that live in Kosovo. These categories are however in many ways asymmetrical instead of symmetrical.\textsuperscript{178} This asymmetry has some clear and obvious aspects as well as some more subtle ones. In present-day Kosovo there is a clear difference between the political and demographical position of the Serbs as compared to the Albanians. Serbs are a minority in a state that is officially multiethnic but in practice and experience a state of and for the majority nationality: the Albanians. Besides this asymmetry of national majority-minority and the expected asymmetries of power and position, there are more inconspicuous and subtle experiential and interactional asymmetries at play.

In investigating everyday ethnicity the distinction between what are called marked and unmarked categories can be useful as this can help us see and understand the experiential asymmetries. This distinction was originally developed in linguistics by Joseph Greenberg among others and has been later gratefully used in for example literary studies and anthropology.\textsuperscript{179} In this distinction the unmarked category is the normal, default, taken-for-granted category and the marked category is the different, ‘other’, special one. ‘Man’ for example is usually an unmarked category, while ‘woman’ is marked, ‘white’ is unmarked and ‘black’ is marked and so on.\textsuperscript{180} In Pristina anno 2014, Serb is the marked category and Albanian is unmarked.

Important to note here is the difference between nominal and experiential characterizations and identifications. Somebody is nominally Serbian or Albanian when she unambiguously identifies herself as Serbian or Albanian. Yet such an ethnic category (just as other categories) can also be context-dependent and experiential. In other words besides being nominally Serbian or Albanian somebody can become Serbian or Albanian in certain

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\textsuperscript{177}Brubaker et al. \textit{Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town}, 237.

\textsuperscript{178}Important to note here is that the fundament of this research is to distance itself from the idea that ‘Albanians’ or ‘Serbs’ are bounded groups in Kosovo and that people are Serb or Albanian. But this does not mean that it is not possible to identify a person as Albanian or Serbs, or to talk about Albanians and Serbs. Both Brubaker and Richard Jenkins in his book \textit{Rethinking Ethnicity} make a distinction between what Brubaker calls ‘general, context-independent, nominal characterizations’ and ‘context-specific, experiential characterization’. The former relates to the unambiguous identification of a person as belonging to an ethnic or national group, the latter relates to the experience of ethnicity, to suddenly feeling more Albanian, Serb or in other cases European, or English at certain moments. Brubaker et al. \textit{Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town}, 209-210.

\textsuperscript{179}Ibid., 211.

\textsuperscript{180}Brubaker et al. \textit{Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town}, 211-212.
moments. This means that an Albanian in Pristina today can identify strongly as being nominally Albanian, but might rarely feel experientially Albanian. In contemporary Kosovo, it is likely that Serbs will more often experience their Serbness. This happens for example when a Serb from Gračanica ventures out of the enclave. In the enclave he would identify himself nominally as Serb, but because most people around him are too, he does not experience it nor interprets situations primarily in ethnic terms.

This is a reversal in the marking relationship that is essential to the experience of category membership, in this case ethnicity. While the ‘category’ woman might be the marked category in a society at large, when a man enters for example a private room with all women, this relationship is reversed and suddenly being male is marked. Such is the case too in Kosovo. Being Serb is the marked category in most of Kosovo, but in the enclaves this marking is reversed and Serbian becomes the taken-for-granted category. Yet, as soon as he travels out of the enclave, he becomes more Serbian, or in other words, he experiences his Serb-ness more explicitly. Of course, when an Albanian travels to Gračanica, the same thing happens. But because most Albanians from Pristina do not necessarily need to go to the enclave (other than travelling through it to Gjilan) and the Serbian areas make up only a small part of Kosovo this happens far less often. Within the city of Pristina, as noted, this is even more rare as there are just a few Serbs living there still.

Interesting in this respect are the cases of Lorik and Hana. Both of them are ‘of the same mixture’, in Lorik’s words, with an Albanian father and a Serbian mother. With the first cracks of Yugoslavia, Pristina got more and more divided into Albanian and Serbian groups and worlds. In this process Lorik ‘became’ more and more Albanian, while Hana ‘became’ more Serbian, at least in the eyes of others. As discussed, the main reason of this was the choice of school. Talking with Lorik and Hana about the 1990s and these checkpoints, it is striking how much of a role it played for Lorik, who was usually identified as Albanian by the police, and how less of a role it played for Hana, who usually was identified as Serbian, also because she could show her Serbian school ID. Lorik said he was lucky compared to many of his friends, because even as he was confronted with his Albanianness often, his Serbian was fluent, and which made that he could get away more easily than many of his friends.

Lorik and Hana are interesting cases for two reasons. One, instead of the described unambiguous nominal identifications of being either Albanian or Serb, both of them are mixed. Both of them have felt or have been perceived as either Albanian or Serb in certain contexts. Them being mixed provides for the potential for either one of the two categories to become salient for either them or others in certain situations. The second point, and this

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181 Ibid., 212. This reversal of marking within certain settings will be discussed further in the section on institutions.

182 Perhaps gender plays a role in this as well. This could be, however I have heard many stories of girls being harassed or worse at these checkpoints. Certain personalities have their ways with police and authority, and Hana is definitely a person that butterflies through life. This however does not take away the salience of this example I believe. In this instance Hana showed her school ID to the policeman who responds ‘oh! You are in Serbian school. Do you go out?’ So he asks her out, and to the relief of her two Albanian friends, he lets them go without further ado.

183 Important here is that the potential is created by the ambiguous situation of having two nominal ethnic ‘identities’, but that it depends on the situation if, and if so, which one will become salient. In the examples it was Lorik that ‘became’ more Albanian and Hana that ‘became’ more Serbian, but it could have well been different. Also it is important to note that the salience of ethnicity in a certain moment does not mean that
relates to the first, is that in Kosovo of the late 80s and 90s ambiguous identities became much less accepted. With growing tension and ‘group-ness’ Lorik was pushed more into identifying himself as Albanian and Hana her schooling pushed her further into the Serbian category. These moments at the checkpoints were the contexts in which, for Lorik especially, he was not only nominally (half) Albanian, but he also suddenly became more Albanian than he had ever experienced. Before he could maintain a rather ambiguous position, Albanian and Serb, the tensions however left no room for ambiguity. For Hana this was slightly different, as she ‘belonged’ more to the, at that point, dominant group due to her schooling.

Darko, as a Serbian, was not confronted with his Serb-ness in those ways as much in the 1990s as he unambiguously belonged to the dominant ethnic group. Today however he is likely to experiences his Serb-ness as soon as he exists the enclave. The immediate aftermath of the war especially was a context in which Serbs were confronted with their category membership, when every Serb in Pristina risked being lynched in the violent and revengeful chaos that existed. For Hana, whose account of how she experienced the early 1990s does not show much importance of her being mixed, things changed when Hana got an Albanian boyfriend in 1998. Suddenly she became much more aware of the situation, of the danger her boyfriend was in at times, which caused her to experience his, and by that token, her own Albanian-ness more than ever before. The examples of Lorik and Hana illustrate two things. The first is that people instead of being ethnic can become ethnic depending on the context and the situation. Lorik and Hana happen to be of mixed ethnicity, which makes their nominal identification more fluid than with most people, yet, this dynamic of becoming ethnic in certain contexts and situations is found in many stories of people as we will later see. A second issue illustrated by their stories is how the asymmetry between Albanians and Serbs is not fixed but rather has changed and changes over time. While this potential of shifting asymmetries is found in most places, it is a characterizing feature of Kosovo’s society and has deeply influenced both the relationship between Albanians and Serbs as well as their experience of ethnicity.

3.4.2 Shifting Asymmetries

Albanians make up the majority of the population in Kosovo, and therefore it is not surprising that it is more likely for Serbs to experience their Serb-ness. Some twenty years ago the situation was quite different though. Especially in the streets of Pristina, even when Albanians made up a majority of the city population, it was much more likely for Albanians to experience their Albanian-ness. At that time Serbian was the dominant language in Yugoslav Pristina, and in Kosovo Albanians might have been in the majority demographically, they were no national majority in the wider Yugoslavia or Serbia. Serbian was heard and seen everywhere, sometimes alongside Albanian. While asymmetric, in Yugoslavia before 1990 the asymmetries between Albanians and Serbs were of a more subtle nature. This changed under the rigorous police control of Kosovo imposed by Milošević, as an ‘Apartheid’ of sorts was installed and Albanians were constantly confronted by checkpoints where they were required to identify and were often harassed or worse.

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\[\text{this becomes a fixed identity. This is a complicated dynamic that definitely deserves more attention than it is given here.}\]
So while Albanian is the unmarked category today, it has not always been the dominant and taken-for-granted category. The matter of asymmetry between the two groups in Kosovo is complex, especially when we look at how it changed over the course of the past decades. Compared to Cluj, where Romanians have made up the majority of the city for decades now and with Cluj having belonged to Romania for already a long time, the asymmetries between the categories are much more clear and persistent. In Kosovo they are still very much in flux. In Yugoslavia alone, from a period where Albanians were suppressed in the 1950s, when the Serbs were in charge, to a change in relations and the blossoming of an Albanian culture in Kosovo in the 60s and the 70s, where the Serbs started to experience once again that they are a demographic minority. In these years the Albanians were still a national minority in Yugoslavia, but became more dominant culturally and politically, shifting the power position and thereby the asymmetries between the two groups. The 1980s and the breakdown of Yugoslavia finally gave way to yet another shift, where the Serbs took power again and where nationalists enforced deep divisions between the groups as well as putting the Albanians back into a suppressed position.

This constantly shifting dynamic of asymmetry is a factor, I believe, that fuels the tensions between the Albanians and the Serbs. While an asymmetry such as in Cluj allows for a certain potential for Hungarians to experience their Hungarianness more often than the Romanians experience their ethnicity, the asymmetry and the (mostly) taken-for-grantedness of the position of the Hungarians in Cluj also makes that the situation is not given much thought and thus not often experienced in a certain way, in the everyday lives of people. In Kosovo however the situation and position of groups have not been stable for longer than ten years in the past century (except perhaps in the 1970s to a certain extend, which was definitely influenced by the growing prosperity of the Yugoslavs). This instability made that hardly ever a situation has developed in which the asymmetries and the markedness of ethnic group membership grew stable. The effect of this is that Kosovo has not reached a situation in which the asymmetry has become a taken-for-granted situation and that for both Albanians and Serbs has been salient and experienced often over the past decades.

Another and closely related issue is that of the categories of ethnicity and citizenship. Again, in Cluj, for the past seventy years, has been firmly within Romanian borders and thus ‘Romanian’ conveys both an ethnicity and a citizenship. Hungarians in Cluj can therefor be both Hungarian and Romanian. In Kosovo, of course, citizenship has been the subject of a little more change. From the end of the Second World War onwards, officially Kosovo was a province of Serbia, which was one of the republics of the federal state of Yugoslavia. Over the course of time however, Kosovo gained much more autonomy within Serbia and Yugoslavia. Then in the 1990s Kosovo was brought back firmly into Serbia, in 1999 became a separate and autonomous region again and in 2008 turned into an independent and contested state.

While for the Serbs of Kosovo, however chaotic it must have been, their citizenship was first and foremost Serbian (within Yugoslavia, an identity and citizenship many also identified themselves with). The Albanians never identified with Serbian citizenship, and viewed themselves as Albanians within Yugoslavia. Hungarians in Transylvania might feel the same, but both the passing of time and the unambiguous Romanian state has created a
more stable situation in which Transylvanian Hungarians are ethnically Hungarian, but clearly Romanian citizens. For Albanians, the ambiguous situation in Yugoslavia in terms of citizenship lead to a sort of nationhood twilight. The increasing discrimination in the 1980s and the degradation of Kosovo Albanians to second-class citizens in the 1990s only made things worse.

Kosovo’s citizenship is still ambiguous today. Officially a multi-ethnic state with equal rights, de facto the state of the Albanian majority. This is how Kosovo Albanians feel, as they view the independence as their independence and Kosovo their state, as do the Serbs, who equate the Kosovar identity with the Albanians and thus, at the moment, will not identify with this. The fact that Kosovo today is an Albanian state does not mean that it is Albania or necessarily that it strives to merge with Albania in some sort of form. Albanians of Kosovo strongly identify with Albania, but a distinct Kosovo identity has become stronger over time, especially due to the war, differences in language and history between Albanians from Albania and from Kosovo and the emerging of ‘national’ myths connected to Kosovo.184

Serbs could potentially identify with a Kosovo identity but such an identification of Serbs with a Kosovar state is unthinkable at this moment. How unthinkable this is at this moment illustrated when in conversation sometimes the word ‘Kosovars’ was used to talk about people in Kosovo in general (Albanians, Serbs and other minorities), and on several occasions Serbs would interrupt me and point out passionately that they are not Kosovars. For most Serbs ethnicity and citizenship are sharply distinct. Reality might dictate that they live in the Republic of Kosovo; this does not mean that they accept it. Not every Kosovo Albanian identifies with the label Kosovar either. Asking friends if they are Kosovar, some would respond positively, but a significant number would answer no, and state that they are Albanian. Asymmetry regarding ethnicity and citizenship exists, but in a complex and quite ambiguous way.

The most important aspect of asymmetry has been mentioned and hinted at in the above: the ways in which asymmetry makes that for the minority or non-dominant group ethnicity is more accessible, more often experientially salient and more consequential.185 It is clear that experiencing ethnicity is more accessible, more sensitive and more salient for Serbs in Kosovo. Another effect of this salience is that the more often ethnicity is experienced the more that person or group expects the other group to be occupied with ethnicity, while, this is one of the crucial elements of asymmetry, for the dominant group this is much less so or even hardly so. Salience for the Serbs comes from the political reality and from objectified reminders inside the enclave, such as a Kosovo Police station and the omnipresence of Albanian flags (and, in a growing number, Kosovo flags) and KLA war memorials. Yet due to the instability of dominance in Kosovo, ethnicity is still experienced more often by the Albanians than say the Romanians in Cluj. This is fuelled by the contestedness of their state, their recent memory of harsh experience and salience of their ethnicity in the 1990s (and before) and the novelty of having ‘independence’ and a state.

While the distinctions and dynamics distinguished by Brubaker provide an approach to gain insight into the workings of ethnicity in Cluj, in the context of Kosovo with its shifting asymmetries, things seem to be a little more complex. This dynamic of shifting

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184 Such as the ‘Legendary Commander’ Adem Jashari, who was mentioned in chapter two.
185 Brubaker et. al. *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town*, 216.
asymmetry of ethnic categories in Kosovo, I believe, is a crucial part of the complexity of the tensions in Kosovo. It was however Brubaker’s approach that helped to uncover this, by looking at dynamics and processes rather than substances. And utilizing this approach further could give way to important and better understandings of ethnicity in Kosovo. This will hopefully be investigated more thoroughly in the future.\textsuperscript{186}

3.4.3 Perceiving and Enacting Ethnicity

Having gained understanding of some theoretical aspects of the dynamics and impact of categories and categorization, it is time to have a look at how categorization actually works in everyday Kosovo. Categories are frames through which we see the world and an obvious way of categorizing each other is by the ways we look. Many people in Kosovo will tell you that they can tell who is Albanian and who is Serb, just by seeing them. In some interethnic settings bodily cues might be very clear due to skin color or other conspicuous physical differences, in Kosovo, regardless of what some people say, this is not so much the case. When asked how people can tell who is who, usually they answer that ‘you just know’. Traditional clothing however can be reliable cue of ethnicity though, but this is not usually worn in present-day Kosovo. Yet, in a general sense, differences in clothing can point to a distinction between rural and urban people than to ethnic categories.\textsuperscript{187}

Another cue, and perhaps the most important of all, is language. Language is not always a clear indicator of ethnicity; in Bosnia for example all three large ethnicities – Bosniak, Serb and Croat – speak more or less the same language.\textsuperscript{188} In Kosovo however language is a reliable cue for ethnic categorization. Language cues are both visual and aural. Language is visual in street and town signs, in nameplates, in newspapers that people read on the streets and whether somebody in Kosovo talks about Pećs or Peja, usually gives away that person’s ethnicity. The aural aspect is even more obvious. Speaking Albanian is practically always an indicator for being Albanian as hardly any Serb speaks Albanian, besides the few words they have picked up from friends, nor is Albanian a language commonly spoken by other minorities in Kosovo.\textsuperscript{189} When I would speak some words in Albanian during my field research, surprise was usually the first response, often followed by the assumption that I would somehow be Albanian or have Albanian roots. When it turned out that this was not the case, interestingly, I was often regarded with some suspicion.\textsuperscript{190}

\textsuperscript{186} The lack of time, funds and language skills and the space one has within a MA thesis sadly placed this effort out of my reach.

\textsuperscript{187} It must however be said that today most Serbs live in villages and have less access to certain clothing stores. Higher incomes of people living in Pristina is a factor, but perhaps one of the most influential factors regarding clothing is the clothes brought back by the diaspora, which is often the newest fashion from Western Europe. While this might be the case and point at a certain asymmetry and difference in clothing styles, it is not a reliable indicator of ethnicity.

\textsuperscript{188} Since the breakup of Yugoslavia, differences between different variations of Serbo-Croatian or Bosnian have been emphasized and furtered. The languages differ more today than they did in the recent past, but people still understand each other without problems and speak essentially the same language.

\textsuperscript{189} Some Roma communities speak Albanian, and there are Bosniaks in Kosovo that speak Albanian. Due to the size of the language and its difficulty there are much less internationals that speak Albanian versus Serbian.

\textsuperscript{190} The main requirement for being Albanian is speaking Albanian. Thus speaking a couple of words would often be embraced with me being Albanian. The extent to which Albanians are unfamiliar with other people speaking their language is interesting. When you know just some words, often Albanians think that they can just speak to you without taking into regard that you cannot follow at all. For Albanians their language also meant a degree of safety in times of oppression, hence the occasional suspicious response to some
Speaking Serbian on the other hand does not necessarily indicate being Serb. Not only do most Slavs of the former Yugoslavia speak a form of Serbian-Croatian, also most (urban) Albanians in Kosovo spoke and speak Serbian to some degree. Those generations of Albanians that lived in Yugoslavia usually can still speak Serbian today, some with reluctance, yet others enthusiastically. The younger generations however have usually never learned to speak it.

Due to language, ethnicity is more salient today for the Serbs while back in Yugoslavia where Serbo-Croatian was the main language this was much more the case for Albanians. Even when Albanians did speak Serbian, there is a difference in how one speaks a language. Many Albanians that did speak Serbian would pride themselves in being fluent if they were, very much like someone would pride herself in speaking fluent English today. Yet usually differences remain between native speakers and non-native speakers in any language, sometimes giving way to feelings of discomfort on the side of Albanians and more in general their experience of ethnicity. Asymmetries existed back in Yugoslavia and language gave clear cues for ethnic identification. That is different today. With the fading of bilingualism and the segregation that followed the war everyday interactions between Albanians and Serbs have largely disappeared. Some Albanians and Serbs of the older generations do communicate with each other, in Serbian, and some Albanians eagerly do so, usually for nostalgic reasons.

An interesting situation that illustrates this occurred when I travelled back to Gračanica on late at night with some Serbs from a jazz festival that took place in Zvečan in the Serbian northern part of Kosovo. My Serb friends tried to fetch us a taxi to drive back to Gračanica, but most taxis in the North have Serbian license plates and no Kosovo ones, which makes that they could not drive south of the river Ibar. We tried many taxis but none had the required plates or were willing to take the risk. We then decided that we would walk to the southern part of Mitrovica, where we would hopefully find Kosovar (Albanian) taxis to drive us home. When my friends had been my guides in the Northern part, suddenly I realized that, as they reluctantly walked over the bridge to the south, they expected me to do the talking and that I knew my way around and they did not. Anxious to display their Serbness by speaking Serbian on the streets late at night, they were silent. I asked around for a taxi in Albanian, and after a while we finally found one. Sitting in the taxi my casual conversation with the driver quickly dried up as my arsenal of Albanian words was quickly used up. I asked him if he spoke English or German so that this long drive home would not be too awkward, but he answered that the only other language he spoke was Serbian. I decided then to take my chances, and told the driver that the people in the back were Serbian. I had not yet finished my sentence as he enthusiastically turned his head and started a very animated conversation with my friends, who talked back, relaxed and seemed to enjoy the conversation that involved a lot of travelling down Yugoslavia’s memory lane. The conversation lasted all the way home and ended in a warm goodbye.

This was not nearly the only occasion in which the enthusiasm of older Albanians to speak Serbian came forward but one of the most interesting ones as it reveals much about
the present-day situation in Kosovo. The younger generations however rarely interact and when they do, the language of choice (and usually only option) is often the neutral English.

Cues of any kind – physical appearance, dress, language, accent and names – can be a matter of perception by others. Ethnicity is however also enacted. In interaction, ethnicity can be, what anthropologists call overcommunicated or undercommunicated.191 According to Brubaker signs can be consciously ‘given’, unconsciously ‘given off’ or a mixture of both.192 Overcommunication of ethnicity happens often in the public and political sphere and national holidays are a common setting for overcommunication of ethnicity or nationhood by ordinary people.193 Kosovan Albanians for example celebrate the anniversary of the Albanian independence of 1912, known as Flag Day, more elaborately than the independence day of the Republic of Kosovo on the 17th of February. Flag day goes accompanied with widespread celebrations, traditional Albanian songs and lots of Albanian flag-waving. For Kosovan Serbs, religious holidays often go hand in hand with national symbols of Serbia and even the anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo on the 28th of June is connected to a religious holiday.194 Ordinary people however rarely overcommunicate their ethnicity in their daily lives.

But certain events can spark nationalist sentiments causing sudden surges of overcommunication of ethnicity. A recent example of such an event was the international football match between Serbia and Albania, on the 14th of October 2014 in Belgrade. Just before halftime a drone flew through the stadium, carrying a flag of ‘Albania Etnike’ or Greater Albania, including Kosovo. A provocation that hit a sensitive note with the Serbian fans and led to euphoria with the Albanians, especially of Kosovo, who were not allowed to visit the match. A skirmish ensued on the pitch, between players and later hooligans, until the Albanians players fled from the field. Within minutes my Facebook feed filled with Albanian flags of all sorts and people changing their cover and profile photos. Suddenly Albanian-ness was loudly communicated, even by people I did not expect it from. Interestingly enough it was quite silent on the side of my Serbian friends.195

Accounts of ethnicity often understand ethnicity as something that is ascribed, but in many ways it is ‘achieved’. Ethnic category membership relies on the recognition by others of you being a member. This allows for an insider status and the privileges that belong to it, but also includes obligations.196 These obligations are never very clear, but come to the surface when perceived violations are ‘policing’. Policing of category membership happens to maintain groupness. Policing is also subject to asymmetry, as a minority group usually feels greater pressure to maintain group boundaries. Policing happens in different ways, varying from commenting language practices to enforcing certain choices as what school the children will go to and discouraging mixed marriages, as

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191 Brubaker et al. Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town, 222.
192 Ibid.
193 Albanians celebrate the anniversary of the Albanian independence of 1912, known as Flag Day, often more elaborately than the independence day of Kosovo.
194 This anniversary coincides with St. Vitus Day or Vidovdan, a religious holiday in the Orthodox Church.
195 I am still not sure why exactly this was. I do know that on the side of Serbs in Kosovo there were some fears of violence, perhaps of the kind of March 2004 in the hours following the suspended match. Besides some raised tensions, some celebrations of Albanians in towns of Kosovo (thinking they would surely be appointed with the points of the match and the ‘heroic’ act of nationalism) and political exploitation of the event not much happened.
196 Brubaker et al. Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town, 229.
well as numerous more subtle cases. Policing of Albanian-ness was much stronger in Yugoslavia, when the Albanian identity competed with a Yugoslav identity that was pressed upon them by the government.\textsuperscript{197}

Policing has always been quite strong among Serbs in Kosovo. Because Kosovo was and is perceived as the holy heart of Serbia, the Serbs and Serbian settlers in Kosovo had a sacred task to maintain the existence of Serbian culture. Later this narrative became less strong but with the growing Albanian autonomy within Yugoslavia there was an increasing sense of threat. This grew in strength for both Albanians and Serbs as the first cracks began to appear in the foundations of Yugoslavia. The 1990s are marked by fierce policing by both sides and interaction became increasingly tabooed. When the majority of the Albanians working for state institutions were fired by Milošević in 1990 this triggered policing and negative feelings towards those Albanians that kept working for Yugoslav institutions as they were sometimes perceived as traitors by other Albanians. It has been mentioned that a similar situation now exists for Serbs. There are hardly any opportunities for employment, but those, like Nemanja, the architect working at the Ministry of Culture, who do take up jobs with the Albanians are criticized. A different example is Tringa, a 22-year old girl from Gjilan, living in Pristina, who wants to study Serbian, as it would greatly enhance her chances of a job. She seriously considers it but afraid of what others would say about it, she said she would probably not dare to.

Policing in Kosovo today is however not only directed to the ‘other’ ethnic group. When I participated in a workshop on memory and monuments at the University of Pristina, it often happened that participants switched from English, the official language in this international workshop, to Albanian when they felt that they could convey their point better or would feel more comfortable.\textsuperscript{198} Two internationals and myself would not be able to follow any longer when this happened. One of the Albanians spoke up against the others speaking Albanian as it excluded us, but some participants insisted quite fiercely that they should have the right to speak own tongue and be comfortable and the professors, clearly conscious of the delicateness of the situation, protected the point of those in favor of speaking Albanian. This case was not the only one, and although English is widely spoken in Kosovo, in post-war and recently independent Kosovo there seems to be some friction with the widespread usage of English. It is clear that in post 1999 Kosovo the majority of Albanians is of the opinion that Albanian is the dominant language and having been a secondary language long enough, people are passionate to protect the right to speak their language, whether it be against Serbian, English or any other language.

3.4.4 Non-ethnic categories

Often we think of ethnic categories as discrete and bounded: just like you are either man or not, you are Albanian or you are not. We imagine these and other categories as black and

\textsuperscript{197} To some extent at least, as Albanians were allowed education in their language and many other cultural liberties.

\textsuperscript{198} This workshop was called ‘Recollecting the Past in Kosovo: Cultural Memory between Facts and Fiction’, and was organized by Forum ZFD and Alter Habitus, two organizations active in Kosovo. We travelled to different locations in Kosovo and held meetings at the University of Pristina. The workshop was held from the 4th to the 7th of March 2014.
white, with a clear distinction who is inside the category and who is not. Yet, as Brubaker has pointed out, ‘in practice ethnic category membership is often understood, experienced and represented as a matter of degree’, or as an analog – with many different shades – and not a digital phenomenon, as Thomas Eriksen has put it. Ethnic categories themselves are rarely as clear-cut as we might assume them to be.

Besides ethnic categories there are many more categories or lenses through which we experience and interpret the world and that we feel we belong to. Categories such as citizenship, region and religion matter and work next to ethnic ones. Ethnic categories are however also often tied up with, or rather, conveyed through the use of other categories. In Kosovo the religious category ‘Muslim’ conveys, especially for Serbs, the ethnic category ‘Albanian’. The regional category ‘Štrpce’ suggests the ethnic category ‘Serbian’ just as ‘Drenica’ suggests ‘Albanian’, and not only because of the language used for their geographical names. There is a strong association between religion and ethnicity in Kosovo, and often to know someone’s religion is to know his ethnicity. Yet not necessarily so, being Muslim is not essential to being Albanian and being a Muslim could also mean he is Bosniak for example, or Roma. The point here is that these categories are often closely tied up, especially in the perception of Kosovars themselves, but the fact that they are often linked does not mean that they are one and the same or that they always work together. The rest of this paragraph will look at some examples of how non-ethnic categories can both relativize and reinforce ethnic categories.

Regional categories are especially interesting because in many ways they function like ethnic categories. Regional categories are very strong in Kosovo, and are connected to cultural and behavioral differences. Especially to Kosovo Albanians, regional categories are often much more salient than ethnic ones are. The lesser salience of ethnicity for the Albanians in their daily lives due to them being the national majority makes that regional differences and the rural/urban distinction are experienced far more often by people. These differences, just as with ethnic categories, are experienced and picked up through language cues, such as dialect and accent, and other cues like dress, bodily differences, behavior and customs. For Albanians regions have always been an important but the importance of regional divisions got temporarily suspended during the years of the 1990s with when being Albanian increasingly defined their lives due to the political suppression and prosecution. Yet, as we have seen, these regional and urban-rural divisions today might be much more experienced in the everyday lives of Albanians than ethnicity. Daily distinctions between us and them by Kosovo Albanians are more readily cast in rural-urban terms than ethnic terms.

Regional categories are tied up closely with a distinction between people from the cities and from the countryside. Sometimes the rural regional categories are praised, for

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200 Ibid., and Eriksen, Ethnicity and Nationalism, 157-158.
201 Brubaker et al. Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town, 232.
202 Albanians tend to have a stronger relation to regional categories. This is caused partly by the fact that Albanian bonds are first and foremost with their family, who were often tied to a certain territory. Related to the lack of a centrally organized church, Albanians relied more on their tribes or communities. Serbs have less strongly developed regional categories, and while they are surely still there, Kosovo being just a region of Serbia this is much less so the case for Serbs within Kosovo. Regional categories work much the same as ethnic categories as their cultural and behavioral characteristics are often assumed to be biologically transmitted or acquired by early socialization.
them being real Albanians, from the most authentic Albanian regions such as Drenica and the highlands, where people are traditional and where the core of resistance against the Serbs was. The experience of categories thus changes over time, depending on the context. During the 1990s, these villagers were the heroes of the Albanians. And they still are, but for many this is overlapped by the influx of katunar in Pristina and they are associated with inefficiency and corruption. This division between civilized, urban, ‘European’, educated people and traditional, rural, religious and uncivilized people is not new in Kosovo. There is a long lasting divide between the urbanites and villagers in Kosovo. For the urbanites, the more traditional (and often more religious and nationalist) people conflict with their identification with a Western, educated, cosmopolitan image. Samet, who grew up in Serbia, which he (and many other ‘urban’ Albanians) views as much more civilized, put it like this:

Samet: ‘Being here, like disconnects me from urban life. You know, I think that people here are primitive, and the mentality is primitive as well; culture, non-existent. Manners, manners. What are those? You know. No one says hello, no one says good afternoon, nothing! Now, I can live with this, I don’t mind, but I would rather live in a place where, you know, people have some, some culture.’

For the Serbs in Kosovo regional categories probably have mattered more in the past, yet today, similar to the Albanians in the 1990s, it seems that the position they are in overshadows regional categories. In periods of when the group category is under pressure it seems that the experience of other categories such as regional ones is crowded out of experience by the growing group cohesion or groupness. And as ethnic groupness grows ethnicity is experienced more often in the daily lives and other distinctions become less salient. Darko and other Serbs from Pristina that now live in Gračanica do however often complain about village life and how abnormal this is, sometimes also hinting to Serbs that have lived in the village for a longer time than they have. But their attitude usually seems to be that what else they can do, but make do? Things are the way they are and complaining or emphasizing differences within the small community that relies on each other will not help them in any way.

Regional or other categories such as religious ones can relativize ethnic oppositions. On the other hand they can also reinforce them. This happens when regional categories overlap with ethnic ones for example. When Nemanja complains about how Pristina changed, even right after the war, he told me how he saw a man chopping his firewood on a balcony in the middle of the city. Still indignant of this barbaric breach of civility in the city, he saw this as exemplary for Albanians pouring into his town. In this way the overlap of rural behavior and ethnicity reinforced the experience of ethnicity. Nemanja had however shared his town with Albanians all his life, and he meant rural Albanians, but quite obviously for him these were the only real Albanians, collapsing regional and ethnic categories. This division between urban and rural people is however just as commonly expressed by Albanians in Pristina today when they complain about how katunar or villagers are in charge and mess up their country.

Dren: You know what is wrong, what I cannot understand? Villagers. Yeah. Katunar come here, and want to learn you how to...

Ull: Yeah!
Increasing interaction with Albanians from Albania and Kosovar Albanians has highlighted regional differences between them. Differences between Albanians from Kosovo and from Albania were often a subject of conversation. Una, a 25-year-old girl originally from Tirana in Albania, now lives in Pristina together with her boyfriend. She is still surprised by how much respect she gets from Kosovo Albanians, as people tend to think her language is so civilized and her accent so pretty. While girls from Albania are often admired for their femininity and their civility in Kosovo, guys from Albania are often viewed as girly, ‘gay’ and not manly in general. This is not only articulated in terms of speech, but also in bodily differences, where guys from Albania are laughed about, and described as small, dark and feminine. Una on the other hand thinks that Kosovo Albanian men are tall, strong and manly. Here we can see how regional categories do not only sometimes collapse with ethnicity, but function like an ethnic category, complete with differences in language, appearance, culture etc.

Just as with ethnic categories are regional categories often cast in civilizational and racial terms. And just as Kosovo Albanians for example say that they can recognize Serbs by just looking at the way they look, the same is said about Albanians from Albania. But perhaps more salient than the racial aspects is the civilizational aspect that already has recurred many times. While Albanians from Kosovo generally see Albanians from Albania as more civilized, these Albanians in Albania, also Una’s parents, have an image of Kosovo Albanians as less civilized, as *katunar*, villagers.

In the anecdote with Nemanja he saw the rural and the ethnic category as complementary, but as he later admitted for him it is much move about civility and normality than about ethnicity. Ethnic categories are often closely intertwined with other categories such as region and religion. Serbs in Kosovo are also often Christian Orthodox and in Yugoslavia a majority of them lived in cities, Albanians are often Muslim and a vast majority of them used to live on the countryside and in certain regions of Kosovo. Yet while in the example of Nemanja he conflates Albanian and rural categories and thereby reinforcing opposition, shortly thereafter he allowed the rural category understood as ‘uncivilized people’ cut cross ethnic ones, as he said that he of course not meant the real Pristina (urban) Albanians. This difference might not seem that important, yet for the ways in which it shapes the experience of interethnic interaction and knowledge it is significant.

This civilizational divide is one of stratification and another us-them distinction. These stratification categories can coincide with ethnic categories, but they often cut across

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203 Ramush Haradinaj and Hashim Thaçi are two former KLA fighters and prominent politicians in Kosovo today. Haradinaj is a former KLA commander, political leader for the Aleanca për Ardhmërinë e Kosovës (AAK) and a former Prime Minister of Kosovo in 2004-2005. He has been charged by the ICTY and tried twice, but has been acquitted on all charges. Hashim Thaçi was the political leader of the KLA and the first Prime Minister of the independent Republic of Kosovo from 2008 until 2014. He is the leader of the Partia Demokratike e Kosovës.
them as illustrated by Nemanja. Another ubiquitous stratification category is that of morality, of good and bad. When talking about corruption and the us-them division between politicians and ordinary people this already came to the for, and this divide sometimes cuts across ethnic categories. Yet, there is another moral category through which people in Kosovo categorize. In almost every interview I have held, at some point the war emerged. In talking about the war people would often simply talk about how the Serbs did this, or the Albanians did this. But almost always, at some point, my interviewees felt the need to exert a different categorization: one between good people and bad people.

David: Did that make you look different at your neighbors? Did that change anything?
Blerta: Not really, because we were always reminded that there were good people, even when they are Serbs, they could be good.
David: Who would do that?
Blerta: Our parents, every nation has good and bad people, even Albanians also have bad people.
Zana: Our father would always say, there are hooligans, you don’t hang out with them, because they are the bad people, but not our neighbors, because they are the good people, they would never hurt us, or do anything bad, he would always point out that, like, intelligent, educated, academic people, even if they are Serbian, they would never do us any bad things, you know.

This example captures what is heard so very commonly across Kosovo. It does not relativize the experience of many people of what Serbs, or in other occasions, Albanians have done to people. And many people still are angry or scared of the ‘other’, disappointed how their trust in people they have lived with for so long had been damaged and still do not want or dare to trust a Serb or an Albanian. People however have to make sense of the world and the many good things neighbors and friends of the other ethnicity have also done during those years. For instance Ull, whose father has been cruelly killed by Serbian neighbors some months after the end of the war, has other Serbian neighbors that had helped them escape to the mountains of Novi Pazar some months before. It were definitely Serbs that have taken away his father and have deeply influenced his life, but it has also been Serbs that at the risk of their own safety had helped them. In the wake of this war, how are people to make sense of this? A way to cope with this is to understand that besides and across ethnic lines, there is another category to understand and experience the world through: that of good and bad people.

These dynamics of categorization are significant because it shows us that just looking at the ethnic categories alone obscures the salience other categories might have to the experience of daily life. And yet this is often what happens in studies on ethnicity. Categorizing happens all the time and most people divide the world in an us/them frame. This however does not mean that this frame is always ethnic, not even in ethnic conflict-ridden Kosovo. Categorization is everywhere in the social world, in lots of different forms and shapes and ethnicity is only one of them. The understanding of categories as modalities or vehicles of experience is essential and will be a guiding principle for the rest of this analysis. An important aspect of the experience of ethnicity is the asymmetry that exists between (ethnic) categories. The asymmetry between Albanians and Serbians, which in present-day Kosovo puts the Albanians in the power position, increases the potential to
experience ethnicity for the Serbs and diminishes it for the Albanians. Yet while in most places such an asymmetry is rather stable, in Kosovo it has shifted and tilted many times over the past decades. To my knowledge not much attention has been given to this dynamic in the field of ethnicity or in the study of ethnicity in Kosovo while I believe it to be an essential feature to the experience and salience of ethnicity by ordinary Kosovars.

Brubaker is right when he states that ‘to study ethnic categories alone – or even in conjunction with closely related categories like citizenship, region and religion – is to risk contributing to the very reification of ethnicity that the strategy of beginning with categories rather than groups was designed to avoid’\textsuperscript{204} It has been this approach that has allowed this study to get peek into the dynamics and workings of ethnicity in Kosovo, confirming that ethnicity is definitely ‘happening’ in Kosovo, but that other categories ‘happen’ just as much and sometimes are more salient to the everyday experience of people. The remainder of the analysis will look at the many different forms in which ethnicity shapes or does not shape experience.

### 3.5 Languages

Language is an important aspect of ethnicity and probably the most important aspect of everyday ethnicity in Kosovo. This part takes a closer look at some ways in which ethnicity is enacted and experienced through language practices.\textsuperscript{205} These language practices have changed over time, from what was roughly a ‘setting of asymmetrical bilingualism’ in Yugoslavia to a situation where people are not only segregated spatially but also linguistically.

In Brubaker’s analysis of language practices in Cluj he argues that while in many occasions language is a cause of ethnic friction, in everyday language use bilingualism is often interactionally unproblematic. In Yugoslavia this was true for interactions in Kosovo too, but rising tensions and eventual bloody ethnic conflict have given way to a new reality in which bilingualism has gotten more and more exceptional and with it the interaction itself. The current situation leaves not much room for linguistic interaction or interaction between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo altogether. This does however not mean that there is nothing of our interest in the role of language in Kosovo.

Today, when you walk into a shop in Pristina, you will be welcomed with an Albanian miređita, or perhaps an English hello. And in Gračanica you will be greeted by the Serbian zdravo or doberdan. This can be rather safely done as the Albanian and Serbian ‘worlds’ are largely separated as we have seen, and thus strangers can be assumed to speak one or the other language, depending on where you are. In Yugoslav Pristina this was different, and while Albanian shop owners might have still welcomed their customers in Albanian, upon hearing or recognizing that the costumer was Serb, they would easily switch to Serbian.

And Serbs, knowing the shop owner is Albanian, would often use a couple of Albanian words to just get by and be polite. Most Serbs I talked to say they know a couple of Albanian words and that they would sometimes use it to buy bread or something. A

\textsuperscript{204} Brubaker, Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town, 238.

\textsuperscript{205} Ibid., 240.
commonly heard complaint from Albanians about that period is that ‘they’, the Serbs, know quite a lot of Albanian but just do not want to use it and pretend they do not understand. These dynamics are nicely illustrated in a conversation with the two sisters Blerta and Zana, about their childhood in the city of Mitrovica:

Zana: Every shop around us was owned by Serbians. That’s why we learned Serbian. Like, we couldn’t go anywhere without knowing how to speak Serbian

David: So you maybe did some groceries and stuff?

Blerta: Yeah, yeah. Like, we had the shops around, so we went to buy bread or something like that. Because if you would talk Albanian, they would just don’t get you, ignore you.

Zana: Yeah.

David: Do you think they understood though?

Zana: Yes!

Blerta: Yeah!

David: But they would just not respond?

Blerta: A lot of them, a lot of them do.

Zana: There would be some of them, would just respond in Albanian.

Blerta: But the stores where we always went, they didn’t.

Zana: No, no. But we learned Serbian that way, so that was good.

In general it can be said that in Yugoslavia, it was expected from the Albanians to speak at least some Serbian and almost everybody did. In practice this did not cause much friction most of the time as it was accepted and taken-for-granted. Just as Serbian in the past, as the national majority in the new ‘multiethnic’ state, nowadays most Albanians view it as normal that Albanian has a dominant position in Kosovo.

A second aspect of bilingual interaction is the usage of a certain language in public. In my interviews I have not gained an extensive insight into the practices and subtleties of public interaction pre-1990, and the segregation of Albanians and Serbs today does not allow for many of these interactions in Pristina at this moment.206 This does not mean that these interethnic interactions or situations do not happen at all. When asked about the segregation of Serbs in Kosovo today, many Albanians respond that they do not really know, not really care, or that it is their own fault. When asked more directly about the feelings of limited freedom and living in a ghetto that many Serbs have, Albanians often respond a little surprised and tell me that Serbs can come to Pristina, that nothing will happen and that they even hear Serbian on the streets all the time. Or in the words of the 33-year old Maria:

Maria: For myself, I am surprised; I thought it would be much worse. I am surprised how tolerant it is. People speak, even before this year, in the middle of the street Serbian, without any problem, and loud! Really loud! Like, they want to make it so obvious, like on the phone and stuff. You know. Even now, I don’t dare, I don’t have that much courage, to go in the middle of Belgrade, and speak Albanian. Maybe nothing will happen, but I don’t dare.

206 It is important to understand that this might change in the future. Not stating that it will, but an important aspect of (everyday) ethnicity, as mentioned a couple of times, is the waxing and waning of groupness. With a war just fifteen years ago, several violent upheavals in the years after and a contested status it is not surprising that this segregation persists. This does not mean that with time, and possible political changes, interaction could not possibly grow again, in whatever form. In Brubaker’s research on Cluj, it is not that there has never been a violent or uncertain situation like in Kosovo, but these a lot longer ago. This partly accounts for the lack of salience that ethnicity has in Cluj, even when Brubaker does not really emphasize this himself.
She goes on to tell about how during a bus ride to Germany for a school trip, she and the kids were scared of speaking Albanian at the Serbian borders, even if there is no clear reason for such fear today. That Albanians are scared to speak their language in public, for example in Belgrade (if they dare to go) is frequently heard. As often is the case with these things, this is not so much about actual danger but about the perception of danger and a narrative based on the collective memory of the 1990s. At the same time, hearing Serbian on the streets in Pristina is still quite rare, and even when it is heard, usually these are Serbs from Belgrade and not from the enclaves, but this is not always clear to the Albanians in Pristina. And while it happens, speaking Serbian in public is clearly marked and noticed. But while this is the case, hearing Serbian on the streets of Pristina rarely prompts direct complaint or policing by Albanians. When I asked Emir, a 26-year old guy from Prizren, with an Albanian father and a Bosniak mother, about speaking Serbian on the streets, he answered this:

David: I remember a Macedonian once saying he was worried, about him speaking Macedonian here in public. That people think they think it is Serbian and it would get him in trouble.

Emir: I speak Serbian all the time; with some of my bosses, and also with Serbs that live here. I always speak Serbian with them! And when I call with my mum, on the phone, even on the street, I always speak Serbian. Nobody ever complained about that.

When I would ask Albanians directly about the use of Serbian in public, they say that it happens, and that it is no problem. Sometimes they added some complaints of how Serbs already do so, and do so loudly, as also expressed by Maria. Most Albanians probably have some sort of opinion about the speaking of Serbian and would add that Serbs do also have to understand or speak some Albanian, but on the streets it rarely actually sparks friction and open complaining or policing.

Serbs that do go to Pristina, such as Aleksandar and Petar often mask the fact that they are Serb by not speaking Serbian open or loudly, but prefer to speak English. Or in the case of the Serbs I went with to South Mitrovica, who decided to be silent. When Albanians go to Belgrade they often do the same, and start to speak English amongst each other, scarred that people would discover they are Albanians in Belgrade and not sure what would happen. Two of my colleagues from the think tank I worked for however regularly went to Belgrade, and being a little more comfortable tried to have some open and quite loud conversations in Albanian. Nothing happened. Just as Genc said that when he went to Belgrade, people thought he was speaking some sort of French when he actually spoke Albanian.

These examples illustrate that while open complaining about language practices is rare and policing even more rare. This is party due to lack of interaction, as more interaction would happen, perhaps more friction would happen too. But the fact of the matter is that most people censor and police themselves due to perceptions of danger or possible conflict. This is not less serious, as it enforces the separation and fuels feelings of restrictions and danger as well as the experience of ethnicity, but the response to sudden interaction is usually surprise more than anything, real irritation is rare and direct conflicts even more so.
Language practices are a vehicle of ethnicity and often generate attention and can cause irritation, friction and complaint. Today these practices are more restrained by self-censoring due to perceptions of danger than by actual policing or complaining and not that often experienced as a result of the little interaction. Yet even in pre-1990 Yugoslavia, when the interaction between Serbs and Albanians was abundant, such frictions and confrontations did not frequently happen.

However, more important to the experience of ethnicity than friction and conflict might be yet another asymmetry. Even when people are fully fluent in a language, asymmetry between a second language and a mother tongue usually remains. As Brubaker eloquently puts it: ‘the experience of speaking “one’s own” language is often associated with a feeling of phenomenological comfort, a sense of being home in the social world’.207 Albanians in Yugoslavia were confronted with speaking another language was not their own language on a daily basis. Serbians have never really experienced their ethnicity through language in this way, not even today, as most do not speak Albanian. It is not impossible that this would change on the long run in Kosovo, and that Serbs would start speaking more Albanian. Before such a thing would happen the situation in Kosovo would have to change drastically, both politically and on the level of daily interaction. Besides it being an acknowledgement of Albanian dominance of Kosovo, speaking Albanian however would also bring along a phenomenological discomfort they are not well acquainted with, posing yet another great barrier.

Language in Kosovo is the most clear and strong aspect of ethnicity in Kosovo. Today language differences are one of the issues preventing or obstructing interethnic interaction. But besides distance, it does not necessarily cause friction between the two groups. Perhaps even a lot less than when a situation of asymmetrical bilingualism, in which most Albanians also spoke Serbian, did allow for frequent and daily interactions. But also in that situation, although not impossible, language practices did not often lead to conflict or friction and were structured in ways that allowed for easy and unproblematic communication between Serbs and Albanians. This asymmetry did however make that ethnicity, through the speaking of a different language, was experienced more readily and often by Albanians. This is an experience that Serbs usually lacked.

3.6 Institutions

In an attempt to gain understanding of how ethnicity works, this study looks at the forms and shapes that structure the experience of ethnicity. The analysis has already looked at some ways in which language, demography and categories influence the experience of ethnicity. Especially the role asymmetry plays in either increasing or decreasing (the probability of) the salience of ethnicity to the everyday experience of people has been and needs to be emphasized here. This section deals with another asymmetry that shapes the experience of ethnicity in Kosovo: the institutions and organizations. More specifically it will look at how institutions and organizations create ethnic worlds. These worlds are what

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207 Brubaker et al. Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town, 264.
Zoltán Kántor called ‘ethno-civil societies’. Such an ethno-civil society then is a ‘world’ in which for example an Albanian is able to speak Albanian and meet other Albanians as a matter of course. Kántor distinguishes two elements that create and sustain such a society. The first element is that of the political project, an element briefly looked at in the second chapter in the parts regarding the political push for Albanian language institutions and Albanian schooling in Yugoslavia. The second element concerns the more inconspicuous social processes that create such a world. These social processes are what this section focuses on but they cannot be seen separate from the existence of the institutions and organizations help produce and reproduce these ethno-civil societies.

The idea behind these ethno-civil societies is that there is a separate ethnic world, within and sort of insulated from the surrounding society, usually viewed as the world of the majority nation. Brubaker and Kántor study the Hungarian world in Cluj and Transylvania that is nested inside the wider Romanian world that surrounds it. These ethno-civil societies also exist in Kosovo, be it however in some different and more complex ways. The central idea behind the importance of these separate societies to this analysis is that the existence of these worlds influences the experience of ethnicity.

Because asymmetry is again important here, the focus will be mostly on the existence of the ‘minority’ society that is nested within the society of the ‘majority’. In present-day Kosovo it is the Serbians that are the minority, both demographically and politically and it is the Serbian ethno-civil society that is nested within a wider Albanian world. This situation is rather new however. In Yugoslavia it were the Albanians who were the political minority. During these years it was the Albanian society that was encapsulated by a wider Serbian or Yugoslav world.

This section will first set apart what actually is meant with such an ethnic-civil society and how such a society influences the experience of ethnicity. This is followed by a discussion of the Albanian ethno-civil society within a wider Yugoslav world and then completed by a discussion of a Serbian ethno-civil society in post-1999 Kosovo. In both discussions will be looked at several elements that help produce and reproduce these societies, which is first and foremost the educational system that functions as the institutional backbone to these societies, and is complimented by the ways in which churches and mosques, workplaces, organizations and media help to sustain ethno-civil societies in Kosovo.

### 3.6.1 Ethno-Civil Society

It is still not completely clear what such an ethnic-civil society or ethnic ‘world’ is. The most important feature of these societies for this study on everyday ethnicity is how these societies influence and shape the experience of ethnicity. These societies that are, at least in the case of Kosovo, produced and reproduced by personal and individual choices but also by institutions and organizations. The institutions such as schools and churches create places

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210 Ibid.
and structures that bind people together and shape social networks. These institutions enable the production and reproduction of ‘Albanian-ness’ and ‘Serb-ness’, by providing language education, providing places where people speak this language, creating places where (young) people meet and build friendships and marriages with other people of the same ethnicity. But most crucially, these ethno-civil societies create a world in which the minority ethnicity no longer experiences their ethnicity as the marked category, and becomes instead the unmarked and taken-for-granted category. So while on the one hand these ethno-civil societies reproduce and reinforce the experience of ethnic category membership, on the other hand it creates a world in which people’s ethnicity becomes much less salient. It is this dual capacity that holds the power and the significance of the existence of these worlds.

But what is the relation of a minority ethno-civil community to the larger and wider ethno-national society. In his discussion of the Hungarian ‘world’ in Cluj, Brubaker discusses two images that seem to characterize the Hungarian world. The first is the image of a parallel world and the other of an enclave that is nested within the wider Romanian world. According to Brubaker each of these images tells us something about the relation of the Hungarian world with the Romanian one, but both images lack in important ways. A brief look will be taken at the idea of a parallel world and an encapsulated enclave, before indicating in what ways these images link to the situations in both Yugoslav Kosovo and the post 1999 Kosovo.

The idea of parallel worlds is the idea that one society has dualistic structures of parallel institutions that function alongside the other. This idea of parallel social worlds has been developed by Michael Smith, among others, when he tried to make sense of the divided colonial societies in the British West Indies, where groups of people, with different cultures lived together in one place but lived lives completely separated from each other, give or take some rare encounters on the marketplace. Another example of parallel or ‘pillar’ societies could be found in The Netherlands and has been described by Arend Lijphart in the book The Politics of Accommodation, in which he described the existence of parallel Catholic, Protestant, Socialist and Liberal societies that had their own schools, media, political parties, sport clubs etc. This model of parallel structures comes a long way in describing the respective situations in Kosovo before and after 1999, but does not fully describe it. In Yugoslavia there was Albanian language education from primary to university level, there were Albanian language media and Albanian shops alongside Yugoslav or Serbian ones. And today in Kosovo almost every institution, from government to education and even hospitals, has an Albanian or Kosovar one and a Serbian one. The image of completely parallel worlds

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211 Brubaker et al. Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town, 266.
212 M.G. Smith The Plural Society in the British West Indies (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965) and Jenkins, Rethinking Ethnicity 25-30.
214 For the sake of clarity and argument I will largely conflate Serbian and Yugoslav in this section. This is not an accurate description of the situation as Serbian and Yugoslavian are not one and the same. Yet even when Yugoslavia and Serbia are not the same, Kosovo in that time did fall inside of Serbia, even when the province had far-going autonomy, and the main language of Yugoslavia, Serbo-Croatian, was not necessarily only Serb, but it was definitely not Albanian. When Yugoslavia and Serbia are in many ways not synonymous, it is clear that the Albanians were the political and cultural minority in Yugoslavia and Kosovo before 1999.
is problematic however for the same reasons as categories are often not parallel: because of the asymmetry that exists between them. Even when Albanians had almost completely parallel institutions 'of their own' in Yugoslavia, their ethno-civil society was still a different and marked world inside Yugoslav Kosovo. The same counts for Serbs in Kosovo today and as a minority, even when the ethno-civil world takes away most of the experience of ethnicity, there are daily reminders that point at the marked and asymmetric position of their world and thus themselves.

The other image, that of an enclave nested in the dominant society, seems to be especially suited to describe the Serbian situation today. Yet, while it describes some important aspects, this image too does not adequately capture the situations. The image of an enclave does convey the existence of asymmetry, in which the people inside the enclave are separate and different. Brubaker describes three aspects of the enclave metaphor. The first is that an enclave implies spatial separation. The second is that the enclave is completely encapsulated by the dominant society around it. A third connotation of the enclave is that of homogeneity of whoever belongs to the enclave. Put differently, that all that belong to the enclave society are equally 'inside' it.\textsuperscript{215}

This image of an enclave is particularly inadequate in describing the pre-1990 Yugoslav situation, where Albanians, although largely living inside their own ethno-civil society and going to the institutions that belong to that society, did not necessarily have strong territorial bases in Pristina itself nor in most of the other cities (in the countryside this was much more the case). In a way the Albanians were completely embedded in the wider Yugoslavia, but being the demographic majority in Kosovo itself, this did not necessarily give way to feelings of being encapsulated by Serbs or Yugoslavs.\textsuperscript{216} The idea that all Albanians within this world were equally 'inside' this world is also not correct, as many also made use of non-Albanian institutions and went to Belgrade to study for example. It has to be noted that the 1990s were a period with its own dynamics, and that Albanians as well as Serbs were 'pushed' increasingly inside their own worlds due to political changes.

The enclave metaphor clearly is much more adequate to describe the current situations of the Serbs. Serbs are spatially separated into enclaves and is completely encapsulated by the Kosovo society (lest for the North Mitrovica region that borders with Serbia and exists quite separately from the rest of Kosovo). Yet even in this more 'textbook' enclave situation, it is important to note that still not all Serbs live equally 'inside' the Serbian enclaves, as was already illustrated by the cases of Aleksandar who went to an American school in Pristina and Darko who often goes to Pristina, meets a lot of Albanians and internationals and moves around a lot. Darko also goes to Serbia often, and that is another breach of the image of the enclave, in that while the Serbs are completely encapsulated by a Kosovo society, there are strong connections with Serbia. These connections open up their isolation as many Serbs travel to Serbia often, visit family, go to

\textsuperscript{215} Brubaker et al. \textit{Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town}, 268-269.

\textsuperscript{216} Even more so, one could imagine and argue that during Yugoslav years many Kosovo Serbs felt more like they were encapsulated by the Albanian society as they were such a large majority over there. I have heard and certainly read some accounts of these feelings by Serbs in those years and in a more detailed account of the influence of the existence of ethno-civil societies on the experience of ethnicity in Kosovo over the years this aspect should definitely be investigated more thoroughly. An interesting sketch of these feelings has been given in a novel by Ahmed Kadare: \textit{The Wedding Procession Turned to Ice} or in Albanian \textit{Krushqit jani te ngrire} (for some reason I cannot find an English copy online, but Dutch and French translations exist).
Belgrade for fun or work. Most Kosovo Serbs have visited Belgrade more often than they have visited Pristina (or at least in the past fifteen years).

While both not adequate in describing the situations, these two images of parallel or enclave societies have illustrated some important aspects of these ethno-civil societies and have slightly cast some light on the relation between the minority society of either the Albanians in Yugoslavia or the Serbs in present-day Kosovo. In the remainder of this section both the situation in Yugoslavia and in post-1999 Kosovo will be put under closer scrutiny, in which the ways that institutions such as schools, churches and mosques, media, workplaces and organizations produce and reproduce these worlds and how this shapes the experience of ethnicity.

3.6.2 Albanian World inside Yugoslavia

It has already been noted several times that the situation and balance between the Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo over the past decades can be characterized as instable. This also counts for the creation and existence of an Albanian ethno-civil society within Yugoslavia. The period following the Second World War presented the people of Kosovo with a new political reality, that of a multi-ethnic Social Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The Albanians, initially viewed as potential problems by the new leader Tito and his staff, enjoyed little liberty to live their public lives in their own culture. This started to change in the late 1960s with the creation of Albanian language education around Kosovo and in Pristina from primary school to university. As this went hand in hand with more political influence by the Albanians on the province and a blossoming of Albanian culture this marked the start of the coming into existence of an Albanian ethnic society within Yugoslavia.

Education is a key element of socialization in the world, but how children are socialized into the world depends on the nature of the system, and into what ‘world’ they are actually welcomed. In Yugoslavia, the educational system was divided in two language options, Serbo-Croatian and Albanian. These two options existed completely parallel to one another, often even in the same buildings and the kids by and large followed the same curricula. Most likely there were some influences from ‘hidden curricula’, as teachers would slip in some story about this or that national hero, but in general it can be said that the content of the education was the same for all Yugoslav kids, just the language differed. This is an important feature of ethno-civil worlds in which, as Brubaker points out ‘what matters, in enabling [...] institutions to constitute a “world” for those inside them, is less what is communicated than the simple fact that it is communicated in the specific language – as a taken-for-granted, default language, not the marked language that it is in the enviroring world’.

In other words, it is the form and framing what matters here, and not so much the content.

Language education in itself was incredibly important for the creation of an Albanian society. Most children would of course learn Albanian at home, but without speaking Albanian in school and reaching greater levels of proficiency the continued existence of Albanian media, theater, literature, associations and so on would be hard to imagine and would have most likely been absorbed into Serbo-Croatian language on the

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217 Brubaker et al. *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town*, 300.
long run. This is something Albanian language education prevented. It is important to note though that most Albanian schoolchildren were also thought Serbo-Croatian in school, while, to my knowledge, Kosovo Serb schoolchildren did not learn Albanian. But besides the linguistic effects of education, the existence of parallel language institutions had a more profound social impact, which is central to this study.

The social-relation impact of the parallel schools starts with the choice of school. Technically both schools stood open to whoever wished to go there. It was up to Albanian parents to choose whether they would send their children to an Albanian or a Serbian school. This choice had far stretching consequences as once a choice was made, only very rarely would a change be made to the other language school. Hana is such an example, and before the Albanian university was created in 1968, more Albanian students would go to university in Belgrade, in Serbian, but after 1968 this choice was only very rarely made. Given the great consequences of the choice one might assume that this was a difficult choice, but this could not be further from the truth. Even the word ‘choice’ might be out of place here, as for both Serbs and Albanians after 1968 it was basically a matter of course that their kid would attend a school in his or her ‘own’ language. Most Albanians in Yugoslavia would go to Albanian language school and not ever consider Serbian schools. This aspect is important, because the taken-for-grantedness of this choice ensured the continuous reproduction of the backbone of the Albanian society within Yugoslavia as well as the rooting of Albanians in this world.\(^{218}\)

The main cause of this rooting is the social-relational impact that schools and other institutions can and most often have on the social network of people. School is where friendships are made, where a network is created and, later on, where marriages are born. To the question whether they had or have had Serbian friends, most older Albanians responded positively. But after further inspection it would become clear that there was a difference in friendships with Serbs and the Albanian kids they went to school with. Berat told me some things about his school friendships in the 1970s and 80s.

\begin{quote}
David: Did you have any Serbian friends?
Berat: Yes, [passionately], I had Serbian girlfriends, although I had a lot of problems having Serbian girl friends, not from my parents, but I think they had problems. I had Serbian friends, yes.

[...]
David: So you had, Serbian, but how, if you had Serbian friends, were would you be hanging out with them?
Berat: Usually, it wasn’t friends that you hang out with them, outside school. It was, we used to sneak, and smoke cigarettes, in the backyard of the school, of course there were Serbs as well, that would sneak out, and they would be there as well, and we would talk about a Bijelo Dugme concert, and this and that, and we knew each other, we know who of what group was more rebel, and they knew from our side, who is the leader, or, and that’s how we used to hang out, or sometimes in concerts, and, cause, some of the concerts happened in town, like I said, if it was a state owned building, you can’t choose, this side or that side. So concerts and movies. We know each other, but we wouldn’t hang out. Like, I never had a friend, that was one of my best friends, that I would hang out day and night with, only in places, certain places, and you would smoke a cigarette, and you
\end{quote}

\(^{218}\) Ibid., 272-273.
Many people that lived in Yugoslavia told me they had friends of the other ethnicity, but usually they were more like acquaintances with whom people would sometimes talk, but not actually hang out or develop strong friendships with. In the example Berat talks about how they would see each other at school. This does however not mean that they went to school together, but that they would attend the same building or location of a school but went to separate classes in their respective languages all the time.

It is exactly the social-relational dimension of education that is the most important element of schools in reproducing these separate worlds. Attending an Albanian school meant developing a mainly Albanian network of close friends, and marrying an Albanian with a similar background, sending his kids to an Albanian school, and so on. This does not only happen at school itself, but is facilitated as well by extracurricular activities, such as sports, school trips and the Pioneers that were organized through school. When Lorik commented that it was an unlucky decision of Hana’s parents to send her to Serbian schools in the 1990s, he was not only aiming at the taboo that rested on such a decision, but moreover that she would be severed from the Albanian society.

This system of parallel schooling came to quite an abrupt halt in 1990 with the Serbian decision to the unification of Serbia’s education. This meant in effect that the Albanians had no say over their schools anymore and a head on confrontation between Albanians and Serbs ensued. During the course of 1990 and 1991 this led to a complete segregation of Serbian state schools and clandestine Albanian language schools. Primary school education was often still held in the official school buildings, but only in the after hours and high school and university education took refuge to private houses or shtépi shkolla. This separation of education, as well as almost all other Albanian institutions, into illegality changed the situation from one of an Albanian society imbedded in Yugoslavia to one of complete segregation.

Besides schools there are other important vehicles for the reproduction of the Albanian world within Yugoslavia. Traditionally religious institutions are important in this process. But while churches play a very important role in the production of a Serbian world in Kosovo today, for Albanians religious institutions have had a more ambiguous role. The majority of Albanians in Kosovo is Muslim, and identifies him or herself as such, regardless of how religious that person is. Yet, different than with the Serbs, Islam is by no means the Albanian religion and quite some Albanians adhere to other religions.

Islamic institutions in the past had provided some clandestine Albanian language education in the countryside from the 1920s to the 1950s. But besides this the Islamic institutions in Kosovo did not play a significant role in the production of an Albanian world

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219 The Union of the Pioneers of Yugoslavia was the pioneer movement in Yugoslavia, as found all over the Communist world. All children of seven and older were member. It was a main vehicle of socializing children into the (communist) world. It took me a while to figure this out, but the Yugoslav pioneers were organized through schools and thus separated along linguistic lines, which contributed to yet another institution producing separate worlds.


221 Ibid., 157-171.
in Yugoslav Kosovo. For one, because Islam is a largely non-nationalistic, or supranational religion and is not necessarily interested in nationalist projects. Also, the official language of Islam is Arabic. This does not mean that there are no services held in Albanian, but these mosques are not necessarily active actors in the production and reproduction of an Albanian language world. Mosques do however of course create another place where Albanians could speak Albanian with one another and could expect to meet other Albanians as a matter of course as well as create an environment for the creation of social networks. But what is important to note is that while Serbs would usually not attend these mosques or other activities organized by Islamic organizations, thus creating a sphere that was separate from Serbians, and where the majority of people probably was Albanian, Islamic Bosniaks, Gorani, Roma or any other Muslim were and are welcomed as well.

While Islam is not central to being Kosovo Albanian or creating an Albanian world, not being a part of this religious community could however place you outside of the Albanian world, as Maria has experienced. Maria, a 33-year old Albanian, is raised a Protestant and her family plays a central role in the small Protestant church of Kosovo. Her father, who was raised a Catholic, but was really more a Communist, converted to Protestantism when he was in the army. Maria is a Christian name, and all her life she has encountered discrimination and exclusion due to being Protestant, either from Muslims or Catholics. This only grew worse when the tensions with the Serbs grew, and the group boundaries were fortified. Being a Christian, she was perceived as presumably being on the Serbian side by Albanians. During the war, the KLA was a threat to them, as they were seen as the ‘weak link’ in the ranks of the Albanian world. Catholic Albanians faced these issues as well, but this group being larger, and historically a part of Albanian culture, the pressure was far less. Until the end of the war not many Catholics were killed, but the Catholics were ‘lucky’, as Maria puts it, as there was a big massacre in an Albanian Catholic village close to Gjakova during the war. According to Maria this took away the suspicion of many Muslim Kosovars regarding the Catholics, while this suspicion remained for Protestants. Maria absolutely feels Albanian, she even is an Albanian-language teacher, yet for most of her life she has not been fully accepted into the Albanian society due to her religion. This shows a little of how religion does not need to be, but can overlap with ethnic group membership.

For some ethnic societies shops and other enterprises function as the cornerstone of that society, as for example is the case in many Chinese ethnic societies in the U.S., the so-called Chinatowns. In Kosovo this cornerstone is and has been institutions and primarily education. Businesses and workplaces did however influence the Albanian world before 1999. Work and entrepreneurial life in Kosovo however did not contribute much to the reproduction of an Albanian community. It, to the contrary, rather worked as a vehicle for opening up these communities to one another.

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222 This does not mean that there have never been imams, or hożhas as imams are called in Kosovo, have commented on political events in Kosovo. But Islam takes a very different position to nationalism and plays a different role for the Albanians in Kosovo.


In the large state-owned companies and institutions of Yugoslavia, Serbs and Albanians often worked together. In many of the interviews, when talking about interethnic friendships, Albanians would, as Berat above, tell of Serb friends but would add that they would rarely or never really hang out of consider them as close friends that they would invite into their houses. The same people however often mentioned that their fathers had good colleagues or even friends from work, who would occasionally even come to visit their homes. Work, just like schools, function as a base for social networks and people often developed camaraderie and friendship with colleagues, regardless of ethnic category. In the mentioned cases of Serbs helping their Albanian friends flee during the war or guarding their houses, these Serbs had quite often been colleagues of one of the parents. Bora’s father for example, who worked as a high official for the state factory of cold and silver called FamiPak in Prizren, had many Serbian friends. Bora told me this anecdote:

‘My father had a lot of Serbian friends. I remember also, that during the war, some of his friends from Serbia, would call us, to check on us, like how we are. And before that, when my father was in Belgrade, probably in ’97, ’98, one of his friends said: ‘You know, Zim, (her father’s name – D.D.) this asshole, meaning Milošević, wants my son, and your son, to look each other through the, not the bullet hole, but the sniper thing (sight – D.D.), so that’s what I heard at home. And, I also remember that when the war ended, this friend of my father called him, that he cried on the phone, from happiness, that his friend’s family is alive, and good.’

The workplace was also the place where most Albanian fathers and mothers learned to speak Serbian well, as some people explained. Aleksandar, a Serb who grew up in a village close to Gjilan that was completely divided in an Albanian and a Serbian part, in which the neighbors would rarely interact, told a story about how they had hardly any interaction with Albanians, other than the Albanian colleagues of his father that would occasionally lunch at their house. Work thus functioned as a vehicle for interaction between the ethnic communities rather than a separation. But at the same time it also increased the salience of ethnicity for many Albanians, as the language of communication usually was Serbian and the asymmetries between them and the Serbs became more experientially visible, when at the same time it evened out some perceived differences between people.

There was an abrupt end to this practice when Milošević sacked all Albanians from state institutions and companies in 1990. This pushed many Albanians into unemployment, where a large portion of the Albanians would remain for over a decade and longer. Some Albanians did however now have the time and opportunity (and necessity) to start up businesses and sometimes run organizations or play a role in the new parallel Albanian ‘state’ institutions of the 1990s. Hana’s dad, who was an actor and TV director for Yugoslav television, got fired for example and started up a club in Pristina to make some money for his family, in which he succeeded quite well for a while.

Albanians were already overrepresented in the private sector in Yugoslavia, partly due to a privileged position of Serbs in state institutions, but it was this large unemplo-

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225 In his account, the village is separated in an Albanian part and a Serbian part, by a road driving through, each having their own little shop and their own community. He told me only the elders seem to know each other. When I asked him how many people live in the village he answered me 70 houses, but after some more questions it turned out that there were some 150 houses if we included the Albanian ones, showing that not only the village is divided in practice, but also in his perception.
ment that really led to a surge in private businesses owned by Albanians as well as a separation of Albanians and Serbs from the area that had functioned as the main breach in their respective worlds. This did not only have financial downsides, because actually it allowed many Albanians to get their hands on Deutsch Marks instead of the heavily inflated Yugoslav Dinar. But more importantly, it reinforced the Albanian world, providing even more places for Albanians to go and speak Albanian than before, separating Kosovo’s society further.

Benedict Anderson argues that media in the vernacular language is one of the main instruments to create a (imagined) community. Just as with education, it is not the content that the media spread that mattered much, it was rather the fact that it existed that was important. Media help to create and sustain imagined communities that cut across as well as reinforce nation-state boundaries. In Yugoslavia, Albanian-language media existed alongside Serbo-Croatian-language media. From the 1950s the newspaper Rilindja was printed and became a large-scale daily paper by the 1960s. From 1975 the partly Albanian-language RTV Pristina was founded providing TV and Radio services. These media came along with the surge of Albanian education and cultural expressions in the 1970s. As this was still in Yugoslavia, where censorship did exist and the freedom of media was restricted, the Albanian media was predominantly just Albanian-language media, possibly focusing more on Kosovo and Albanians, but not strikingly different in content or nationalistic of nature.

This changed in the late 1980s when Serbian newspapers started to utilize the waves of nationalism and fear among the Serbians and the fragility of Yugoslavia. The infamous ‘Memorandum’ was published in Serbian newspapers and there was a lot of attention for scandals such as the ‘Martinović-case’. This proved only the beginning of media increasingly explicitly contributing to nationalist missions all over Yugoslavia and eventually the banning of Albanian newspapers by the Milošević government. The Albanian media went underground just as the rest of their parallel ‘state’, and more or less continued to exist throughout the 1990s, while new outlets such as Koha Ditore came into existence during these years, be it underground. They provided the Albanians with correctives to Yugoslav state propaganda that were urgently sought after and helped to sustain the Albanian world that was under so much pressure at this point.

A last element that is intertwined with the reproduction of ethnic communities is that of associations. The domain of associations is incredibly big and stretches from religious associations and literary clubs to sports, science and theater clubs etc. etc. While associations can function as important element of an ethnic community, in Yugoslavia most organizations and associations were somehow linked to the state and aimed at fostering a civil and Yugoslav community rather than an ethnic one. The primary organization in Yugoslavia and most other Communist countries was the Union of Pioneers. This organization functioned as the main vehicle for the socialization of children as Yugoslav citizens. Children would become a pioneer at the age of six, when they first went to school.

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228 In the beginning during the 1950s reading this newspaper was deemed suspect by the secret services, and reports were filed about everybody buying the paper.
Interestingly enough the Pioneer organization was incorporated into the educational system, and hence with the creation of Albanian language institutions, also the Pioneers were sort of split into a Serbian and an Albanian wing. The Union of Pioneers ceased to exist shortly after the death of president Tito in 1980 and therefore has not had a prominent role in the interviews. But the Pioneers were organized according to school classes, and therefore instead of cutting cross the boundaries of the ethnic communities, Pioneer membership seems to have reinforced them instead.

Another interesting association that was often mentioned in interviews was that of the folk dancing clubs. Paradoxically enough there was and is a thriving culture of (ethnic) folklore dancing. These dancing groups would travel Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe and participate in competitions and camps. While it involved the reproduction of an ethnic cultural form, at the same time it actually allowed for mixing and interethnic interaction, as kids from all over Yugoslavia would meet each other, stay at each others houses, visit each other countries, make friends and fall in love. Or in the words of Berat:

‘We also had this group of dancers. Like every republic and every province had one school, where they would do traditional dance. They would meet each year, in one of the cities. So first year, we went to Kotor, and then we went to Rijeka, then to [...], its near Belgrade. And then we would stay at a house of someone, from that area. Like if, the event was happening in Pristina, children from that school, volunteered to take one child into their house, so yeah, we were a group of Serbs and Albanians, that went to all these places. And, we had, yeah, it was, I didn’t think of nationalism at that time.’

It was in these dancing groups that Berat got his first girlfriends, and some of them were Serbian. These are just two examples of associations that came up in the interviews, but together with the other organizations and institutions, the examples give a taste of the Albanian world in Yugoslav Kosovo and the relation between the ethnic Albanian world and the wider Yugoslav world.\footnote{These two examples of associations are just mentioning of those associations that came up in the course of the interviews. There have been numerous other associations of many different sorts, but the field research for this study has unfortunately not been able to gather any more information on the organizations in Yugoslavia and the ways they impacted the production and reproduction of the Albanian community in Yugoslav Kosovo.}
3.6.3 Serbian Enclaves in Kosovo

While the Albanian society within Yugoslavia until the 1990s could be characterized as an asymmetrical but largely parallel society alongside and inside the wider Yugoslav world, the Serbian community in post-1999 Kosovo is a rather different case. In 1990 things already started to change for the Kosovo Serbs as Yugoslavia was crumbling down around them. Under the tensions that followed the instability of Yugoslavia and the use nationalist politicians made of this instability, Kosovo slipped into an increasingly deepening conflict between two ethnic groups that had lived together and alongside each other for some decades. The changes of the early 1990s resulted in a segregation of Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo and the creation of an illegal and underground, parallel Albanian state. When the Albanian society within Yugoslavia had still allowed for interaction in many different ways, the segregation divided the two groups, making interaction exceptionally rare and basically cut most ties between the Albanians and the Serbs. For the Serbs during these years life largely went on as they had in they had in the past. There were some differences, of course Serbs also noticed the political suppression of the Albanians and experienced the segregation, but besides the economical effects of the boycotts from the West that started in the early 1990s and the effects of nationalism on the media and their schooling, not much changed as they continued to go to the same schools and the same jobs. Tensions however grew and grew and this situation eventually led to the war of the 1990s.

This war has been a game changer for the Serbs in Kosovo. With the retreat of Serbian forces and with it the dominant political position of the Serbs, the asymmetry that had put the Albanians in the minority position for decades suddenly shifted, turning the Serbs into the minority in the new Kosovo. In the immediate aftermath of the war it was not exactly clear what was going to happen, but as the years passed under the protectorate of the UN, this new reality began to sink in. If the segregation had not already been complete before 2004, the events of March that year made sure that it was. With the declaration of independence of 2008, even when contested, there came an end to the uncertainty: whether they accept it or not, the new reality is that the Serbs of Kosovo are a minority in the Republic of Kosovo. But with this new situation a new ethnic-civil society has emerged, that of the enclaves of the Kosovo Serbs.

While the Albanians had a strong and thriving ethnic community within the larger body of Yugoslavia, the Serbs community is much more isolated from the Kosovar world around it, spatially, functionally and emotionally. The Kosovo government has some influence on the Serbian enclaves, but by and large these enclaves are run by completely parallel institutions, often supported by the Republic of Serbia, that allow them reproduce their Serbian world even within the new reality of the Republic of Kosovo. The ways in which this Serbian community is upheld and reproduced by different institutions, the relation of this Serbian society with the Kosovo society that surrounds it and the ways in which this influences the experience of ethnicity by the Serbs is described with the help of the same elements used above, education, religion, work, media and associations, in the remainder of this section.
In contemporary Kosovo, two completely separate education systems exist, an Albanian one and a Serbian one. The Albanian one is supported and led by the Kosovo Ministry of Education, and while this ministry also tries to include the Serbian schooling, this is still not really the case. Serbian education in Kosovo is supported and supplied by the Serbian government, and they provide the schools with books, teachers and buildings. For higher education Serbs from Gračanica for example go to the 'Pristina-university-in-exile' in Mitrovica and Zvečan, or travel to places in Serbia. In the OSCE report of April 2009, reporting on the education of non-majority communities in Kosovo, the following was written about the separation of the education systems:

‘In both Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serb majority areas, the Kosovo and the Serbian educational systems seclude Kosovo Serb and Kosovo Albanian students from the surrounding social environment of the majority community, as much as they ensure education in the mother tongue. In this way, education perpetrates and reinforces separation.”

The report touches exactly upon the function the educational system fulfills in sustaining the Serbian community (and the separation of it from the surrounding Kosovar society) as well as reproducing one of the most important elements of this society: the language. While in Yugoslavia Albanian children in Albanian language schools also got taught Serbian, this is not the case today for Serbian schoolchildren. This leads and maintains a crucial element of the segregation in Kosovo today, which is the disappearance and lack of bilingual people. Not only do Kosovo Serb and Kosovo Albanian kids hardly ever meet each other and or can understand each other. They get, and this differs from Yugoslavia, different and nationally colored curricula in school, providing them with the diverging perspectives, especially regarding historical events. Petar told me how the curricula already changed in the early 1990s, when the Albanian children went to school in the parallel and clandestine schools with new and different Albanian textbooks while he still got educated from Yugoslav schoolbooks. The Albanians kids from the neighborhood suddenly had different views on the history of Kosovo, ‘we have a different opinion about history. Our history is not the same as theirs, you know, haha!’, said Petar.

Many things that have been mentioned in discussing and describing the dynamics and effects of minority-language education in Yugoslavia are the same here. The parallel Serbian education system, besides the linguistic effects, ensures that the Serbs stay well inside their community through the social relations and networks they create for schoolchildren. This means in effect that Kosovo Serb children hardly ever meet Kosovo Albanian kids, and that all of their friends and the rest of their network is situated either inside the Serbian enclaves in Kosovo, in the Northern region of Kosovo or in Serbia proper. School choice, probably even more so than in Yugoslav times, is not really a choice. If you are Serb you are expected to attend a Serbian school. Yet while the great majority of the Serbs does indeed attend these Serbian school, the post war period has seen the

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230 Within both education systems there is some space and accommodation of other minority-language education, although it is largely lacking effort and if there is some accommodation of minority languages, then still the curricula are Serbian or Albanian, with little mention of historical and cultural background of the minorities (let alone of ‘the other’, hence Albanians or Serbs depending on who you take).


232 Ibid., 15.
The three entities in the state of Bosnia, Irinej, who has called the recognition of Kosovo a 'sin' and declared Republika Srpska, one of symbols such as flags are all around. The Serbian Orthodox churches are tightly intertwined in Serbian social life. Religious leaders of the church often play a central role in the national project and do not fear to speak up. A clear example of this is the head of the church, the Patriarch Irinej, who has called the recognition of Kosovo a 'sin' and declared Republika Srpska, one of the three entities in the state of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the 'youngest Serbian state'.

There are some differences here with the Yugoslav situation besides the already mentioned linguistic and curricular differences. The main difference is that while in Yugoslavia the schools were separated, the two ethnic groups were not necessarily spatially separated, as became clear in the example of Berat where he often talked about hanging around school smoking with Serbs that attended the same building. In present-day Kosovo such interaction does not exist, which makes the boundaries between the two communities stronger. Yet, it has the already mentioned side effect that with being well 'inside' the ethnic community, the asymmetry and salience of ethnicity is experienced less. This is an important feature of the strongly segregated ethnic-civil society the Serbs live in today. Even when their lives have been sharply influenced by the conflict and the current situation, the existence of this completely parallel system makes that Serbs rarely experience their ethnicity as salient.

While schools are the backbone of the ethnic communities in Kosovo, both today as in Yugoslavia, there are more institutions that provide for the social reproduction and that shape the experience of ethnicity. The Serbian Orthodox Church has played an important role in preserving and enforcing social, cultural and political unity of the Serbian nation throughout the centuries, if only because it were the religious institutions that provided education for a long time. Religious organizations however still are an essential part of the Serbian community in Kosovo. Besides the role the Church has played and still plays in the national project of the Serbs, the Church also functions more subtly in producing and reproducing the Serbian world in Kosovo.

Besides being literally in the center of Gračanica, the church is central to village life. There are many events connected somehow to the church, and the men affiliated with the monastery are regularly present at social and cultural events. To be Serb is to be Serbian Orthodox, and even when somebody is not particularly religious, the church and its holidays play a vital role in Serbian social life. Churches in general, and definitely a national church such as the Serbian Orthodox one, often contribute to the strengthening national feelings. The Serbian Orthodox churches are tightly intertwined with the Serbian state, and national symbols such as flags are all around.

Religious leaders of the church often play a central role in the national project and do not fear to speak up. A clear example of this is the head of the church, the Patriarch Irinej, who has called the recognition of Kosovo a 'sin' and declared Republika Srpska, one of the three entities in the state of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the 'youngest Serbian state'.

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233 Brubaker et al. Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town, 280.
But while this national message is strong, the contribution of the church in Gračanica to the production of a Serbian world lies in the fact that she is there, and that she creates spaces and events in which speaking Serbian is normal, even essential and where people meet only other Serbs. Just as the schools, it contributes to the reversal of the asymmetry that the Serb minority finds itself in, in Kosovo, into a situation where Serbs are the taken-for-granted category, where there are only Serbs. While Serbian flags, symbols and national messages might be all around, for the shaping of ethnic experience, this reversal is of the biggest importance. And from this space, this community in which Serbian is unmarked and where there are basically only Serbs, just as with schools the church and all the activities that are associated with it also socialize people into the Serbian community and make that most of the creation of social relations and networks.

While in Yugoslavia, especially for the urban Serbs, the church had played a lesser role, with the omnipresence of Yugoslav institutions and a different power position for the Serbs. But in the past twenty-five years the role of the church in all of Serbia has been on the rise, and has played an especially important role in supporting the Serbs in Kosovo in the past fifteen years. With the great unrest, instability, disappearing of institutions, it was often the church that could offer stability, structure and organization. The fact that Serbs flocked to the most important monastery of Kosovo, Gračanica, might be symbolic for this.

The role of businesses and enterprises in reproducing a Serbian community is and has not been very large. Today, in the enclave of Gračanica, no Albanian shops exist to my knowledge. The fact that the enclave and most people inside it are Serbian is taken-for-granted, and the same counts for the shops. Yet, as Darko tells me, in the past, in Yugoslavia, the ethnicity of shop owners was rarely a decisive factor for him, his friends or his family:

‘All the shops were Albanian! All the shops in Pristina were owned by Albanians. all the private business and everything was Albanian, maybe there was some Serb, but I didn't know or care, I go to the nearest shop. Nearest, like, if I am somewhere in the city, and I wanna buy something, I go to the first one. It's like, hah, you know, it's like, no, no difference. The only parameter was the nearest shop. You know, if you are a pensioner, and you have to be stiff with the money, go to the cheapest. But for me, the nearest was the key.’

The same counted for Blerta and Zana, the two Albanian’s sisters, who grew up in Mitrovica. Most shops in the northern part of the city, where they lived, were owned by Serbs. But, as mentioned, they would just go there as kids and enjoy that they could learn to speak Serbian. This however changed for them in the 1990s:

‘And all the things they did, you could see more in Mitrovica. When they started writing the names of the shops in Cyrillic, even the Albanian shops, that was like ARG! It was a small town, you would see them, you had to see them. In Pristina, you didn’t have to see them, because you had shops spread out everywhere. [...] And back then we had like, from the bridge, in that street, we had shops on both sides. And all the shops, all them changed, in the same time [in Cyrillic – D.D.], and you could see the influence, and the way they wanted to change you. And even as a kid, you could see that, feel the pressure.’

Today Blerta and her sister boycott Serbian owned shops in Pristina as part of a political boycott inspired by the political party Vetëvendosje, which is not necessarily aimed against
Serbs, but rather for the economical development and independence of Kosovo.\(^{235}\) For Serbs the daily choice for buying groceries and the like inside Gračanica is limited to Serbian shops. But due to the lack of bigger supermarkets in the enclave, some Serbs do decide to drive to a large supermarket on the edge of Pristina, for a bigger and cheaper selection of foods. This makes that they step out of the enclave, the bubble of their Serbian community, and are confronted with the wider Kosovo and Albanian world around them. This confronts them with reminders of the asymmetric situation that in Gračanica itself are largely absent.

The segregation continues into the domain of work, after the mass firing of Albanians from Yugoslav state businesses and the great factories of Yugoslavia closed the Albanians and Serbs have rarely worked together again. Not many Serbs are employed in Albanian businesses in Kosovo today. This is a problem as unemployment and prospects for the future are low in Gračanica. The fact that few Serbs work at Kosovo Albanian business or in government functions is partly due to the mentioned problem of corruption and nepotism, which is already hard for Albanians and definitely not in favor of Serbs wanting to get a job. But a bigger factor perhaps is the taboo that rests on working for the Kosovo government, as Serbs do not recognize its legitimacy. Taboos, nepotism, paired with the lack of Albanian language skills and a social network that includes Albanians with businesses keeps many Serbs unemployed and well ‘inside’ the Serbian society, both practically as well as metaphorically.

Nemanja is one of the few Serbs working for Kosovo central government institutions, and there are some Serbs working as local officials for the municipality or the police station. For young Serbs for Gračanica working for NGO’s is often a better chance for some work. Petar works for such an NGO. His work for an organization for young Serbs interested in political and democratic action is one of the only ways of getting ahead in the enclave. While this NGO is mainly aimed at Serb kids, the NGO cooperates with other NGO’s, which makes that he has Albanian and international colleagues, and that he travels outside of the enclave quite regularly. This opens up the world around Petar a little, much more than is the case for his friends at home, but while he enjoys his job, the work also confronts him more often with the new reality of Kosovo:

“There was one interesting moment in my work. We had a training, in, uh, for this project. And we had it in Dečani. Dečani is not very welcoming to Serbs, you know. We have that monastery there and they suffered so much, the guys from Dečani. And I ask my colleague, do you want to go, are you going? And she was like, I don’t have the time, so you must go. So I was one Serb, and all of them, my colleagues, were Albanians. When I am surrounded by my colleagues, I feel ok, you know. I go with them in Dečani, I go out in Dečani, I go out in Gjakovica: also not hospitable for Serbs. And I feel ok. You know. But, uh, its, its not normal atmosphere between, when they hear me speak Serbian over there. I saw faces, you know, I saw faces. And because of that, I don’t feel ok. And I don’t feel that I am in my home land, you know.’

Petar expresses here clearly the experience many Serbs have when they do venture out of the enclave and into the world surrounding them. When his ethnicity is rarely salient to him inside of the enclave, going to Dečan makes him experience his ethnicity sharply and makes him feel he does not belong there and that he is not in the country where he was born. At

\(^{235}\) Vetëvendosje is a political party in Kosovo, fighting for self-determination (the meaning of the name of the party).
the same time confronting (and to some degree accepting) this reality is necessary if Serbs want to get a job and get ahead.

It is usually also these NGO's that organize many events and projects in which Albanian and Serbian youngsters participate. These projects often are centered around the idea of reconciliation and democratization of the Kosovars, but are also viewed as important possibilities to get a larger network, to enhance their English and to increase their chances of later working for these or other NGO's or international organizations. These projects facilitate the interesting and rare moments of interaction between Albanians and Serbs, which the next section will elaborate on. Almost all young Serbs from Gračanica I have met had participated with different projects in the past, and were also somehow involved with projects of Centre for Peace and Tolerance (CPT), which is run by Darko. This strategy of participating in organizations and projects is not limited to Serbs, but is also commonly heard among the Albanians. Dren and Ull told me about their volunteer work for the Red Cross/Red Crescent in Kosovo, where they had met a lot of internationals and some Serbs. The organizations and projects sometimes help to reproduce ethnic societies, if they are restricted to a certain group or language, but much more often break open the boundaries of these ethnic societies. And when this allows for the making of friends and creating a network outside of the ethnic community one belongs to, for the minority, in present-day Kosovo the Serbs, it also reminds them of their position and shapes their experience of ethnicity.

The media are another feature shaping the experience of ethnicity and the ethnic society. While in Kosovo today a large number of Albanian language media exist, there are no Serbian language newspapers printed in Kosovo, and only very limited Serbian-language radio broadcasting and Internet news providers exist. Kosovo Serbs get most of their news from Serbia, with only these few radio channels and Internet sites that provide them with local news. This sustains their Serbian world, but mostly links them to Serbia and sustains the experience and perspective of living in enclaves or ghettos. It also cuts them loose from the news from Kosovo, and thus from the public sphere of Kosovo. Serbian media do report on Kosovo, but much less so, not really on news from Pristina or other areas outside of the enclaves, not directly affecting Serbs, and is often very subjective. The great majority of Serbs does not read Albanian sufficiently to read newspapers, and while many Albanians do read Serbian, to my knowledge there are not many Albanians that read Serbian newspapers (they do however receive and watch Serbian television on occasion). The separate media cuts off the Serbian community even more from the Kosovo society and thereby help sustain a Serbian world in Kosovo.

This section discussed the ways in which institutions and organizations sustain the production and reproduction of ethnic societies, respectively the Albanian community in Yugoslavia and the Serbian enclave in modern-day Kosovo, as well as how the existence of these specific communities and their relation with the dominant society shapes the experience of ethnicity. It has zoomed in on some of the important institutions and on the ways they function, and has paid special attention to how such institutions create an ethnic-civil society in which the asymmetry of political and cultural minority-majority is reversed.

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236 This is not to say that Albanian media are much more objective; most of them are not, although the media climate in Kosovo seems to be a bit more liberal than the one in Serbia.
In doing so these ethnic-civil societies and the ways in which they are organized and how they work, are essential to the experience of everyday ethnicity. The shift of asymmetry and power between the situation in Yugoslavia where the Albanians were the ethnic minority community and the current situation where it is the Serbs that hold that position, is on the one hand a turn-over of the relation between the two groups. But it has also become clear that there are some important differences in the relation the Albanian community had with the Yugoslav society and the relation of the Serb community with the Kosovo society. The fact that while the Albanians largely lived in their own Albanian ‘world’ or society within Yugoslavia, did not prevent them from interacting with the Serbs or venturing ‘out’ of their Albanian worlds. The boundaries were there, but, especially for the Albanians, the boundaries of this world were porous. This is much less the case for the Serbs today, who, instead of living in a civil-ethnic community nested in the Kosovo society, are much more of a real enclave community, cut off from the world they are surrounded by in many ways.

This has an interesting effect on the experience of ethnicity however. While the Serbs are perhaps in a more sharply asymmetrical position today, the lack of reminders and interaction, the rarity of physically going out of the enclave and the lack of blurring of the boundaries in whatever way, makes that Serbs do not often experience this asymmetry and thus do not often experience ethnicity in their daily lives today. Albanians in Yugoslavia, while more embedded in Yugoslav society, and from the 1960s until 1990 holding a respectable position, were confronted with this asymmetry on a daily basis however, mostly due to language practices but also on many other occasions. This situation, even when the Albanian world was comprehensive and provided for a large world inside Yugoslavia, in which being Albanian was unmarked and taken-for-granted, did allow for daily experiences of ethnicity by Albanians.

What this section has attempted to show is how and in what different ways the existence of these ethnic-civil societies has shaped ethnic experience in Yugoslavia and today. It has been implicitly argued that while the political and nationalist influence on the reproduction of these worlds and the construction of the institutions is important, that it is not so much what is communicated that matters, but the fact that it is communicated in either Albanian or Serbian. This for the ethnic minority creates a space, a world, where their ethnicity and language is default, taken-for-granted and unmarked. And while Albanians and Serbs are concerned with the reproduction of their respective worlds, the reproduction is mostly facilitated by unconscious, taken-for-granted, everyday decisions and the development of a social-relational network, rather than active and conscious political and ethnic efforts to sustain these worlds.237

3.7 Mixing

Interaction between Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians today is rare and the comprehensive ethnic society of the Serbians enables them to stay well inside the boundaries of their world. In Yugoslavia this was different. Even when the Albanian community had created a large institutional world for themselves inside Yugoslavia, the boundaries were porous and interaction between Serbs and Albanians happened all the

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237 Brubaker et al., Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town, 300.
time. Kosovars in Yugoslavia worked together, went to the same sport events, concerts, shopping centers and other public places. Most Albanians were bilingual making much of the interethnic interaction inconspicuous and while rare, Albanians and Serbs would have friendships and romantic relations (however often secretly) and even marriages.

This paragraph on mixing is not necessarily about the nominal interethnic interactions, but rather about those interactions that are experientially mixed. Brubaker explains the distinction between the two as follows: 'Experientially interethnic interactions are best understood as moments within nominally interethnic relationships. Just as people can become (experientially rather than nominal) Hungarian or Romanian at particular moments and in particular contexts (as discussed in Categories – D.D.), so relationships can become interethnic.' Brubaker points with this at the moments in which ethnicity 'happens' in mixed relationships.

Nominal interethnic interactions, when they do exist, can happen without people knowing they belong to different ethnicities. And even when people do know or become aware of the mixedness (through cues like names, language, neighborhood etc.), this does not necessarily influence the interaction. But sometimes interactions do become experientially mixed and sometimes it does influence the conversation. It is these moments in which people the nominal mixedness of people became also experientially mixed that this section focuses on.

Interactions do not become experienced as interethnic just like that. There are several ways in which interactions usually become experientially mixed. First and foremost this is through cues that give away the other persons nominal ethnic category. But knowing or discovering somebodies nominal ethnicity is not always enough for really experiencing mixedness and has already been discussed in the paragraph on categories. Other ways through which interaction usually becomes mixed include conflict and disagreement, avoidance of sensitive topics and possible disagreement and ethnically framed joking.

The contemporary situation in Kosovo makes interaction rare, and due to this lack of interactions the discussion of this period will focus on those situations of interethnic interaction that did emerge in my interviews and data on this period. Potentially the interviews with people that lived through Yugoslavia could have given away much about the subtleties of interethnic interaction and in what occasions they became experientially mixed and when they did not, but unfortunately this study has not managed to gather enough data on this period to go beyond some illustrative and anecdotal examples. These do however show the changes in the nature of interaction (and the experience thereof) between Yugoslav times and present-day Kosovo.

Before looking at these interactions as well as the ways interactions were different in Yugoslavia compared to today, it is important to note that even when ethnicity is often experientially irrelevant to everyday interaction (even when this is much less so today), this does not mean or imply that ethnicity is structurally or generally irrelevant. Ethnicity, or

238 This distinction between nominal and experiential ethnicity has been discussed in paragraph 3.4.1 on categories and asymmetries. For more on this see Brubaker et al. Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town, 209-210, 301 and Jenkins, Rethinking Ethnicity, 41, 56 and 71-72.
239 Brubaker et al. Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town, 302.
240 Ibid.
241 Ibid., 301-302.
at least those political and linguistic asymmetries that are associated with ethnicity, have and still do deeply influence the lives of Kosovars and the relations between Albanians and Serbians. To say that ethnicity is often irrelevant to the experience of interaction or to the experience of daily life of Kosovars is not to say that it is not important or does not have influence, but in taking a such different perspective to ethnicity this study gains better understanding of the workings of ethnicity and the ways it shapes the experience of ethnicity for ordinary Kosovars.

3.7.1 Changing Interactions

In Yugoslavia interethnic interactions were casual and happened daily. This situation is very different in Kosovo today. One of the main impacts this has on interethic interactions, when they do happen, is that almost every nominally mixed interaction also becomes experientially interethnic because the rarity of the occasion and the relatively short time that has passed since the war highlight the interethnic nature of an interaction. Especially among young people that have had almost no contact with the other ethnicity and only have traumatic memories from more conflictual times, there is much anxiety for interaction. So there is fear of interacting, not knowing what would happen, but at the same time there is also a lot of curiosity and interest. This is nicely illustrated in the story of Shota.

Shota is a 26-year old girl from Pristina. One day we talked about her trying to get a visa for Israel, but she told me she had to go for Belgrade for that, and did not dare nor want to go there. She was afraid of travelling there, and said she did not feel at all like meeting Serbs. One day when there was a friend from Serbia visiting one of our friends in Pristina and I noticed that she actively avoided contact with him. This one day however Hana and I go for dinner at the restaurant where Shota works. Without me knowing, Hana had invited two friends to join us for dinner. They were both Serbs from Serbia, named Sasha and Marija. When Shota joined us later for a drink, she suddenly asked whether it was correct that she had heard them speak Serbian before. There was little tension after this remark but Sasha quickly answered positively, and defused the tension by making a polite joke about Shota’s name, which he knew to mean something very patriotic. The fact that he knew this and diplomatically mentioned this broke the ice for Shota. She then told us that she had not met a Serb in more than fifteen years. But while she had often told me about her reluctance and fears, when this occasion arose she surprised me by turning out to be very curious, displaying her knowledge of Serbian words and Sasha and Shota ended up having a long and interesting conversation. She later told me she had very much enjoyed it.

Even when fears and some anxiety are often present among young Kosovars for meeting one of the ‘others’, the curiosity and interest that Shota displayed often is present too. Bora tells it even more explicitly when the tells me about her experience in projects on reconciliation she participated in:

‘A lot of them were about living together with Serbs, and like reconciliation. So I remember that I did see a lot of Serbs in these projects, and I remember that in one of the Seminars that happened in Kosova, I had a big crush on one of the Serbs, who had, long, long hair. And I remember that I had a picture with him, so I didn’t have any hatred towards him, I really felt sympathetic. I felt like, exotic. To get to know them better. And the same happened when we were in the US, the first week, cause there was a group of I think ten, of each South Eastern European country, that went to the same program.
And the first week it was hard to make friends, but the second week, my best friends were Ivan and Maya, or Mira. They were Serbians. I was always beyond that, I didn’t care about, who they are. Or, rather, I felt exotic, because they were Serbs! I really wanted to know them better. So it has never been a problem for me.

So while both anxiety and curiosity are present in among young people in modern day Kosovo, there is one obstruction for communicating and that is the language. In Yugoslavia bilingualism allowed for smooth and often made that many interethnic interactions were not experientially mixed. Lorik expressed this when he talks about how kids of many different ethnicities, Roma, Turkish, Serbian and Albanian, were playing together in his neighborhood in the old part of Pristina. ‘It was mixed. Until 1991, everything was mixed.’ This is not completely true, but in his experience of those times it apparently was. And Berat told me for example that in the 1980s he would have discussions with Serbian kids when smoking behind the school building. They would talk and did not shy away from political and historical debates, the Serbs claiming that ‘they were here first’, or the Albanians stating that ‘they had more right to these lands’. He told me how these conversations were politically charged, but at the same time also just challenging each other and having fun. These interactions were definitely experienced as mixed. Yet, even when they were experienced as mixed, Berat and the guys he talked to were closer together and actually had a conversation due to the fact that Berat speaks Serbian.

Petar told me an anecdote that explains the role of language in today’s interactions:

David: Because most Albanian’s could speak Serbian right?
Petar: Most, most. But they don’t tell show that to anyone I would say. I have experienced in municipality in Kosovo Polje, they call it Fushë Kosovë now, and I know, a guy who could speak, because he is an old guy. He grew up with my father you know, my father knows him and I go to him and speak Serbian because I don’t know Albanian. And he turned to me, and start to speak in Albanian. And I, just look down, and say I don’t understand you. And then he doesn’t start to speak Serbian. They don’t, you know. Haha, after that, I, start to speak on English. And there’s a guy, who knows English, and they send him! So, its like I say, tragic that I don’t speak Albanian. I try. But,

David: It’s a difficult language, I am trying to learn, it is not easy.
Petar: It’s not, it’s not. Like I say, I know, lot’s of words, but I can’t speak. When I listen, we cooperate with each other, and that is one fact, of the Balkan. Everybody, even if they fight, everybody cooperates for money, you know. That is funny thing!

But there were also plenty of interactions in Yugoslavia that were nominally mixed but not experienced as such. These include a lot of daily and small interactions between shop owners and customers and the like, but also more intimate interactions. While the nightlife in Pristina in Yugoslavia was largely separated in bars where the Serbs would go and places where the Albanians would go, almost everybody I talked to, especially men, but also some women, told me about how there was a lot of ‘interethnic flirting’ going on.

Lorik, Berat and Darko, all around their late 30s, told me stories about how exciting it was to flirt with girls from the other side, and that this would regularly happen. In the 1980s this flirting was still quite normal but as interethnic relations became more and more tabooed however over the course of the 1990s, this flirting needed to be kept secret. For them ethnicity might not have mattered a lot, but their surroundings often thought differently. Berat said that at some point he had a Serbian girlfriend he really loved, but her
family gave her a really hard time when they got to know about it, and their relationship did not survive this pressure. For Hana, being half Serbian and half Albanian, ethnicity was even experienced less often than it was the case for others living in Yugoslavia. She had Albanian, Serbian, even Roma friends and boyfriends throughout the years, and would visit clubs and bars of both sides. But in the end even Hana could not run away for the divisions.

Thus far the examples have mostly shown the existence of certain interactions, but Hana's story also holds an example of in which both conflict and the avoidance of conflict happen. This happened when protesting Albanians marched along Hana's Serbian high school in 1997. The situation was very tense and rocks were thrown at the school. Hana remembered how her classmates were dead silent, and sometimes somebody would look at her:

‘not in a hateful way, but in a sort of we’re sorry way. Not sorry, they were having empathy with me, like, who knows what she’s feeling right now. This is what I got from them, they were all like looking at me, and being quiet. Then my friend Dragana, who is from Montenegro, she looks up and says: “What are you all looking at her for. She’s like us. She’s ours”. And I look at her, and say “look Dragana, I am not yours, and not theirs. I am myself, I am a student, I am a friend. I’m not choosing, like I can’t do that, I really cannot” and that was it.’

In this situation Hana’s suddenly became Albanian to her classmates and thereby changing their interaction from nominally mixed to experientially mixed. At first the situation became mixed through avoidance of the classmates by being silent and looking at her, and then her friend and Hana herself overtly confronted everybody with the situation. Especially during the war years Hana experienced a couple more moments like this. Hana and her mother and sister spend the war in Serbia at her mother's parent’s house in Serbia, and when she and the neighbors were taking shelter from the bombing in one of the bomb shelters a lady snapped and started screaming hysterically ‘her husband is Albanian! They are spies!’ The others in the room got angry and told her to shut up, and that was the end of it. Some weeks later a boy who fancied her, a love she could not return as she was in love with another guy. As she was sort of ignoring him, he suddenly started to shout at her in the café with a lot of people around. ‘You are Albanian, you are a whore!', he screamed at her. Again others handled it, and made him shut up, but she understood that the situation was getting tense and that her being half Albanian, even when she did not often think about it, was becoming more and more salient for others and thus for herself too.

Another example of interethnic interaction is the case of Samet. Samet, a 25-year old Albanian guy who grew up in the city of Bor in Serbia, is in the eyes of many of his friends ‘Albanian, but really a Serb at heart’. He does not really agree with this. He says he is both, raised as a Serb, but in the end Albanian. He had grown up in Bor and people knew he was Albanian, but this was rarely talked about. The only times Samet himself felt he was Albanian and the contact became experientially interethnic was when he would go for dinner at a friend’s house, and the mother of the house would have made something without pork for him, assuming that as an Albanian and a Muslim, he would not eat that. Samet told me that he does eat pork, he even loves it, and that while grateful he would always feel awkward and different when this happened. It was really only in these situations that he felt that he was different during his early childhood. Things were about to change though. In the 1990s suddenly some kids would try to fight with him, and call him
names such as šiptar and mudja, the former a common derogatory term for Albanians by Serbs and the latter a reference to mujahedien and radical Muslims. He however jokingly added that Albanians in Kosovo also call him names such as shkie, the derogatory name for Serbs used by Albanians, because of him growing up in Serbia and having a Serbianized surname.

Samet, while he identifies himself completely as Albanian, feels at home in Serbia, back then and still. There are moments in which he becomes Albanian when he is in Serbia or talks to Serbians, due to disagreements and the like. But most of the time people do not notice or know that he is Albanian, and even when they do they do not mind. He actually says that he faces more issues because of growing up in Serbia and having a Serbianized surname in Kosovo, than he usually has being an Albanian in Serbia. Besides the calling of derogatory names, which is often meant in a joking way, this involves some discrimination and obstructions that he had to face at school for example. On the other hand, the late 1990s in Bor were rough on him and his family, especially during the NATO bombings. And while there were some militiamen roaming the city looking for him and his family, it were his family's Serbian friends that protected them from these groups by hiding them. And Samet told me that even before the war started, when some Serbian bullies would try to pick a fight with him, his other Serb friends would protect him as they walked to school.

The changes of the 1990s illustrate that not only conflicts in the micro interactional sphere can make nominally mixed situations experientially interethnic, but that the conflicts and tensions on the political level do fuel the potential of all nominal ethnic identities to become salient. It is this dynamic in the 90s that basically eliminated the possibility of normal and relatively unmarked interethnic interactions and caused a deep rift between the two ethnic groups. This separation still exists today, and interaction is rare. And when interaction does occur, it is experienced as interethnic because it happens so rarely and because people are not able to speak in one language anymore.

Perhaps young Kosovars could speak English together, a neutral and in ways new language in the region. It is in this language that most mixed interactions today take place. Projects organized by NGO’s and other organizations such as embassies have been mentioned as one of the occasions that Kosovo Albanians actually get to meet Serbs from either Kosovo or Serbia proper. These meetings and projects that often evolve around reconciliation or democratization are mostly marked by mutual curiosity and respect, and are occasions in which young people get to meet each other and hear stories from either side. The war often surfaces in these conversations, but is more often seems to be a source of mutual understanding and sympathy than conflict.

Emir, who speaks Serbian fluently, as his mother is Bosniak, remembers many times in which he met Serbs in these projects. One time, in Turkey, a Serb told him that he had been initially very afraid of meeting Kosovo Albanians, as he thought there would be some sort of conflict. But this guy had told Emir that he was very happy that he had met him, and they got really close those days.

But Emir also recounted a story from a time when he was in Croatia, and there was a girl from Novi Sad with whom he was hanging out. When they sat somewhere one night she surprised him, knowing he speaks Serbian as fluent as he does and that he was ‘half-Slavic’, she asked him whether he was on their side or on the other side. He was shocked by this
question, and told her that he had been never even asked this question in Serbia! Other than this one case, he said that most of the time these events are not politicized and center around drinking and having fun together, which is why he was really surprised by this event.

Another example is when Tringa was in a project in Ohrid, in Macedonia. During this week she was hanging out not so much with the Albanians from Kosovo, but much more with some Serbs from Serbia, ‘out of curiosity’, she said. When they had to do a little presentation about their country and its problems, the (international) organization had explicitly stated that no sensitive issues should be brought up. Yet when Tringa was presenting her country, she felt she could not be silent about the issue of missing people in Kosovo, which is still an important disruptive factor and a political issue.\footnote{Still some 1700 people, both Albanians and Serbs are missing since the conflict of the late 90s. This is a politically charged issue as many people blames the respective governments for the unwillingness of to find these people/bodies or to open the files about their fate. Edona Peci, ‘UN Calls for Urgent Action on Kosovo’s Missing’, Balkan Insight, 26 June, 2014, accessed 9 January 2015. http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/un-group-demands-urgent-act-on-missing-persons-in-kosovo.} When she mentioned this, her Serb friends stood up and walked out of the room. She was outraged about this and very surprised: ‘why they could not be polite and stay and listen? They had stated political things about Kosovo as well.’ Later she confronted one of the Serbs with this, and when he first defended their action, Tringa got angry and defended her people and their history in a way she had never done before. Later he admitted that he felt guilty and they are still friends and keep contact on Facebook, she told me.

\subsection*{3.7.2 Conflicts and Jokes}

Even when most of these interactions are marked by curiosity, conflicts do sometimes pop up and only emphasize the mixedness that was already pretty apparent and salient most of time. In order to defuse the tension and to avoid possible conflict making ethnically marked jokes can be a strategy to make the interaction run smoothly and get close the cold air. A way in which jokes are used can be seen in the story of Genc and Stefan. Genc is a 24-year old Albanian guy from Pristina who works for an NGO, through which he had visited Belgrade. In Belgrade he had cooperated with and befriended a Serbian guy, Stefan. They had agreed that it would be good for their project if Stefan came to live in Pristina for a week or two. Stefan came to Pristina, and Genc took him to many cafes and parties, showed him around and introduced him to many people, both Albanians and internationals. The two of them got along really well, and they would often joke. The jokes they enjoyed were often ethnically marked, and involved many stereotypes and mentioning of things associated with the war or the bombings.\footnote{Joking on the Balkans, especially in Serbia, is notoriously harsh. In Yugoslavia jokes were a way of coping with the differences between groups and countries. With the Second World War only a few years ago, joking was a way of overcoming differences and previous hostilities. It was clearly in this tradition that Genc and Stefan acted.}

This one day I joined them in the restaurant. Stefan and Genc were there, some Albanian friends and Genc had brought along a couple of Americans who were in town for an exchange program on reconciliation. The Americans had just arrived in town and were still a little anxious and careful, and of course highly conscious of the recent conflict and possible tensions. But Stefan and Genc, as soon as they sat down started cracking jokes such
Genc asking ‘How does a Serb from Belgrade cross the street?’, ‘He looks left, right and up, to see if there’s no NATO bombs coming in.’ Usually Stefan would enjoy faking a shocked and angry response. And then he would retaliate with yet another, and possibly harsher joke. As one can imagine, the Americans were shocked by the harshness of the jokes and the awkwardness of the situation. But most other people around the table laughed about the jokes. The jokes accentuated Stefan’s Serb ethnicity, but in doing so conflict or disagreement was largely avoided and the interaction could continue rather normally. Sasha, a Serb from Belgrade who lives and works in Pristina would often do the same, as we saw in the situation with Shota. Samet and his friends, both here and back in Serbia, would call each other derogatory names all the times. Often this is just banter of course, just as Emir reported he would frequently call his Serbian friends ‘Serbian bastards’. Joking is a common practice, not only in Kosovo but around the Balkans to defuse tension and to avoid sensitive issues. Jokes are often also just a way of showing endearment. Therefore they often happen in mixed friendships and mixed marriages, as Hana told me about how her Albanian father and Serbian mother would often use ethnic slurs for each other as a joke or expression of endearment:

‘Our family would even make jokes. Like, we would joke about political situations, or joke about, you know, mum being Serbian and dad being Albanian. We would have dinner, and mum started getting fatter around that time as she went through menopause. She was a skinny lady, and all of a sudden, she got bigger, and was eating much more. And my dad actually filmed this, and I don’t know, if this is somewhere, it was a hidden camera thing, with the family. He put the camera on the table, and we were all sitting. Mum got one scoop of food, and she ate it, and she went for a second one. And my dad was like no! And my mum’s comment was “Sara! (Hana’s sister), šiptar doesn’t let me eat in my own country!” Haha, so it was more like jokes like that, haha! Cause, they didn’t take it seriously and they didn’t want us to take it seriously, cause, you know, it wasn’t an issue for us.’

Joking does require some level of intimacy and collaboration, and therefor happens usually between friends or family. If this intimacy or the expectation of collaboration does not exist joking is usually not a successful strategy of approaching a mixed interaction.

This paragraph has aimed to discuss the workings of interethnic interaction in Kosovo today and in the Yugoslav past. A key understanding in this has been the distinction between a nominally mixed interaction, in which two people that belong to different ethnic categories interact with one another, and experiential mixed interactions in which this nominally mixed interaction is or becomes experienced as mixed.244 Informed by this idea this paragraph has focused on the different ways in which interethnic interactions become experienced as mixed and how the dynamics of interethnic interactions have changed over the years.

This approach, inspired by the research of Brubaker in Cluj, takes a different perspective than most works on ethnicity, that have been primarily concerned with nominally mixed relationships and interactions, such as mixed friendships and marriages.245 The focus on when interactions become experientially mixed is an important feature for understanding the workings of ethnicity in present-day and Yugoslav Kosovo. And although

244 Brubaker et al. Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town, 314.
245 Ibid. For an elaborate discussion on the literature of ethnically mixed relationships see Fedja Buric, Becoming Mixed. Mixed Marriages of Bosnia-Herzegovina During the Life and Death of Yugoslavia (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2012) 3-11.
the work that has been done her is rather preliminary, it does cast some important light on when and where ethnicity becomes salient for Kosovars and when it does not, thereby offering a corrective to accounts of ethnicity and of interethnic interactions, that usually evolve around nominal ethnic group membership rather than the experience of interethnic interactions.

3.8 Crossing Borders

One of the main concerns of this study is how, where and when ethnicity is experienced by ordinary Kosovars and what shapes this experience. Several elements that shape the experience have already been discussed in this analysis, ranging from institutions and civil-ethnic societies, to everyday preoccupations, language and direct interactions with Serbs. Most of the ways through which ethnicity is experienced are somehow related to the category set Albanian-Serb. In the paragraph on categories as well as in some other examples, it has however been shown that other category distinctions such as regional, religious and moral categories can shape the experience of ethnicity as they crowd out or cut across ethnic lines. This paragraph focuses on the influence of some other categories that involves both literal and metaphorical boundary crossing.

The tensions of the 1990s and the war that ensued led to an enormous flow of people leaving Kosovo. This started in the late 1980s when the tensions rose and became exceptionally large during and right after the war. Kosovars crossing the borders was however not a new phenomenon, as from the 1960s onwards many Kosovars and other Yugoslavs had travelled to Western Europe to work over there as so-called gastarbeiter, many of which ended up staying in these countries. But besides Kosovars crossing the borders themselves, Kosovars have seen the world entering into their country after the war. Countless internationals working for NGO’s, embassies, UN, KFOR, EULEX and many other organizations poured into Kosovo during and after the war, and although the war is already fifteen years ago and many peace keepers have left (but not nearly all), there is still a considerable population of international workers in Kosovo and Pristina, something that is clearly visible and noticeable on the street.

Movement and migration open up the world. Kosovars moving around and the influence of the outside world impacts the power and insulation of ethnic communities, in this it can have denationalizing or de-ethnicizing effects. At the same time however migration and movement can emphasize and highlight ethnicity and thus the experience thereof. This paragraph looks at some ways in which migration and international presence in Kosovo heightens of lowers experience of ethnicity and it which ways it happens.246

‘There is just no way of making it here’, is a commonly heard cry in Kosovo, amongst both Albanians and Serbs. Migration is a central issue of life in Kosovo, as most people have at least thought about it and have friends and family that have left Kosovo. This is not surprising when you take the amount of poverty into regard: a research from 2007 estimated that around 46 % of the Kosovo population lives below the poverty line of 1.50

246 Brubaker et al. Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town, 316.
Many believe that migrating abroad would solve these problems or at least give them some kind of chance on a better life and a better future. Dren for example is very pessimistic about the future:

'I love Kosovo but I'd love to leave Kosovo. Yeah, I don't know, because I can do better! If I am in Germany, France, USA or something. Because I want to work a lot, and when you work a lot in those places, you are gonna climb a lot. I would work two jobs, and send my family money!'

Ull on the other hand wants to stay in Kosovo. He wants to stay because it is 'our country', it is 'our ancestors' grounds', he says. He would go abroad for a little while, to work, but not to leave Kosovo for good. He also disagrees with Dren, 'you are saying it so easy, but if you go there, you will see how easy it is, and how much you will love it!'. Ull argues that he will miss his country and that he will not be able to buy coffees for one euro as he can do here. Besides being more attached to the country, Ull is more skeptical about how easy it will be, and how much better life will be out there.

Maria, who migrated to the USA with her husband some years ago, has experienced it herself. She said it seems all so easy, and everybody who gets back tells amazing stories, only the good things, or even lies, but they do not tell stories about the struggles or even dilemmas. According to her, it is very hard to make it without getting involved with some kind of crime. She did not want to do this, and so they moved back. This is often regarded as a shameful move, especially if you do not come back with loads of money for the family and the money to buy a car and build a house.

But while migrating is not all that much of a fairytale, there are people that do make it. And these examples are the ones most people see. Such as Blerta and Zana's brother who pays the rent – for which he does indeed have to work two jobs – or the wave of migrated Albanians – the diaspora – that return to Kosovo for summer, jokingly called schatzi's by Kosovo Albanians. These returning Albanians drive insanely expansive cars, which are often rented, they bring clothes and money for everybody, brag about the luxury lives they live, complaining about the situation in Kosovo and the garbage on the streets. These schatzi's are often ridiculed for losing their Albanian-ness, for acting crazy and being superficial. But even when people realize that some of the success stories are lies and that the expensive cars are often a hoax, it does not prevent them from dreaming of going abroad.

While the migrated Albanians often fuel the dreams and desire of people in Kosovo to migrate, the migrants themselves often also told me about the difficulties they face.

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Besides the expected ones of economic hardship and struggles to obtain a job, a house, to settle, this also includes a less expected difficulty of being stigmatized. As soon as Kosovo Albanians or Kosovo Serbs go to Western Europe, they often face the situation that they experience their ethnicity much stronger than they do in their home countries. For one, this is of course because they leave their ethnic communities where their ethnicity and language are unmarked. Sometimes they are faced with stigmatization of their respective ethnicity. Albanians are often associated with the infamous Albanian mafia and Serbs often being associated with war criminals. This stigmatization starts at the border controls and continues through happen in interaction with 'Westerners'. This stigmatization, besides that it makes them become more ethnic than they perhaps felt previously, also makes that many migrants from Kosovo find themselves embraced by the many ethnic diaspora communities that exist around the West. Of course these communities also provide some more practical help, but definitely provide for a world in which the ethnicity of the migrants becomes relatively unmarked and taken-for-granted again. In this we can see a dynamic of how an increased awareness of ethnicity can lead to a migrant becoming 'more ethnic', both experientially as well as practically, by crossing the borders.

Migrants however face another interesting stigmatization, one they often did not expect. Instead of being viewed as Albanians or Serbs, due to lack of knowledge or interest of the people they meet, they are quite often quickly categorized by many people as Eastern Europeans or ex-Yugoslavs or 'Balkanians'. Sometimes this leads just to funny or annoying situations, other times to straight-out discrimination. Bora experienced such a moment when she travelled to Germany as a 16 year-old for an exchange in the year 2000, when German kids asked her 'Do you have electricity back home? Do you have cars?', after they had just told some stories about Kosovo and the war and the things they had experienced. These 'stupid questions', were very annoying and frustrating to them, as it made them feel inferior and it did not match their self-image as well developed Yugoslavs. Ahmed experienced certain treatments by customs on his travels, and noticed how the police in Berlin interrogated him after hearing that he was from Kosovo. Another moment was how a waitress changed her behavior according to him, when she found out he was not English or American, but from Kosovo, and suddenly started treating him rudely and with some distance. These experiences are not unique to Kosovo Albanians or even Kosovars only, but common to people from the Balkan and Eastern Europe. The experiences often surprise them and are frustrating. This stigmatization as 'Eastern Europeans' is not connected to ethnic categories so much as it is to categories of civility, development and crime. Interestingly enough, while this stigmatization accentuates the experience of the immigrants being different, it also has denationalizing effects. For one because it dissociates them from their ethnicity and second because they share this fate with the other immigrants from their region. In this suddenly Serbs and Albanians are put in the same category.

Berat told me that while Albanians and Serbs who had migrated to the UK in the 1990s did not necessarily always hang out together, they did have a sense of being in this situation together. He told me that they (the Albanians) would mostly hang out with

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250 The Albanian diaspora communities are especially large, namely in the U.S. but also elsewhere. But diaspora communities do also exist for Serbs around the world.
Bosnians and Croats. But that when they did encounter Serbs, there were no problems. Even more so, when Albanians and Serbs did hang out together, the Serbs would often emphasize that the Albanians were *isti*, ‘the same’. The same meaning, all from Yugoslavia, all with the same background, but just divided by these conflicts and nationalists. Una experienced the same when she travelled to the USA. She had never really met Serbs, but all people from former Yugoslavia and Albania hung out together as they had so much in common. Being in a strange country and being treated differently brought them much closer together and thereby somehow decreased the experience of ethnicity.

These are ways in which the salience of ethnicity is affected by Kosovars crossing borders. But many Kosovars need not to cross the borders to be confronted with the outside world. The large international presence in Kosovo influences the experience of ethnicity in Kosovo. The international community has taken with it things from home, from habits and goods to their languages. The mere presence of the internationals can be noticed on the Pristina streets as you here English everywhere, and many bars and cafes are tailored to the needs of foreigners. Many of the habits and traditions of the internationals, especially the Americans, are warmly welcomed by Kosovo Albanians who view them as their liberators and as examples for how to become developed and prosperous. This goes as far as that for example Halloween and the 4th of July, holidays unknown to Kosovo previous to the war, are celebrated with much enthusiasm. American flags can be seen all over Kosovo and other forms of American or Western culture also pervade Kosovo.

Some of this is not unique of course, as this happens all over the world as the result of globalization and nor is the resistance against it, caused by fears of losing the traditional values and culture, unique to Kosovo. What makes this dynamic more interesting in Kosovo is that the resistance is paired with feelings of nationalism and ‘trauma’. For the first time in history the Albanians are in charge in Kosovo, and as soon as their culture is dominant and free to be celebrated, the Western culture comes in to push aside this newly obtained dominance? This is not unrelated to more political feelings of Kosovo being a play ball of the international community and them having sovereignty only in name, but are actually ruled by the great powers. Many Kosovars therefor stand in a ambiguous relation with the internationals, for they have ensured the safety and liberty of the Albanians and are probably the key towards progress and prosperity, yet at the same time their presence and influence rouses feelings of resistance and nationalism. An occasion in which this became visible has already been mentioned in the anecdote about speaking English or Albanian in the university workshop. Among Serbs these worries seem to be much less present. One, because there still exists a resistance against the West for having bombed them and two, because Western culture is not so much competing with theirs, as the Serb culture is strongly rooted in Serbia itself and not dominant anyways in Kosovo nowadays.

Besides these more direct influences that do highlight the awareness of ethnicity among Albanians, there is something that raises awareness of ethnicity even more which is the feelings of inferiority and stigmatization their presence brings along. When stigmatization outside of the borders might be surprising to immigrants, it is very confronting inside the borders of your own country. The presence of the internationals and the power they have has fed many feelings of inferiority among Kosovo Albanians due to their dominance, the way the internationals sometimes treated Kosovars and expressed
themselves about them. This creates many feelings of frustration, as is exemplified in what Genc told me:

‘I can also remember that I felt inferior to internationals, I thought that internationals are well educated, and they do things better, and they are more professional than us, and I don’t think nowadays, I am totally disappointed from what I see everyday.’

But according to Genc these feelings of inferiority also had an affect on the behavior of Albanians:

‘I see that a lot of my friends have this complex of being superior, which comes from their inferiority, towards Internationals. So they need to be, uhh, superior too, and that is why many people hate on people that are from the villages, or that are not from Pristina. But in fact, being from Pristina, doesn’t mean anything. I mean, Pristina, as I said before, was more like big village, a big developed village. But I don’t think that in Pristina there is something like urban identity, and even if it was, that is not a thing to be proud of.’

The example of Genc shows how the presence of internationals gives way to feelings of inferiority and thus of a heightened sense of ethnicity and otherness. In this way it has nationalizing effects, which a part of the reason of the popularity of the Vetëvendosje movement that advocates self-determination of the Kosovo Albanians.

These feelings of inferiority are only fueled by one of the issues that frustrates many Kosovars the most. While in Yugoslavia all Yugoslavs could travel the world. Yugoslavia was one of the rare communist countries that was befriended with the West, and Tito’s strategy led to opening up borders in many ways, for products, tourists coming to visit the country, and for Yugoslavs to travel all over the world. As a part of the Non-Aligned Movement Yugoslavs could - they still pride themselves in this and feel nostalgic for it – travel to more countries without visa than Westerners. But today the situation is starkly different. During the course of the 1990s the West closed their borders to the warmongering Balkans states that were seen as sources of endless refugees and nests of barbaric criminals and while these visa restrictions have been lifted for all of Kosovo’s neighbors, Kosovo is yet to receive Visa Liberalization for the Schengen zone. Combined with the contestedness of the Republic of Kosovo, this has led to a ghettoization of Kosovo in that Kosovars can travel only to a handful of countries without going through a process that is experienced as highly humiliating, not to mention the time and money it costs. The long lines that form in front of

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251 The Non-Aligned Movement was a group of states during the Cold War that was not officially aligned with or against any of the major power blocs (The Soviet Union and the United States, and perhaps later China). The organization was founded in Belgrade in 1961 and was conceived as a third way and an assurance of the sovereignty of the participating states.

252 This has led to the situation of Kosovo being an island or ‘ghetto’ in the words of many Kosovars, surrounded by other, similar countries that do have Visa Liberalization. This is perceived as highly unfair. The reason for this is two-fold. On one side it is because of normal Visa Liberalization regulations such as rule of law (especially aimed at organized crime), but on the other hand, and more importantly, it is because of the contested status of Kosovo, not recognized by possible candidate states Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, but also not by five member states: Romania, Greece, Slovakia, Spain and Cyprus. The EU and Kosovo government are working hard to resolve this unwanted situation, and while negotiations have started for both Visa Liberalization as well as signing an Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU, progress has been slow, to the despair of the population of Kosovo.
embassies on many early week mornings are constant reminders of this situation to the Kosovars.\textsuperscript{253}

This visa situation is a nationalizing factor in Kosovo. First, because it keeps Kosovars in their own country. Secondly, and importantly, because it effects mainly Kosovo Albanians. Serbia does have Visa Liberalization, and because most Kosovo Serbs still have Serbian passports, these travel restrictions do not count for them. Technically, as the Serbian state still considers all people of Kosovo as its citizens, it is possible for Kosovo Albanians to get a Serbian passport, which would make travelling a lot easier for them. But generally this is a tabooed move and experienced as a humiliating option. There are however Albanians that have obtained one, for the sake of travel and job opportunities and others contemplate doing so. This situation however strongly shapes the experience of ethnicity for the Kosovo Albanians.

Even travelling to Albania sometimes causes stigmatization for Kosovo Albanians. As mentioned, there are some prejudices between Albanians from Albania and Kosovo Albanians. Generally Kosovo Albanians view Albania and Albanians from Albania as more civilized than themselves. This is a view shared by the Albanians in Albania, who think of Kosovo Albanians as less civilized, crude, mountain and country people. For them this is embodied in the northern dialect \textit{Gheg} and certain behavior. Although this distinction was in some ways shared by Kosovo Albanians, this was mostly founded on the myths of a free and thriving ‘homeland’ that Albania supposedly was during the Hoxha era. The fall of communism, the revelation of the terror and poverty Albania had lived in for decades and the chaos that followed have corrected this perception slightly, but by and large it still exists. This makes that sometimes when Kosovo Albanians travel to Albania, they encounter, to their surprise often, stigmatization and discrimination. This is not to say that this always happens, not nearly, but when it does happens it forms a remarkable moment in which a heightened sense of category membership is experienced by those people generally perceived as their ethnic brothers and sisters.

These instances are interesting because they illuminate how movement can heighten awareness of category membership. Yet this categorization in this case not ethnic, but rather national or regional. These situations have the interesting affect of nationalizing Kosovo Albanians, but at the same time denationalizing of deemphasizing general Albanian-ness. To my knowledge this is not something Kosovo Serbs experience when they travel to Serbia. Other than some regular regional distinctions between city and countryside, Kosovo Serbs are ordinary Serbs just like any other Serb.

This paragraph has widened the focus of the analysis from merely looking how ethnic communities and the opposition and interaction with the ‘rivaling’ ethnic group shapes ethnicity to looking at how movement and migration, or in other words, the wider world, influences the experience of ethnicity for Kosovars. Crossing borders, or having your borders crossed can have nationalizing and denationalizing affects on people and groups. Including these dynamics into this analysis is necessary for understanding how, when and where ethnicity happens in the everyday lives of Kosovars.

3.9 Everyday Politics

The last paragraph of this analysis turns to nationalist politics. As the aims and claims of nationalists and nationalist politics have been discussed in chapter two, here the interest is a slightly different one. Instead of focusing on the claims and the politics itself, this paragraph will look at how these politics are experienced and talked about by ordinary people. In other words, what politics do people talk about and how do they talk about it? Now and in the past politics and the consequences they have for people's daily lives have given much occasion to talk about politics. Yet, even when many of these topics are ethno-political by content, they are not always discussed ethnic terms.

There are many politics topics and issues that are discussed with great sincerity in Kosovo. In 2014 these included for example the parliamentary elections of November, the faith of the Trepsa/Trepça mining complex and the new tribunal in The Hague installed for the trial of former KLA fighters. Much talking about politics is however marked by cynicism, laughter, jokes and dismissal. This concerns the distance that is felt between politicians and ordinary people, and the perspective that most politicians, regardless of ethnicity, are corrupted, incompetent and serving only their own interests. Talking about these themes is characteristic for political talk in Kosovo and the Balkans. This has already come to the surface several times in this analysis as for example in the conversation between Dren and Uli when they gossip about the educational and regional background of the former Prime Minister Hashim Thaçi or when Blerta and Zana scornfully discuss the incompetence of the Albanian politicians. Talking about these issues, besides a way of venting their frustration, is often a way to create and enact solidarity, a feeling of 'we are in this together'.

What topics are discussed by Kosovars and in what ways are they discussed? To understand more about the ways in which people talk about nationalist politics this paragraph will look at three political issues in Kosovo and the ways in which people talk about it. These three topics are all connected to ethno-political issues and discussing these topics will convey some the manners and modalities of political talk in Kosovo.

3.9.1 Status of Kosovo

With the retreat of Yugoslav forces in 1999 and the UN resolution 1244 that followed Kosovo entered a period of uncertainty regarding its status. The declaration of independence in 2008 seemed to have solved this uncertainty. This would have been the case, was it not that the declaration was unilateral and highly contested. Not only Serbia itself, but also by five EU member states, Russia, China and many other countries around the world. The people objecting to this independence most fervently however are of course the Serbs that actually live in Kosovo. The status of Kosovo is a political issue of great importance to Kosovars, but unsurprisingly talked about in different ways by Albanians and Serbians.

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255 Brubaker et al., Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town, 336.
The status of Kosovo is a simple fact for most Kosovo Albanians: they are independent. Yet, they do have to face the effects of the contestation in their everyday lives. Especially issues such as obtaining visa, the uncertain future of the North and the ownership of the Trepça/Trepća mining complex makes the contested status of Kosovo salient to Kosovo Albanians. For Kosovo Serbs the salience of the status of Kosovo is much greater, although for most it is not really up for discussion what is the status of Kosovo: Kosovo is Serbia, whatever the political reality might be at the moment. Petar put it like this, representing what I heard most Serbs say: ‘But in the heart, in am a Serbian man. This is Serbia. I am not from Kosovo. We are not Kosovars. It’s different. You know. When someone calls me Kosovo it is offending to me’.

As clear-cut as it is for Serbs that Kosovo is not a country, just as obvious it is to most Kosovo Albanians that it is. Not only is the independence their pride, it is also the political reality they experience everyday. Serbs on the other hand face the confusion and contestation everyday, with double institutions, choices and two governments supporting them (however little this may be). To some extent the status confusion seems to be to their benefit, as the Serbs sometimes receive money twice, from both the Kosovo and the Serbian government, but in the end this situation is of course not beneficial to anyone, other than perhaps some politicians. The ongoing negotiations, facilitated and enforced by the EU, do not necessarily provide more clarity, as agreements are made, broken, changed, or not implemented. While the status itself is nonnegotiable for most people in Kosovo, the effects of possible agreements are priorities for all sides. The prospects of EU membership, of Visa Liberalization, of open borders and economic progress, are things people often talk about and dearly wish for. The politicians seem to listen to these demands, but they are in the complex situation that coming closer to the EU and satisfying the international community’s requirements of reconciliation and continued dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina means compromising in the status and sovereignty issue.

This Dialogue is however something that frustrates Albanians immensely. Many Albanians are willing to empathize with the situation the Kosovo Serbs find themselves in, but they often feel and express that the Serbs and the Serbian government have a lot of influence on politics in Kosovo. Recent agreements coming from the dialogue have only worsened this, as the Serbs have gotten more autonomy in governing the Serbian municipalities, it has been allowed that Serbian political parties are supported by Serbia and the Serbs (and other minorities) have a fixed number of seats in the Kosovo Parliament and Government. Maria summarizes this view:

‘I mean, they have their seats in the parliament. And they are quite important, you know, there. When it comes to some decisions, Albanians really have to consider them, so, politically, perhaps its not that bad for them. In general, I don’t know much, I haven’t been. I have been to Gracanica, that’s it you know. I don’t know their daily lives, I don’t know what it looks like. I imagine that its not cool, especially for the young people.’

256 The last and so-called groundbreaking agreement between Pristina and Belgrade, also called the Brussels Agreement or the First Agreement signed on the 19th of April 2013, seemed to settle some important issues such as the status of the North, the creation of an association for Serbian communities in Kosovo, electricity and telecom issues and the roads of both countries to the EU. The agreement is especially significant, as it seems to be a de facto recognition of Kosovo as a state by Serbia. This is however of course forcefully denied by Serbia. To date the implementation of the agreement has been lacking and debated, but the EU keeps pushing for implementation.
Recently protests have sparked in Kosovo over the words of a Serbian minister in the newly chosen Kosovo government. When in January of 2015 some Albanians had obstructed the trip of some Serb pilgrims to Gjakova where they wanted to celebrate their Orthodox Christmas. In response to the affair the Serbian minister Jablanovic had called the Albanians involved in this situations ‘savages’. This led to large indignation among the Albanian population, outraged that a Serbian minister in a government they pay taxes to insults them so insensitively. The scandal was quickly linked to a decision by the Kosovo government to postpone the nationalization of the Trepça mines, allegedly under pressure of the Serbian government and the Serb members of the government. The protests that followed have been called the ‘worst unrest in Kosovo since 2008’. An important reason for the protests are the sentiments caused by the insensitive remarks of Jablanovic, but the thing that really bothers many Kosovo Albanians is the influence of the Serbian government on the government of Kosovo. Or in the words of the political analyst Belul Beqaj on the Serbians in the Kosovo government and their ties to Serbia: ‘It plays the role of the Trojan horse in the Kosovar political scene.’

What the outcomes of the negotiations and the status talks will be is unclear, but it is sure that Kosovo Albanians will not give up their independence. The Kosovo Serbs in the enclaves have to wait and see what their politicians in Belgrade decide to do, what the international community decides and how that will impact their lives. Political talk often touches upon the issue of the status, as it is the issue that influences many other political issues in Kosovo as well as most everyday issues for Kosovo Serbs in the enclaves. The position of Kosovo Serbs, as, in Petar’s words, ‘second-grade citizens’, is entirely wrapped up with the status of Kosovo. For this to change, both their actual position as the experience of their position, clarity on the borders and the status of Kosovo needs to be reached and many years will probably have to pass. And that the independence of Kosovo is a fact for Kosovo Albanians does not mean that it is taken-for-granted. To the contrary actually: with a war fresh in their memory and the declaration of independence that took place only six years ago, the status of Kosovo might not be in the minds and talks of Kosovo Albanians as often as it is for Kosovo Serbs, the independence of Kosovo it is by no means not up for negotiation.

3.9.2 Vetëvendosje
One of the most outspoken groups against the influence of Serbia in Kosovo and the Dialogue is the political movement called Lëvizja Vetëvendosje, or Self-Determination

258 Hopkins, ‘Set the Trojan Horse on Fire’.
259 Things are slightly different for the Kosovo Serbs in the North, as they live in some sort of autonomous, Serbia supported, twilight zone.
Movement. 'Vetëvendosje' was what the Albanian protesters chanted when they took to the streets in Pristina in 1968, and is the slogan for this influential but controversial movement in Kosovo today. Led by Albin Kurti, one of the leaders of the student protests in 1997, the movement and party focuses on two main issues. The first is the issue of corruption in Kosovo and especially in the political arena, and the second, and most important one, is the demand for true independence in the form of actual self-determination and not being 'ruled' or 'colonized' by the International Community and Serbia.

Vetëvendosje is controversial, for its standpoints, for their often radical statements and their mass-protests and provocative actions. Genc, a young guy from Pristina, was involved in one of these actions, in which they tumbled EULEX cars as a statement in 2009. He and some of his fellow Vetëvendosje activists were arrested and put in prison for some weeks. According to Genc this action was sparked by an agreement between EULEX and the Serbian police, and they were convinced that it undermined Kosovo's independence. In the course of the movement’s ten years existence it is only one of many incidents. Some Kosovo Albanians call them radicals, nationalists or communists, and shy away for the radical tone and strong critical voice, while others admire the movement and see it the way to real independence and breaking with corrupt politicians that act like slaves of the international community.

The demand for self-determination takes many different shapes, ranging from not obeying EU demands, wanting to kick out EULEX and other international organizations that meddle with the politics of Kosovo as well as stopping the negotiations or 'dialogue' with Serbia and boycott products from Serbia. Vetëvendosje is very present in the street in the form of graffiti slogans that can be seen everywhere, such as EULEX with a big cross through it, 'Jo Negociata – Vetëvendosje!' (No Negotiations, Self-Determination) and 'Blej Shqip!' (Buy Albanian). Vetëvendosje had a mayor victory in the fall of 2013, when their candidate for the position of mayor of Pristina, Shpend Ahmeti won the elections. Ahmeti, usually endearingly called Shpend by people in Pristina, had a huge support from young people in Pristina that wanted change, and he is still very popular. Even when not everybody in Pristina is very fond of Vetëvendosje, most people I talked to and listened to, said to be very pleased with Shpend as mayor.

The sisters Blerta and Zana are fervent Vetëvendosje supporters. They try to boycott Serbian products and will definitely vote for the party, although they are not sure about Kurti’s leadership. Although they take the boycott more serious than most, many of their peers in Pristina also support the movement. They see it as the only way to change, the only party that is not infected with the decease of corruption. While the issue of self-determination is important to most supporters, and, like Blerta and Zana, many may believe that Kosovo could be standing on its own feet, politically and economically, it is the issue of fighting corruption seems to be the pinnacle of their support. While the relationship with Serbia is a sensitive issue for most Kosovo Albanians, and while Vetëvendosje clearly has some nationalistic elements to it, these issues do not seem to be the most important factors for Vetëvendosje’s supporters to vote for this party. Rather it seems that most supporters


261 The boycott of Serbian products is aimed at gaining greater economical independence from Serbia, who still is by far the largest trading partner and an attempt to stimulate and protect the internal Kosovo market.
view the party as the hope in fighting the corruption that pervades all other political parties. And it is their relentless fight against corruption, paired with their resistance against foreign meddling in Kosovo’s politics that has attracted the support of more and more Kosovo Albanians in the past years.

There are definitely some Kosovars that view Vetëvendosje as nationalistic, radical and dangerous. Maria is one of them as she tells me ‘But in order for them to come in real power, and people really follow it, I think they have to come back to something more sane, more normal. I think that it’s all a little bit too crazy. Too radical, too strange.’ To foreign observers the great support and enthusiasm for the party is sometimes a signal of large scale nationalism, but a closer look reveals that while elements of nationalism and radicalism might well be appealing to some, most supporters do not cast their support in ethnic terms and explain that their choice is inspired by the will and determination to fight something that all Kosovars struggle with in their everyday lives: corruption. And for the moment the only choice for reaching these goals they see is Vetëvendosje.

3.9.3 Greater Albania

One of the big issues around Kosovo, both internally as internationally, is the idea of ‘Greater Albania’. Greater Albania is the concept of one state covering all areas where Albanians live. Such a state would include Albania, parts of Montenegro, Serbia, Macedonia, Greece and Kosovo. Ever since the political conceptualization of Greater Albania in the late nineteenth century, this idea has been a unifying factor for the Albanian nation and a fear for the surrounding nations and states. It was this idea that was one of the main reasons for Tito for keeping Kosovo from becoming a republic within Yugoslavia after all, as the Yugoslav government was scared they would use their right to secede and join Albania.

This threat has been a polarizing factor for many decades and it still is. Berat told me about how in the 1980s, his friends and himself would argue with Serbian youngsters about who was here first, and whether Kosovo belonged to ‘Albania’ or ‘Serbia’. Most Serbs are certain that merging with Albania is the eventual goal of the Kosovo Albanians. This is perceived as a big threat for those living there. Interestingly enough, the consensus about this is far less amongst Kosovo Albanians themselves. While the concept has been of political importance throughout the twentieth century and is still a hot issue of debate, the merging of Kosovo with Albania is not at all supported by most Kosovo Albanians.

Vetëvendosje is often seen as a party that pushes the idea of Greater Albania, and while it is hard to make up what their precise standpoint on this matter is, one thing is clear: Vetëvendosje might or might not want to join Albania, they want at least to have the choice to be Kosovo’s to make. At this moment Kosovo does not have this choice. This is ruled by a provision in the – allegedly U.S. designed – constitution that states that Kosovo ‘will seek no union with any other state’, a provision enforced by the international community seeking to comfort Serbia.262 Most Kosovo Albanians I talked to agree that a possible union with Albania should be their choice, but considering all the international fears and attention a

262 To comfort Serbia as well as its main ally Russia, but also other countries such as China and the five non-recognizing EU member state countries that would not welcome the precedent of a region unilaterally seceding (which already happened) and consequently joining another country. Judah, Kosovo, 144-145 and Kosovo Constitution, accessed December 30, 2014. http://www.kushtetutakosesves.info/repository/docs/ConstitutionoftheRepublicofKosovo.pdf.
surprisingly little part of the people I talked to actually supported the idea to join Albania or to establish a Greater Albania. Although most Kosovo Albanians view it as unfair that the Serbs in Kosovo have some sort of autonomy within their country, whilst the Albanians of the Preševo/Presheva valley in Serbia do not have these rights.

Sometimes I heard Albanians talk about the possible benefits a union could have, if it were possible. Mainly in terms of economical strength and having a bigger and stronger country. Many Kosovars are however convinced that Kosovo can make it economically, if they would just have the right people. A part from a conversation with Blerta and Zana might explain this better:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Zana:} & \quad \text{Yeah. We just need the right people to lead it.} \\
\text{Blerta:} & \quad \text{Yeah, we just need them. We have everything we need to survive; we can have factories for anything we need.} \\
\text{Zana:} & \quad \text{We have the soil. We have the skilled people, we have a lot of things, you know. But nobody is using them.} \\
\text{Blerta:} & \quad \text{Nobody is using them, or letting them.} \\
\text{Zana:} & \quad \text{Because politicians are focused on making money fast.} \\
\text{Blerta:} & \quad \text{Making money fast, and not let them do their own thing, because then we will not need Serbian products.}
\end{align*}
\]

When asked, the sisters agreed that Kosovo does not need to merge with Albania. Zana voiced the opinion of many Kosovo Albanians:

‘I don’t like the idea. I like the idea of having a close relationship with them, and working together closely, and cooperating with them, and you know. But being one country, I don’t like that.’

The sisters indicate a couple of practical issues regarding the union of Kosovo and Albania. First of all, what does Albania have to offer to Kosovo? The two countries have the same problems and produce largely the same products. And, if they would become one country, who would lead the country? Kosovo just obtained independence, and the idea of sharing or giving away the power is an idea most Kosovo Albanians do not like at all.

Besides these practical issues there is another consideration that is often overlooked by outsiders. While Kosovo Albanians agree that all Albanians belong to the same nation and that they are brothers and sisters, this does not necessarily mean they would want to live in one country together. Or in the words of Ahmed: ‘Ok, brothers and sisters I call them, because we are two different states, and we are one nation. That’s why. In that sense.’ Many of the people I have interviewed and talked to, told me that Kosovar and Albanian Albanians are so different that it would be hard to live together. This might have been different in the past, but today the Kosovo Albanians and Albanians from Albania have a different history and a different upbringing, that are only enforced by strong regional and linguistic differences. Not only do many Kosovo Albanians perceive differences between them and Albanians from Albania, or from the other areas such as Macedonia for that matter, a sense of a Kosovo identity has been growing steadily in the past years.

The above has made clear that while Serbs and as well as some foreigner actors perceive the support for a Greater Albania to be substantial among the Kosovo Albanians, in reality this is not an idea that Kosovo Albanians support of even talk about much. When the
idea of Greater Albania is cast in ethnic terms by many Serbs, journalists and scholars, for Kosovo Albanians, when they do discuss the matter, it is usually cast in terms of economical benefit and practical problems as well as cultural, regional and historical differences between the Albanians from Albania and those from Kosovo. This does however not mean that the pride of the Albanian nation as a whole does not hold importance to Kosovo Albanians.

On the 14th of October 2014 the long awaited international football match between Albania and Serbia took place in Belgrade as part of the qualification rounds for the European Championship tournament of 2016. Considering the fact that it was a charged and high-risk game, the Serbian football federation and the UEFA had agreed that Albanian fans would be banned from attending the match. This was taken as an affront by the Albanians as a political move to annoy Kosovo Albanians. In general it seemed that the Kosovo Albanians were more excited for the game than the Albanians from Albania, as a victory would of course be a great revenge on Serbia.\(^{263}\) With some small incidents in the period before the game, the atmosphere in the stadium was very tense and Serbian fans or hooligans sang many provoking and violent chants throughout the first half of the game.

The players on the field were however not disturbed until just before halftime a drone carrying a flag entered the stadium. The flag depicted the outlines of ‘Greater Albania’, the Albanian heroes Isa Boletin, a freedom fighter from Kosovo and Ahmed Qemal, the man that declared the independence of (greater) Albania in 1912.\(^{264}\) This sparked violence in the stadium, with players fighting over the flag and hooligans later entering the field to kick the Albanians off, who eventually fled to their changing room.\(^{265}\)

While the event in itself is interesting of course, more interesting is perhaps what happened on Facebook immediately after the event. As soon as the game was suspended my Facebook feed started to color red. Many of my Kosovo Albanian Facebook contacts changed their profile and cover photos to Albanian flags or other tokens of support to the Albanian national cause. While many of these people had not expressed strong feelings for or even explicitly spoken out against the idea of a Greater Albania, they suddenly put up banners spelling Autochthonous (meaning indigenous), referring to the united Albanian nation. The support of the Albanian nation of course does not equal the political wish for Greater Albania, but it was surprising how many people openly expressed their support in the ways they did. Later that evening and the day after there were many rallies of Albanians waving flag, claiming the victory against Serbia.\(^{266}\) These rallies took place mostly in Kosovo, and far less in Albania itself.

As loud as the Albanian response was, as silent was the Kosovo Serbian one. This was a little different in Serbia itself, where hooligans set fire to some Albanian shops in the

\(^{263}\) This is not to say that Albanians from Albania do not feel any rivalry with Serbia, but it is far more present in Kosovo for understandable reasons.

\(^{264}\) The Independence proclaimed by Qemal on the 28th of November, 1912 in Vlore, initially included ‘all’ Albanian areas or vilayet in the Ottoman empire, but would quickly be reduced by its neighbors to its current state.


\(^{266}\) The UEFA eventually ruled that Serbia had officially won the match, while at the moment of suspension the score was 0-0. Serbia was however given the punishment of three points deduction, thus settling the score as even, and both teams were fined 100.000 euros.
country, but online I saw no responses by Serbs. When I asked my Serbian contacts in Gračanica about this, they told me they were ashamed of the event and scared of possible violence in Kosovo in the euphoria of the Albanians.\footnote{267} Besides the rallies, the flags and slogans on Facebook, and the politicians that inevitably tried to make use of the scandal, only fuelling the unrest, in the end not much happened in Kosovo.

It did however affect the diplomatic relations between the two countries, as both sides made their expected and standardized statements and accusations, turning the issue into a political one. The planned historic visit of the Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama to Belgrade a couple of days later was postponed to November, because of the unrest as well as some diplomatic struggles over statements by politicians. During Rama’s visit in November the event played up again when Rama mentioned the event adding that Kosovo ‘is an undeniable regional and European reality, and it must be respected’. The Serbian Prime Minister Vučić responded to this by saying that he had not expected this provocation and adding ‘what does Albania have to do with Kosovo? Kosovo is not part of Albania and it will never be’.\footnote{268}

Greater Albania is an explosive and important topic for politicians and nationalists, and the issue gets much foreign attention, both in newspapers as well as in policy reports. When the focus shifts from the political claims and speculations to the ways in which people talk about this and other explosive ethno-political issues, the experience and expressions of ordinary people of these political issues often turns out to be different than assumed on the basis of the reports. And this is exactly what this paragraph has attempted to do.

This is not to claim that ethno-political issues carry no importance to Kosovars. To the contrary, the issues have the potential to rouse a lot of attention and possible upheavals. Political issues and decisions also strongly influence the daily lives of people. This does however still not mean that all ethno-political issues and the ways people talk about it, are cast, understood or experienced and explained in ethnic terms. The recent protests against Jablanovic or the support of Vetëvendosje are two issues that are often eagerly explained as being inspired by ethnic and nationalist reasons by foreign journalists and political commentators. And at first glance any other explanation indeed seems to be naïve. Yet, taking by taking a closer look and paying attention to the ways people explain and experience certain situations and issues shows that often other, non-ethnic, motivations underlie political action or support. Ethno-political contestation is a real issue in Kosovo and dramatically influences the lives of Kosovars, but this does not mean all that matters to Kosovars is also ethnic.

\footnote{267} Besides feelings of national pride, many Albanians were convinced they would be given the victory and thus the points for the qualification and thus celebrated this.


Conclusion

As I write this conclusion, Pristina is recovering from yet another protest that ended in clouds of tear gas, stone throwing protesters and walls of baton swinging riot police. The protests that started at the end of January 2015 were sparked by the words of the ethnic Serb minister in the Kosovo government Jablanovic, who had called the members of an Albanian war victims organization 'savages' after they had blocked the way a group of Serbian pilgrims who wanted to celebrate Orthodox Christmas in the south Kosovo city of Gjakova. The international media were quick to report that ‘ethnic Albanians’ had protested violently to call for the resignation of the ‘ethnic Serb’ minister, who had insulted them by calling them ‘savages’. Ethnic tensions had flared up in Kosovo again, that was the message.

Nationalist politics and ethnic conflict have deeply influenced and scarred Kosovo. But understanding Kosovo and its recent history exclusively in ethnic terms is a misconception that not only blurs our understanding of Kosovo but also accepts the language of ethnic groups used by nationalists and reifies the power of ethnicity. Discussions of ethnicity in Kosovo and ethnicity in general often (over-)emphasize the political and historical roots of so-called ethnic conflict. Most discussions of ethnicity, both by scholars and others such as journalists, see (ethnic) groups as the main protagonists of conflict and the fundamental units of analysis and have focused on either the inherent power of ethnicity as the most basic and strong social ties or on the potential of ethnic ties to be utilized and manipulated by nationalists and 'ethno-entrepreneurs'.

But while ethnicity is indeed powerful, it is not the only perspective through which people understand and explain the world. Nor is it necessarily as central to people's lives as the ubiquitous nationalist symbols, nationalist rhetoric and even 'ethnic' violence might do expect. Group loyalties such as nationalism and ethnic identification have indeed been manipulated and mobilized by nationalist politicians and ethno-entrepreneurs, but this does not mean that ethnicity is the cause of ethnic conflict or that ethnicity is the main perspective through which ordinary people make sense of their daily lives. This study of everyday ethnicity in Kosovo has challenged these overethnicized interpretations of Kosovo. Instead of assuming the salience of ethnicity in Kosovo, it has sought to discover and describe when, where and how ethnicity becomes significant and salient to ordinary people in their everyday lives.

This effort to understand the workings of ethnicity in Kosovo is informed by a central understanding of ethnicity. This perspective understands ethnicity not as 'a thing, an attribute or a distinct sphere of life', but as 'a way of understanding and interpreting experience, a way of talking and acting, a way of formulating interests and identities.'\textsuperscript{269} And while ethnicity is an incredibly important perspective through which Kosovars interpret and understand their lives and the world around them, it is never the only interpretative perspective. 'If one goes out to look for ethnicity, one will surely find it and thereby contribute to constructing it', wrote Thomas Eriksen.\textsuperscript{270}

Taking that warning seriously, this

\textsuperscript{269} Brubaker et al. Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town, 358.
\textsuperscript{270} Eriksen, Ethnicity and Nationalism, 161.
study has sought to examine ethnicity in Kosovo in the context of ‘that which is not ethnic’ and show the everyday experiences, enactments and embodiments of ethnicity by ordinary Kosovars in their daily lives.

In order to answer the question of how, when and where ethnicity works in Kosovo, this study has looked at the many and multifarious forms in and through which ethnicity ‘happens’ in the lives of Kosovars. Looking at the more inconspicuous forms of ethnicity that are found in the daily lives of people, the research has focused on how ethnicity is expressed and enacted in the ways people talk and dress, where they shop, what schools they go to and why, who their friends are and how they communicate with people with a different language or ethnicity, and so on. In doing so this research follows the idea of Eric Hobsbawm that nationalism is a ‘dual phenomenon’ that is ‘constructed essentially from above’, but ‘cannot be understood unless also analyzed from below, that is in terms of the assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary people’, most of which, Hobsbawm reminds the reader, ‘are not necessarily national, and still less nationalist’.271 It is this ‘view from below’ that this study has taken in studying ethnicity in Kosovo. This perspective can provide an important corrective to the assumed centrality of ethnicity and nationalist politics to the ordinary lives of Kosovars, and instead focus on the experiential centrality of ethnicity to their lives. It allows us to see when and how ethnicity is experienced and enacted, when it influences people’s choices and shapes the ways they act and perceive others. It allows us to see that ethnicity matters to the lives of ordinary people, but also that very often ethnicity does not take up a central part in the experience of their lives, even in a setting that where ethnicity is so deeply rooted and as marked by ethno-political conflict as Kosovo.

This research has been inspired and informed by a research of Rogers Brubaker into everyday ethnicity and nationalist politics in Cluj, Romania.272 In this study Brubaker and his colleagues have examined how ethnicity in Cluj is politically constructed from above and experienced and enacted from below, arguing that there is an important disjuncture between the two that deserves to be highlighted. In doing so they have presented a case study of how ethnicity works in everyday life Cluj on the basis of extensive and exhaustive field research over the period of a decade. While their study has inspired this research, Brubaker’s theory that has informed their work has been of even greater importance.

The basic idea in this theory is that most research on ethnicity tends ‘to take internally homogeneous and externally bounded groups – here ethnic groups – for granted as basic constituents of the social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts, and fundamental units of social analysis.’273 Brubaker sees this as a crucial flaw in the research on ethnicity, as it understands the social world and ethnic groups in a substantialist manner that is so characteristic for the nationalists and nationalism the research intended to put under scrutiny. So instead of using such substantialist and ‘groupist’ understandings of ethnicity, Brubaker proposes to focus on categories instead of on groups. In doing so he develops further the ideas of Richard Jenkins who wrote that: ‘Human society is best seen as an

271 Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalism since 1780, 10-11.
273 Ibid., 7.
ongoing and overlapping kaleidoscope of "group-ness", rather than a "plural" system of separate groups.\textsuperscript{274}

When groups are often understood as a ‘mutually interacting, mutually recognizing, mutually oriented, effectively communicating, bounded collectivity with a sense of solidarity, corporate identity and capacity for concerted action’, categories are at most a potential for group-ness and group formation. Categories can be ethnic, as ‘Albanian’ and ‘Serbian’ are categories, but ‘man’ and ‘woman’, ‘urban’ and ‘rural’ and ‘Muslim’ and ‘Christian’ are also categories. Brubaker argues that taking ethnic groups leads to asking questions what groups want, how they think of themselves and how they act in relation to other groups. Starting with categories however leads to questions about processes and relations. It leads to questions what people do with ethnic and other categories and how these categories shape the perception of the social world, social interaction and the experience of daily lives. It is this approach that has led to the central question of this study of how, why and in what situations Kosovars do or do not use ethnic categories to ‘make sense of problems and predicaments, to articulate affinities and affiliations, to identify commonalities and connections and to frame stories and self-understanding.’\textsuperscript{275}

The first chapter of this study forms the theoretical framework in which some of the main theories on ethnicity are discussed and Brubaker’s theory is introduced as a theoretical innovation to the field. Chapter two sketched the contours and contexts of Kosovo and paid attention to the main ethno-political claims and myths that are important to understand Kosovo today and in the past. The third and last chapter is the case study and analysis and it is this chapter forms the core of the research in which the question of where, when and how ethnicity works in everyday Kosovo is examined and specified.

The case study of the many forms of ethnicity in everyday Kosovo has been theoretically informed by Brubaker and supported empirically by data generated through interviews and ethnographic observation during field research conducted between February and June 2014. This case study has sought to gain understanding of ethnicity in practice in Kosovo through observing and analyzing everyday interaction, as embodied, enacted and experienced by Kosovars. The case study has focused on roughly the past thirty years in which generally there are three different periods to be distinguished. A Yugoslav period in which the Albanians were minority but well integrated into the Yugoslav society, the 1990s, during which segregation and tension between Albanians and Serbians grew and a post-war period in which Serbs live segregated from the Albanians in Serbian enclaves across Kosovo.

The war and the segregation that have occurred in Kosovo make it a very different setting than the one studied by Brubaker in Cluj. When Brubaker has investigated a setting where despite of sustained and highly charged ethno-political conflict, large-scale violence or war has never occurred and where the citizen’s response to heated nationalist rhetoric was rather tepid. One of his main outcomes was that much nominal interethnic interaction is not experientially ethnic, and that this finding should inform research on ethnicity, instead of assuming the centrality of ethnicity to experience.\textsuperscript{276}

\textsuperscript{274} Jenkins, \textit{Rethinking Ethnicity}, 51 and Duijzings, \textit{Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo}, 207.
\textsuperscript{275} Brubaker et al. \textit{Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town}, 12.
\textsuperscript{276} Ibid., 363.
Recognizing the potential of Brubaker’s approach, it has been the aim of this study to take this approach and this knowledge to a setting even more challenging than Cluj: Kosovo. Because, if anywhere, ethnicity must surely be central to the lives of Kosovars? With the end of an ethnic war just fifteen years ago and ongoing tensions and segregation, Kosovo has been a challenging and unlikely setting to examine through a non-groupist perspective. And while the research has been preliminary and of humble scale, the approach has proven to be fruitful. Because even in the unlikely setting of Kosovo, where ethnicity has drastically and dramatically effected the lives of thousands of people and still has great effect on the country today, ethnicity is not always and not necessarily central to people’s daily lives or how people explain and experience the world around them. Ethnicity ‘happens’ in Kosovo, but it has been the core of this research to examine and show when, where and how it happens, and when, where and how it does not happen.

In having done so, this study has contributed to correcting overethnicized accounts of Kosovo. Analyzing a wide array of different forms in and through which ethnicity works, it has been found that while ethnicity is pervasive and important in Kosovo, it is not everywhere and not always relevant for people’s daily lives. And even when ethnicity is present, it is not always experienced as such or affecting the way people act.

Ethnicity is, in the sense that people identify themselves with an ethnic group or rather category and categorize other people as such. But ethnicity also ‘happens’. Because when people are Serbian or Albanian, this does not mean that people are always aware of it, in their daily lives. Ethnicity happens when people become aware and experience the ethnicity of themselves and the other. This study has shown many moments when this happens. It happens when people encounter a stranger, and by recognizing a stranger as belonging to a different category, by the way they speak or the way they dress. It happens when suddenly someone is forced to speak a language that is not his own, or when he is confronted with a national celebration of that other group. Ethnicity happens in interactions with people of a different ethnicity, or with when people of the same group make it salient, by naming it or policing the preservation of a group culture. Ethnicity can happen numerous times a day in Kosovo, through a myriad of forms and shapes, and in the moments when ethnicity happens, it gains salience for the people experiencing it.

Understanding that ethnicity only happens intermittently, this research has examined the processes and dynamics that shape the experience of ethnicity and make it salient one moment, and not at the next. One of the main influences on the dynamics of ethnicity is asymmetry. When ethnic categories such as Albanian and Serbian are seemingly equal, in practice they are not. Asymmetries between categories make that the minority category is marked, not taken for granted, and someone belonging to the minority category is therefore more likely to become aware of his or her ethnicity. Members of a dominant group are much less likely to experience their ethnicity, as they are far less often confronted with reminders of their ethnicity (e.g. by meeting strangers of a different group or being forced to speak a different language) and their ethnicity thus gains salience less often than with members of the minority group who experience this on a daily basis. In other words, due to this asymmetry ethnicity is much more central to the lives of minority group members than it is to those belonging to the majority.
This study has shown many instances of how people belonging to a minority group experience ethnicity in a certain interaction or setting. Today the Kosovo Serbs are the minority group in Kosovo. Yet this has not always been the case, as in Yugoslavia they were the majority group. When Brubaker has pointed out the importance of asymmetry to the experience of ethnicity, he has said nothing of shifting asymmetries. This study has found the shifting asymmetries between Albanians and Serbs, which happened a few times over the course of the past decades, to be a crucial and unique characteristic of ethnicity in Kosovo. Contrary to Cluj, where the ethnic asymmetries have remained the same for at least the past seventy years, the balance between the two ethnic groups in Kosovo has been in constant flux, a dynamic that affects the experience of ethnicity in Kosovo greatly. This study has merely scratched the surface of this dynamic, showing some of the processes in and through which these asymmetries have changed and how they affected interaction and the experience and salience of ethnicity for Kosovars, but more research on the effect of shifting asymmetries on the experience and salience of ethnicity and the processes of groupness should be conducted. What is clear is that this dynamic has become visible by taking a perspective that looks at categories, processes and experience, rather than groups, claims and substance.

Another feature of ethnicity in Kosovo highlighted in this research is that when ethnicity is an important and strong perspective through which people understand and explain the world, it is never the only perspective they use. Overethnicized accounts focus and find it everywhere, obscuring other categories important to people. This study has shown that in the daily lives of people other categories, such as regional, religious and moral categories often overlap, obscure or cut across ethnic categories. This happens when Kosovars categorize people into urbanites or villagers, in Muslims or Christians, or good and bad people. And when these categories can overlap each other, for example in that most Serbs are Christians, and most Albanians are Muslim, this does not need to be, as exemplified in the case of Maria, an Albanian Protestant. Or when Nemanja complains about uncivilized Albanians, but actually meaning the ‘villagers’ most of the urban Albanians complain just as much about. Certain categories are relevant and salient at some moments and some days and insignificant the next, depending on many different circumstances. This is the case in Kosovo, in Cluj, and most likely everywhere. To understand the people of Kosovo, the situation in Kosovo and the ways in which ethnicity works and does not work, it is crucial to look beyond ethnic groups and look at the ‘kaleidoscope of group-ness’ instead.

And even when ethnicity matters a great deal to the lives of Kosovars and when it has influenced their lives dramatically, this does not mean that ethnicity is experienced often in people’s daily lives, or that they frame their cares and concerns in ethnic terms. One reason for this in Kosovo today, is that, paradoxically, due to the deep segregation ethnicity is experienced less. It has been one of the efforts of this study to show how, when and where ethnicity happens, and as mentioned, ethnicity happens in moments when ethnicity is experienced through interaction and reminders. It is exactly the existence of separate ethnic worlds in which ethnicity becomes unmarked and taken-for-granted and the lack of interaction between the two groups that makes that ethnicity is not experienced on a daily basis and therefore not taking up a central place in the ways people live their daily lives.
This might be one of the reasons that this study has found that even when ethno-political tension is all around, Kosovars rarely frame their everyday cares and concerns in ethnic terms. Problems in Kosovo are abundant and many people struggle to get by. These problems may or may not be (in part) caused by conflict often associated with ethnicity, most people I have talked to do not cast these problems in terms of ethnicity, but rather blame, and this is the same for both Albanians and Serbs, the widespread corruption, the incompetence of politicians and the fact that they only work to serve their own interests. Divisions between ‘us and them’ are constantly made, but instead of being ethnic, these are often between politicians and normal people, between morally good people and malicious profiteers or between urbanites and villagers. And even when Kosovars support seemingly nationalist causes, the main motivation for this support often proved to be rooted in other causes than nationalism and ethnicity.

This study of everyday ethnicity in Kosovo has sought to gain understanding of how ethnicity works, and to examine and show, how, when and where ethnicity happens in Kosovo. The research has given an account of the dynamics and processes in which ethnicity does or does not happen in the daily lives of Kosovars over the course of the past thirty years. It has found that ethnicity can indeed be important to the ways experience and understand the world around them, but that this is not always, not easily, and not automatically the case. When this seems to be stating the obvious, given the many overethnicized accounts of ethnicity in Kosovo and elsewhere, I argue it does not. This study has challenged exactly this tendency by scholars and journalists to focus on the power of ethnic identities and groups. The tendency to explain conflicts and other events as caused by ancient conflicts between ethnic groups or caused by clever ethno-entrepreneurs mobilizing the dormant hatreds between different ethnicities. This research has shown that while ethnic ties are indeed powerful and that they can and have been mobilized, there is a large disjunction between the use of ethnicity on the political level and the experience, enactment and salience of ethnicity to the everyday lives of people. This does not mean that ethnicity does not matter, but that it matters in different ways in different places and on different moments than overethnicized accounts make us believe.

The insights of this study can carry significance not only for scholarly studies of ethnicity, but also for policies of local and international organizations concerning reconciliation and minority rights. Most policies today are still informed by assumptions of ethnicity being the cause of conflict and overemphasize ethnicity’s significance to people’s lives, disregarding the waxing and waning of groupness and the importance of other categories, and thereby, instead of countering or correcting essentialist and nationalist perspectives of bounded groups, they often reinforce them.277 Or in the words of the writer of the book The Myth of Ethnic War, Chip Gagnon:

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277 Much more could and should be said on this behalf, but this conclusion is not the place for that. A more elaborate account of the risks of the assumption of ethnicity as the cause of violence can be found in the work of Chip Gagnon and Lars-Erik Cederman. See V.P. Gagnon, The Myth of Ethnic War, 197-200 and Lars-Erik Cederman, ‘Nationalism and Ethnicity in International Relations’, Handbook of International Relations, eds. Simmons, Risse-Knappen and Carlsnaes. 531-554. Rogers Brubaker also touches upon this subject in the epilogue of his work on Cluj. Brubaker, Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town, 365-373.
The dominant approaches to ethnic conflict thus see ethnicity itself as the main cause of war. The solutions they put forward thus focus on ethnic difference, calling for the removal of ethnic differences and the creation of ethnically pure states, or at best ethnically defined states with “minority” rights for others. But what if ethnicity and ethnic pluralism is not the cause of violence? What are the effects and costs of constructing ethnically pure territories in formerly plural communities? Do such moves lead to stability, or are they, by ignoring the actual causes of the violence, in fact reinforcing those factors, a recipe for instability?278

This is a profound question, with possibly serious implications. I believe that the perspective taken in this study has proven to be fruitful in its aims and that studying the workings of ethnicity through a non-groupist approach can provide crucial correctives to overethnicized accounts and our understanding of ethnicity, even, or perhaps especially, in a setting like Kosovo.

Note on data

The data on which the analysis of this research is based was collected between July 2011 and June 2014. The bulk of the field research is conducted in the period between February to June 2014, but is supplemented by experiences and observations from three earlier visits to Kosovo. My first stay in Kosovo was in the year 2011 and was my introduction to the country. It was a short visit of a couple of days as part of a longer trip on the Balkans, but it triggered my interest and provided me with my first contacts and questions that would later lead to this research. The second stay in Kosovo was a two-month internship with the NGO ‘Serve the Silenced’ during the summer months of 2012. Working for this NGO that was concerned with minority rights I lived in Pristina and travelled the country, meeting people from many different minorities and organizations and getting a general image of the country and its society.

I returned to Kosovo in the fall of 2013 for a couple of months to work as an intern for a local think-tank called Democracy 4 Development Institute as part of my graduate program Modern History and International Relations. While I worked and lived in Kosovo, I took the opportunity to get better acquainted with the country and prepare for this research as by then I already knew my thesis would be on everyday ethnicity in Kosovo. In these months I took Albanian classes, travelled the country as much as I could and established a network in Pristina and Gračanica. The decision was made to learn to speak Albanian and not Serbian. The reason for this was that, one, I had to chose one, as learning two new languages at the same time would have not been productive, and second, my network was mostly Albanian, the majority of people in Kosovo are Albanian and not many foreigners speak the Albanian language – whereas many more speak Serbo-Croatian – making the skill both an attractive and necessary one.

Learning the language did not prove easy, and during these months I only reached a very limited proficiency, enough to get around with and have superficial conversations in supermarkets, in restaurants and on the street, but sadly not nearly enough to interview people. I however got a much better sense of what life in Kosovo was like, what kind of problems people faced and what was important to them. These three stays have given me the opportunity to get to know many people, a valuable network that helped me incredibly during my research. Besides contacts, these stays provided me with observations, often recorded in notes, which gave the context for my interest in Kosovo and have acted as supplementary data for this work. These understandings greatly informed this research. In February 2014 I returned to Kosovo once more, this time to concentrate exclusively on the field research for this thesis. The data is drawn mainly from formal interviews and ethnographic observation.

The field research consisted first and foremost of formal and recorded interviews. These formal interviews are however complemented with a substantial amount of informal, unrecorded interviews that were held with friends, acquaintances and strangers. While most of the formal interviews were with single subjects, these informal interviews often involved more people. These conversations and informal interviews were not recorded but notes were sometimes taken on the spot and the conversation was always recollected and
recorded in field notes that were taken (almost) every evening. These field notes proved a rich source of information, especially regarding the everyday problems and predicaments of people, political issues and certain interactional details that would not easily come up in formal interviews. The notes were complimented by elaborate journal entries. This journal writing was attempt to take a step back from the intensity of daily investigations and to reflect on personal feelings and experiences, as well as to take a critical look at my own position during this research. It provided some welcomed checks and balances that made me reconsider my approach a couple of times.

In total eighteen formal interviews have been conducted, involving twenty-one persons. Most of these interviews were with a single subject, but three of the interviews were with two people. Four of these interviewees were Serb, two of them Albanian-Serb, one Albanian-Bosniak, one Gorani, one Albanian from Albania and the rest were Kosovo Albanians. Fourteen of them were men and thus seven were women. These formal interviews usually lasted somewhere between one and three hours, but some lasted longer or consisted of two or more sessions. All of the names of interviewees that have been quoted or described in the text are anonymized and changed and potentially identifying details have been left out.

All interviews were open-ended, only sometimes informed by a wish to gain some more specific knowledge about a certain period or topic. In line with the framework of this research and the awareness that ethnicity is all too easy to find if we look for it, care was taken not to impose my interest into ethnicity onto the interviewees. This was done by avoiding to introduce the research as an investigation into ethnicity and by emphasizing the life story aspects and the interest in the everyday lives of people in Pristina and Gračanica. Asking about everyday problems and predicaments, institutions such as schools and churches, the neighborhood in the past and present lead to loads of crucial information about everyday life in Kosovo today and in the past. When however ethnicity arose the opportunity would be taken to follow up on this in more detail. And while ethnicity, as we have seen, does not necessarily play a central role in any of the everyday lives, there was opportunity enough to engage with ethnicity as it often arose, especially talking about the 1990s for the Albanians or the present for the Serbs.

Interview subjects were selected through snowball sampling. The diverse network I had established during previous visits to Kosovo functioned as my starting point. The interviews centered on Pristina and many subjects were born and raised in the city. However, as Pristina is the capital of the country and many people have migrated to the city, a significant part of the subjects have been either born or grown up outside the city and have moved later on. On the other hand, some of the Serbs that were interviewed are from Pristina by birth, but were forced to move to Gračanica in the wake of the war. The reason to include Gračanica was inspired by the fact that most Serbs have left Pristina and now live in this village nearby. The majority of the subjects of the formal interviews were between the ages of twenty and forty. The informal interviews however included a lot more people that were either younger than twenty or older than forty. Some of these contacts were strangers that I just met once or twice, with others however I developed sustained

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280 Many of these older people were parents of friends or acquaintances, with whom I could sometimes speak directly, or through the translations of their son or daughter.
relationships and friendships, which led to unique insights into their personal lives, the perspectives they took on the world and the problems they faced.

Sometimes friendships with subjects of the field research are viewed with suspicion, as it would influence the researcher's objectivity. While it surely is true that getting to know people and their stories is of influence of someone's perspective, I believe that first, this is always the case with ethnographic, anthropological and oral historical research and that this cannot and need not to be avoided as long as the researcher is open and honest about his relation to his subjects and makes sure to critically assess the selection of subjects and portrayal of their stories. Besides that, it would have been impossible to gain understanding of people's everyday lives without getting close to them, and developing sustained relationships with people. The data of generated in the field research has been processed and interpreted in ways common to anthropology and oral history. The data and the interpretations of the data make no claim to objectivity or universal or specific truths, but have been gathered and used with care and the greatest academic ethics and attempt to provide a sketch of everyday life in Kosovo and understand the experiences of people and are used and portrayed as such.

A major handicap regarding the selection of my subjects, and to the field research at large, was my confinement to the English language. As my Albanian was by far not good enough, the interviews had to be conducted in English and the interviewees thus had to speak English. There were no funds available to pay for possible translators, but even if funds would have been available, it was important to me to conduct all the interviews myself, and to transcribe and code them myself in order to experience and control the whole process from start to end. Luckily, English is widely spoken in Kosovo. Especially amongst young people, but also some older people speak English perfectly (although the level of proficiency of course fluctuates strongly, also amongst my subjects). The widespread presence of English speakers has much to do with the international influence in Kosovo, caused by the large presence of internationals in the country, but also due to the fact that many people have lived and worked abroad and have family that live in other countries. Some have learned English at an early age in refugee camps or in contact with KFOR soldiers, but of course the majority of the people have learned it through English language education and English language media.

Being limited to English did however restrict this research. While I believe that the data here is still selected from as broad a section of the population of Pristina as was possible, highly educated people are clearly overrepresented, as well are young people. It proved especially hard to find English speakers among the Serbs in Gračanica and among the older generations. While these limitations are real and do impact the results of this research, the nature of this preliminary research I believe the research provides a good explorative insight into the workings of ethnicity in Kosovo. This research is a first investigation into the workings of everyday ethnicity in Kosovo and an invitation to conduct further field research that does include interviews in native languages and includes a broader section of the population in order to gain more detailed knowledge of how, where and when ethnicity works.

The recorded data form the backbone of this research, yet the analysis could not have been done without the ethnographic observations. The line between informal
interviews and ethnographic observation is thin as formal interviews blend into informal interviews and conversations into ethnographic observations. With ethnographic observation encompasses everything from conversations and small talk, to the brief encounters with people in cafés, the supermarkets and on the street or the observation of groups of people in public places. Ethnographic observation includes practically all information that falls outside the structured lines of interviewing, and often provided essential or missing information about this or that, or surprising insights or new perspectives on an issue. The ethnographic observations recorded in jot notes and field notes, provide a framework to the interpretation of what people told me in interviews and conversations. Without these there it is very hard to assess what people tell you or put it into context. These observations were taken wherever I would go, and range from Sundays with the hiking group, to conferences, hanging out on the streets, to late nights and early mornings in bars. But they also include visits to families’ houses on national holidays, celebrating religious holidays and other special occasions with people, visiting government officials and party members. During my stays in Kosovo, and also when I was not in the country, I did my best to stay informed about the recent news, read local newspapers and watch local television. On occasion I would discuss my observations with a couple of close friends from Kosovo, who would supplement and check my findings.

All of the formal interviews have been transcribed by me, and are in English. After the transcription I coded the interviews. For this I did not use coding software nor an elaborate coding scheme, but a pragmatic method of ordering my data for personal use. A sophisticated coding scheme would perhaps organized the data in a more coherent way but given the scale of this research, the relatively small amount of interviews and the aims of the research this I belief that the chosen method functioned well for my purposes. The body of data includes the recordings, transcripts, coded transcripts, field notes, jot notes and journal entries, and is stored in a several different places in order to not lose anything.


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