Youth & Diversity in Europe

Our Future – European Union 2012
Serbia, Kosovo and The Netherlands

Multiculturality
Youth Political Participation
Gender in a European Perspective

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Acknowledgments

The genesis of this publication has several milestones starting with a workshop in Pristina in March 2012, where students from Kosovo, Serbia and The Netherlands met for the first time. During this training, they agreed on the subjects and the methods of their researches to be conducted.

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In the following months (April till October 2012), we went through a collaborative research process by using and experimenting with online tools, by learning and overcoming the challenges of our diverse backgrounds (academic, social, cultural and historic), by comparing different experiences and by developing mutual understanding and common ground. Many people have accompanied us in this research journey and we would like to thank them for the combination of inspiration, good advice, steering and support.

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There can be no meaningful integration in Europe without a constant self-reflection, discussion and critical thinking. We hope that our effort, and as a result this publication, speaks for itself and can function as a bridge between worlds as well as contribute to future discussions on the gender equality, multiculturalism and the political participation of youth in Europe.

OFEU 2012 TEAM

Foreword

Our Future – European Integration (OFEI) used to be an exchange program and network of youngsters from Serbia, Kosovo and the Netherlands, that ran from 2003 until 2010 and aimed at raising mutual awareness and intercultural understanding. In 2011, we built on the experience of this project as international exchange network and developed an international exchange and collaborative research project. The project team consists of the NGOs Fractal (Serbia), Integra (Kosovo) and a group of alumni of the OFEI project from the Netherlands (OFN – the Netherlands)[1].

We have selected three fields of research that closely relate to the issues discussed during the previous years: Multiculturalism, Gender Equality and Youth Political Participation. In this publication we proudly present the three reports that the participants have written on the basis of their research and exploration of these topics.

The first field, multiculturalism, refers to an exchange of views between people from different nations that are represented in the project. The wider question the research group investigated is how people from different backgrounds live together in their societies, and in the context of the wider European community. The case studies in this field include: the case of Novi Pazar as a multiethnic community in the southwest of Serbia; the way multiculturalism as an ideology is to some extent forced on the cultural heritage of the Kosovo city of Prizren; the relevance of an overarching European identity; and finally, a hotline set up by a Dutch right wing political party that targets Eastern European migrants and asks Dutch people to report their misbehaving.

The second topic deals with youth political participation. Widely regarded as a fundamental political process, as youths necessarily are the future leaders of every country, the practice of youth political participation is

1 In the past peacebuilding organization from the Netherlands, IKV Pax Christi, acted as a third, EU based partner. In 2011, this role has been taken over by a group of former participants of the project from the Netherlands.

also seen as "too low" in Kosovo, Serbia and the Netherlands. One reason to believe in a downward trend in youth political participation is that all three countries have rich and recent histories with large demonstrations and other forms of youth activism. But is the youth of today in Kosovo, Serbia and the Netherlands less involved with politics, or did something else change? The participants in this field have therefore set out to investigate this problem, by interviewing former youth activists, and examining what sort of possibilities and motivations the youths of today have to be active in politics, or not.

By considering different historic, social and global processes of redefining the position of women and men, the third topic explores variations in gendered experiences and opportunities in Kosovo, Serbia and the Netherlands. The efforts to promote and achieve gender equality are filled with difficulties and challenges even in societies that have highly developed democratic systems and institutions such as the Netherlands. These challenges are even more obvious and dramatic in post-conflict and transitional societies, like Serbia and Kosovo. Engaged in a collective and self-reflective effort, the research team examined deeply rooted gender stereotypes and questioned if the ways we have organized our societies is failing to bring ideals of fairness and equal opportunities for men and women. Following from their research experience, the team furthermore stresses the importance of critical reflection as well as individual and collective responsibility in bringing change.

The methodology of the project has three main components: research journalism, online collaboration and intercultural exchange. With regard to the first component, we combined the approach of journalism with that of more traditional social science. That means that formulation of research questions followed from scientific methods. At the same time, training on journalist methods was included in the program, highlighting ways how to do interviews and engage your audience. Combining

journalism with social sciences was also an important factor in the selection of participants. They come from different disciplines in the social sciences, and about half of them have experience with journalism.

The second component is international online collaboration. We used online open-source platforms, most notably Skype, Google-docs, Wordle and Wordpress to facilitate the research process. Documents were shared and worked on together and Skype-meetings were frequently scheduled to keep each other up to date, discuss the research process and keep the team spirit high. We have set up a central blog on Wordpress, http://ourfutureeu.wordpress.com, for the exchange between the research groups, to inform a wider public about our activities and research findings, and to promote the third component.

The third component is intercultural exchange. There are several barriers when working online with people from different countries. There was a language barrier as we worked in English, not the mother tongue to any one involved in the project. Translating therefore took a lot of effort from both the participants and the organization team. Then there are the differences in experiences and backgrounds, which made finding a common ground both a challenge and a fascinating adventure. Not just the differences, but also important similarities between the cultures of Kosovo, Serbia and the Netherlands are in fact the subject of analysis and discussion in the research reports.

The aim of this publication as a whole is to raise awareness about the situation and problems that exist in the three areas of study in Kosovo, Serbia and The Netherlands. It is difficult to imagine the problems the Dutch multicultural society suffers from, when you picture the Netherlands as a utopian eternally prosperous island in the West. Neither is it self-evident that Dutch people understand the lack of opportunities youth in Serbia and Kosovo has in order to build up a living and participate in politics. Or how in three societies with distinct cultural traditions and social contexts gender roles have been constructed and reproduced over the decades, shaping the current perspectives of how women and men relate to each other and share public and private space in different ways. These examples lack the necessary nuance to raise the awareness necessary to work towards European integration. We hope that this publication

provides this nuance and contributes to a wider understanding as well in Serbia as in the Netherlands and in Kosovo.

Our ambition to change the understanding of social problems surrounding Multiculturalism, Youth Political Participation and Gender Equality does not stop here. Also within the countries we are active, we aim to reach out to stakeholders in the fields we cover. The research reports presented in this publication signal social problems and show how the participants that collaborated in this project perceive these problems. The publication itself is an example of youth activism that aspires to change the way social problems of Multiculturalism, Youth Political Participation and Gender Equality are addressed in Serbia, Kosovo and the Netherlands. This project gives a voice to the youth of today and engages civil society to take a proactive role in solving the social problems within Europe. And all of this within the context of European integration: it promotes cooperation across borders and rising above cultural differences.

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The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the vision of NGO Fractal, NGO Integra, Our Future Network – The Netherlands, or of the donors.

How Society deals with Multiculturality

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General Introduction

This report is about the state of multiculturalism in Europe. Through a theoretical article on European identity, and case studies in Serbia, Kosovo, and the Netherlands, the report attempts to offer insights into the challenges cultural diversity and its management face – challenges in which the European Union has become an increasingly important actor.

While cultural diversity is often discussed under the rubric of *multiculturalism*, we follow Brian Barry[1] in stressing that it is important to distinguish between *multiculturality* – which is descriptive and refers to the "fact" of cultural diversity – and *multiculturalism* – an ideology that propagates the desirability of multiple cultures coexisting without losing their distinctiveness. The term multiculturalism has historically been used to denote both of these meanings, but has increasingly come to stand for the normative ideological concept. Our case studies are more focused on multiculturality than multiculturalism.

Given the current political situation in Europe, that should not come as a surprise: recently, European leaders like Merkel (late 2010), and Cameron and Sarkozy (early 2011) declared multiculturalism a failed project. Dutch

1 Lisbeth Aggestam and Christopher Hill (2008) 'The Challenge Of Multiculturalism In European Foreign Policy', International Affairs 84(1), pp. 98.

prime minister at the time, Mark Rutte, echoed their statements by referring to multiculturalism as a "buried experiment".

Despite this dire position in which multiculturalist ideals currently find themselves in the EU, aspiring new member states – at present most notably several countries of the former Yugoslavia – face stringent demands to adopt multicultural policies. These demands are part of top-down reforms that are to prepare states like Serbia and Kosovo for EU membership. Policies regarding diversity in many of the existing member states, on the other hand, are largely the result of bottom-up processes, and in many ways remain internal affairs.

As such policy-making processes in existing EU member states stand in stark contrast with the top-down manner in which they are to be implemented in potential new member states like Serbia and Kosovo. Whether top-down implemented multicultural policies are more heavily contested is an open question, however, to which we will allow readers to formulate their own answers. Our case studies suggest that the regulation of multiculturality at present is considered problematic around the continent. For our future Europe to be livable for its diverse inhabitants, a lot of work is certainly to be done still.

Research Paper – Wouter Le Febre

Getting Together

Introduction

Ever since the start of the process of European integration, the idea of a European identity has become more relevant over time. That is not strange, since the institutions of the EU are becoming more supranational as their role in politics increases and thereby their role in the lives of people. On one side it is 'deeper' integration that raises the question whether there is a European identity. On the other hand it is the increased multiculturality within the EU. We speak of multiculturality, as opposed to multiculturalism, because it refers to the existence of multicultural diversity. It has nothing to do with how a society (or the EU in this case) deals with that diversity, it just means that diversity is present.[2]

This question of a European identity is more difficult than it seems at first glance, because a yes or a no will not suffice. Instead, this question invites to explore the debate regarding a European identity. The goal of this short study is not to provide a fulfilling answer to the question, because that is not possible in a study of this size. Instead this study will explore the basic ideas of a European identity and suggest to what use they can be. In order to do this it is necessary to ask ourselves what this identity could look like and how it could emerge. Can it replace a national identity or does it work differently? How does it deal with the multiculturality and what can a European identity mean for the EU or countries that are looking for ascension to the EU? These are the questions that will be covered in this short study. It is impossible to showcase the whole theoretical debate regarding the question, so this study has a more basic approach, so it is well understandable how it works.

The term 'European identity' suggests that it is something that would, in concept, apply to all Europeans. That is not entirely true, since it is usually confined to the EU when people talk about or do research on the matter. Although this may appear unusual ("Why can't people in other countries

2 Lisbeth Aggestam and Christopher Hill (2008) 'The Challenge Of Multiculturalism In European Foreign Policy', International Affairs 84(1), pp. 98.

feel European as well?") it is understandable because member states of the EU are somewhat politically bound to each other through supranational institutions, while countries outside the EU are not. This forms the basis for a collective identity on a European scale. People within the EU have something in common with each other that they don't have with people outside of it. That is exactly how identity works. As Dutch historian Niek van Sas put it: identity is defined in what is 'your own' and what is 'alien'. You cannot express your identity without expressing what is not your identity, for it would be meaningless if you did not.[3] Besides that it is important to note that with the 'emergence of a European identity' I do not imply the 'creation of a European identity'. This study takes the concept as an analytical notion and is not about some sort of abstract European profile that all Europeans will have to eventually fit into.

Because the process of European integration is an ongoing one, its final form, if there even is one, is still undecided. That leads to a problem in the emergence of a European identity, because to feel European, you have to be a proponent of European integration. Identifying with something that you do not agree with is unlikely. Instead, you will identify with others who do not agree with European integration as well. Besides that, even among proponents there is a lot of discord on how the EU should look like. Try dropping the f-word (federalism that is) in a debate about the EU.

Opportunities to identify

Although there is no consensus of how the European integration should go further, there are possibilities to create more European solidarity. In the past we have seen several cases where identity was strengthened by the emergence of a common enemy. A good example of this is Germany during the Franco–German war in 1870–1871. Before the war Bismarck wanted to unite the deeply divided German states, but did not manage to until the outbreak of a war with France. This created a common enemy for the German state. At that point people from the German states realized they had more in common with each other than they initially thought, because they were opposing themselves from the French and found themselves at the same side of the bar. This was the beginning of

3 Niek van Sas (1996), Talen van het Vaderland, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, pp. 148.

the German nation and the creation of the German identity, which continued to be strengthened over time.

Does this mean the EU has to engage in a war to create a common enemy and then hope that people start to feel European? I think not. There already is a common enemy which we have to battle: The economic and financial crisis. Although this is a more or less global crisis, it has got the EU puzzled internally. It is true that there is once again a lot of division, but there also is a belief that we have to get out of this together. This is confirmed by the Eurobarometer report of autumn 2011, which shows that the most people think that the EU is the best way to get out of the crisis.[4] Creating solidarity through such a situation suggests that a European identity would have to emerge through shocks and bumps, but that is not the only way, as will appear later on in this study. Clear is that people do not identify with Europe in the first place as appears in a Eurobarometer report from 2008, which shows that 91% of the participants identified with their nation, opposed to a mere 49% that identified with Europe.

Different ways

A European identity can work in different ways. On one hand it could replace our national identity and people would feel European in the first place, rather than French, Romanian or Dutch. On the other hand it could be another layer of our identity. In that case one could feel French, Romanian or Dutch, but above that have a sense of belonging to a European community. The European layer, so to say, would look different than the national layer, because else they would be conflicting.

European instead of national

This would require the European Union to be unified on areas that are essential for identification. These areas could be, for example: culture, politics or certain values that are shared among members of the EU. This would make it logical for people to feel European, since most within the EU can identify with these areas. Politically, the EU is already a step forward in becoming unified: supranationalism. Though political unification

4 European Commission, 'Standard Barometer 76; Autumn 2011', Eurobarometer Autumn 2011, pp. 119.

is far from complete, supranationalism is a step in the direction of it. The European Commission and the European Parliament are important supranational institutions. They deal with the interests of Europe and not with the interests of specific member states. Members of supranational institutions can be from any country, but they are not representing their home country, as opposed to, for example, the intergovernmental United Nations, where states are represented individually.

It is hard, or impossible, to distinguish a European culture. This is also recognized by the EU as it recognizes and stimulates its rich cultural diversity. The EU's stance on this point is 'unity within diversity', so it would be difficult to see a European identity emerge out of a sense of cultural community. Even if there would have been a common culture in the EU at one point, an identity based on that could not last for long, because cultural diversity would (re)appear with the ascension of new member states.

In order for a European identity to emerge and replace national identities, it would have to emerge gradually. People must have the idea that they live in Europe, not in a specific country which is part of it. This is difficult to achieve, because it requires people to change their identity, their sense of belonging. It could work out over time perhaps, when people know no better than that the EU plays a big role in their lives and it is part of their 'world'. People today still see it as an institution far away from their daily lives which is slowly increasing its position in the political world of its member states. In this view we can say this 'option' is generation bound.

European *and* national

Instead of a European identity replacing our national identity, it is also possible that there would be a European layer of identity above the national layer. This is called 'civic'.[5] That means the European identity would be compatible with a national identity and, in fact, all European national identities. This idea complies with the idea of multiculturalism that cultural diversity is compatible with political cohesion and therefore does

5 Antonia M. Ruiz Jiménez, Jaroslaw Józef Górniak, Ankica Kosic, Paszkal Kiss, Maren Kandulla (2004) 'European and National Identities in EU's Old and New Member States', European Integration Online Papers 8, pp. 2.

not have to lead to conflict. As political scientist Andrew Heywood puts it, when discussing multiculturalism: 'Cultural diversity is seen to benefit society in just the same way that biodiversity benefits an ecosystem'.[6] What does this mean for a European identity, taking the multiculturality of the EU into account? It means that people still feel European, while acknowledging other cultural identities that exist under the big umbrella of the EU. This is also in compliance with the stance of the EU: Unity in diversity. It allows two appreciate the differences while still working together and perhaps feel connected.

Figure 1

This multi-layered idea of identity also leaves room for other levels of identity. This is important to take into account, because while we are speaking about national identities and a European identity, we must not forget that other levels, or layers, of identity also exist, such as regional and communal identities. You can see these layers as a concentric circle (see figure 1) which begins with the smallest entity, the individual, and ends with the largest entity you identify with. At this moment that is the national level, but perhaps a European layer could be placed on top of that. These layers exist while people identify with several of them. If that could work, why would a European identity have to replace a national identity? In order for this to work, the European layer of identity would consist out of different elements than the national layer (and the other layers), because else they would conflict. Values

What would this layer then consist of? It is hard to define something that is not quite clear yet, such as a European identity, but it is still possible to point out some areas which could make up the European layer of identity. As stated in article 6 of the Treaty of Maastricht (1992) the core values

6 Andrew Heywood (2007) Political Ideologies. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 321.

of the EU are liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and rule of law. It also states that these are common to the member states. According to the Eurobarometer report of autumn 2010, the values that matter the most to the interviewees are human rights (47%), peace (44%), and respect for human life (41%), democracy (29%), individual freedom (23%) and rule of law (22%). It is interesting that practically all core values are among the highest ranking values under the interviewees. Apparently, people in the EU find these the most important so that could form a basis for a common identity. This communitarian aspect would shape the identity based on shared values.

On the other hand a more cosmopolitan aspect could possibly fit in as well. Values as individual freedom could be considered universal. This universal approach would make people 'blind' to the differences between each other. It is to say that what is your own and what is alien is not even relevant for identification. It could be seen as a more absolute approach of 'unity within diversity'. The only problem that this raises is whether this cosmopolitan approach doesn't surpass the European level. The political aspect would then have to bind people as opposed to values.[7]

Values alone are not everything either. People need to have the feeling that they are part of the same entity. This can be done by high participation in democracy on a European scale. According to the latest Eurobarometer report on the matter of autumn 2011, 45% of the interviewees are satisfied with the way democracy works in the European Union against 43% that is not satisfied. The report also noted that the negative responses have been increasing over the years. That means less people are satisfied about the way democracy works in the EU. Talking with people around me about the European Union, most people said they did not feel European because they had the idea they had no say in the big thing. It may therefore be important that the EU plays a more visible role for the people to feel more European. This could be accomplished by having more referenda and showing the European citizens how they can have a say in this big game called the European Union.

7 Andrew Heywood (2007) Political Ideologies. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 326.

What is it good for?

Besides thinking about what a European identity could look like it is also interesting to see what it can be good for. Because of the increasing globalization and the emergence of problems that surpass national scale, such as environmental issues, it has become increasingly important for countries to cooperate on these issues. Global warming, for example, doesn't stop at the border so it will need to be dealt with on a greater scale than national. Of course, cooperation between European countries is what the EU is for, but a strong European identity could serve as a lubricant for this European engine. You probably feel more responsible for people with whom you identity with than for people that you do not. It is about the idea of getting somewhere together.

This also contributes to one of the goals that was one of the initial reasons to start the process of European integration: keeping the peace. So far, the EU has managed to accomplish this goal, since there have been no internal war since the European integration started in the late forties. Preventing (internal) war is also one of the main reasons that the EU has been actively stimulating the European identity in the past twenty years.[8] Preventing war is also an important prerequisite for further integration. Developing a strong European identity would also pave the way for further integration, because social cohesion that could (not necessarily would!) follow from the deeper European integration would be necessary to enlarge the role of the EU. This is because it would be hard to make decisions based on unanimity with the diversity that is within the EU.[9] Unanimity is actually required for decisions when a member state has indicated that vital interests are at stake. Besides that it would be desirable would be unanimous, since that would indicate all member states agree with it.

8 Geetha Garib (2011) 'Why Do We Feel European? Social Mechanisms of European Identity', Journal of Identity and Migration Studies 5, pp. 110.

9 Viktoria Kaina and Ireneusz P. Karolewski (2009), 'EU governance and European identity', Living Review in EU Governance 4, pp. 5.

Conclusion

We have seen that the European identity could basically work in two ways. It can either replace the national identity and therefore become the foremost thing people identify with, but it could also become just another layer above the existing layers. This last position seems to be the most realistic, since it takes other levels of identification into account, which is important. A European identity replacing a national identity would not simply have the last one disappear, unless all Europeans will share the same culture and all other characteristics that make up the national identity. On the other hand, a European identity that is 'just' another layer above existing layers makes it compatible with those layers. You could easily identify with your family, but as well with somebody from another EU member state. That would be possible because each layer consists out of different elements that are used to identify with. On a European scale that could perhaps be the core values of the EU, since the Eurobarometer poll shows that these are also the values that the interviewees ranked high.

If we ask ourselves if there is a European identity, we should take into consideration that more people identify with their nation than people identify with Europe. It is not like Europe is not on our minds apparently, since half of the interviewees can identify with Europe, but it also shows that the European identity is still in the making, if it is to emerge at some point. Whether it will emerge is something that no scientist can predict. One can only hope that it will, seeing that more and more issues are crossing national borders and call for a joint solution. The EU Is a good foundation to solve problems together. To do so, we will have to get together.

Research paper – Nenad Smiljkov

Novi Pazar: Between Multiculturalism and Politics

Introduction

According to the 2002 official Serbian Government census, in Serbia there were 1,135,393 persons belonging to national minorities. This represents 13.47% of the total population of Serbia. From this list we can see that in Serbia there are over 20 national minorities, which makes it a very heterogeneous ethnic and multicultural community.[10] After Milošević was removed from power in October 2000, a transition towards democracy was set in motion. The newly elected government began efforts for Serbia to join the UN, Council of Europe and other international organizations. Since then, the state is committed to democracy, the rule of law and the protection of national minorities according to the standards prescribed by various documents of the OSCE, Council of Europe and the European Union. Among the documents that Serbia signed are the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minority and the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages. These documents are the ones that define the minimum for the rights of national minorities. In the report: "Exercising the right to use their language and script of national minorities in the Republic of Serbia", the Ombudsman of Serbia said the Serbian legal system sets high standards for the official use of minority languages, but does not provide effective mechanisms to exercise that right. There are several laws that the government created to protect minority rights, some from the Ministry of Education, others from the Ministry of Minorities. The problem is that these laws are isolated from each other and not streamlined into a comprehensive policy to deal with multilingualism for example. Some standards are too ambitious and are

10 Data from the statement number 295, National Bureau of Statistics, Belgrade, 2003. Population by census of 2002 is as follows: Serbs (6,212,838), Montenegrins (69,049),Yugoslavs (80,721), Albanians (61,647), Bosniaks (136,087), Bulgarians (20,497), Bunjevci (20,012), Vlachs (40,054), Gorani (4581), Hungarians (293,299), Macedonians(25,847), Muslim (19,503), Germans (3,901), Roma (108,193), Russians (15 905), Slovaks (59 021), Slovenes (5104), Ukrainians (5354) , Croats (70,602), the Czechs (2211); Other (11,711), Undeclared (107,732), regional affiliation (11,485), Unknown (75,483). See: *http://www.scribd.com/doc/56717311/Popis-2002* (visited 1st of August 2012)

under existing social circumstance unrealistic. This further widens the gap between the normative and the actual situation. A significant weakness is the fact that the state was not built up in parallel or at least contributed to capacity-building for the implementation of the right to officially use minority languages.[11]

In this research paper, I try to answer the following crucial questions, through the case study of the Bosniak minority in Serbia. The main questions are: What are the main problems and difficulties people in multiethnic communities face? What kind of multicultural/minority policies have been implemented in Serbia and what results have been achieved?

In order to find out, I visited Novi Pazar, one of the many multicultural municipalities in Serbia, and I have interviewed representatives of the civil society, proactive youngsters and also I had informal chats with citizens. I did my first interview with Zibija Šarenkapić, executive director of the Culture Center DamaD, one of the biggest NGOs in Novi Pazar. I also interviewed Samid Šarenkapić, who works for the same NGO and I did interviews with youngsters: Lejla Hubić and Nedžad Mihović from the Inter-ethnic Youth Alliance. This Alliance is a non-formal group that promotes interethnic dialog and cooperation among young Bosniaks and Serbs. They believe that by reconnecting these communities, they can work together and resolve many of the issues and social problems these communities face. Finally, my research contains a review of potentially relevant reports done by for example the Serbian Ombudsman.[12]

Case study – Novi Pazar (Sandžak, Serbia)

The Sandžak is a region that extends along the border between Serbia and Montenegro. In the Serbian part there are 6 municipalities: Novi Pazar, Sjenica, Tutin, Prijepolje, Nova Varoš and Priboj, which are part of the so-called Raška region. This part of Serbia has the largest concentration of Bosniaks. From a total of 136,087 Bosniaks that live in Serbia,

11 Ombudsman (2010), 'Exercising the right to use their language and script of national minorities in the Republic of Serbia', Belgrade, pp 79. See: *http://www.pravamanjina.rs/attachments/izvestaj.pdf* (visited 5th of August 2012)

12 Serbian Ombudsman (2010), 'Exercising the right to use their language and script of national minorities in the Republic of Serbia.'

93,921 live in southwest Serbia.[13] The biggest city in this part of Serbia is Novi Pazar, with 65,593 Bosniaks who form an absolute majority in this city as well as in the towns of Tutin and Sjenica. Multiethnic living is a fact of life in this region, however local government is often more interested in polarizing communities to gain votes.

Polarization and Partial interests

"Partial interests prevail over the general interest. There is no consensus even over fundamental issues," Zibija Šarenkapić points out. Politicians in the Sandžak often use important issues to polarize the situation, everything is subordinate to their partial interests. At this point there are national, religious and political groups and their narrow interests. The existence and the prevalence of specific interests over the common interest is a serious problem. As a result, politicians are unable to reach consensus about the most elementary questions. For example, Novi Pazar is facing a serious water supply problem. Because of a lack of capacity in water supply, some parts of the city have to cope with water shortage for 12 hours per day or more during summer. Some villages even have no water for days.[14] There were a couple of examples where citizens tried to make blockades and protested, just because they had not even been able to arrange a meeting with representatives of the government. Every year during summer, when this problem reaches a boiling point, the media comes with the news about some protest in Novi Pazar. Unfortunately, every time a different part of the city comes up and fights for this problem alone. This problem with water supply is an excellent example of how Novi Pazar isn't able to reach consensus. A first reason is because different suburbs of the city are ethnically polarized, and second one is political polarization within both the Serbian and Bosniak's communities.

The real problem is in the ethnically profiled political parties. "The parties are again becoming polarized and admittedly ethnically homogeneous. This had already been the case before, but some change was introduced with the coalition between Democratic Party (Serb) and Social

13 Data from the statement number 295, National Bureau of Statistics, Belgrade, 2003.

14 *http://sandzakpress.net/partije-imaju-razlicita-resenja-za-problem-vodosnabdijevanja* (visited 24th of August 2012.)

Democratic Party (Bosniak) which contributed to the fact that the parties are not completely ethnically homogeneous," said Samid Šarenkapić. Actually in the previous government, the Democratic Party (leader of the previous government, 2008–2012) was in coalition with the Social Democratic Party. With this coalition, ethnical polarization was broken, but today, with the change of government and the formation of a new coalition of the Social Democratic Party and the Party of Democratic Action of Sandžak, local government in Novi Pazar takes a step back. Serbs are no longer represented in government and politicians again focus on the differences between the communities: enter polarization.

Party of Democratic Action of Sandžak and Social Democratic Party are two former rivals that are now politically aligned. These two parties are two of the biggest political parties of the Bosniak minority in Serbia. However these two big rivals ended up in a coalition and formed a Local Government in Novi Pazar. It shows that the politics at the local level within a minority follows the same rules as politics at the national level. Actually, after the national elections that took place in May 2012, an unexpected coalition was made. Namely, in order to become prime minister, Ivica Dačić, leader of Socialistic Party (Party of Slobodan Milošević), accepted to make Government and get into a coalition with Serbian Progressive Party (new party that emerged from the Serbian Radical Party). Also it needs to be said that this is nothing new, because it happened also 4 years ago after the previous national parliamentary elections when the Democratic Party in order to stay in power accepted a coalition with Socialistic Party of Serbia.

The implementation of Legislation

The status of national minorities in Serbia today is primarily defined by the Constitution of Serbia adopted in 2006 and by a number of laws including the Law on Protection of rights and freedoms of national minorities, the Law for official use of language, the Law of the foundations of education, the Law on Local self-government and the Law on national councils of national minorities. However, having rights on paper is one thing: one of the main problems faced by minority communities in Serbia is the existence of bureaucratic obstructions that prevent the implementation of legislation protecting the rights of minorities in Serbia.

Zibija Šarenkapić confers that: "Minority policies are based on different legislation for which there is no mechanism to implement." From the interview I took that generally Serbia enacts laws but has no mechanism to actually implement them. Currently, a period of 4 years is needed to make a law functional. The state constantly tries to copy European laws, but does not take over the functional European laws entirely; the state rewrites laws and modifies them in such a way that they become non-functional. The introduction of the Bosniak National Council is a good example. The Council is elected by the Bosniaks in Serbia and should improve the position of the minority in Serbia. When I talked about the Bosniaks National Council (BNC) with Zibija Šarenkapić, it became clear that the Council is used by the government to 'symbolically' fulfill the requirements of adopted laws that serve to secure the rights of Bosniaks. The BNC raised a lot of problematic issues from the very beginning following the first elections and controversies.[15]

The role of civil society

"Civil society can only maintain trends until there are conditions for those trends to become mainstream." Samid Šarenkapić comments. The role of a NGO is to work with as many young people as possible: "If we work with 300 young people from a political party, it is likely that out of those 300, at least three of them will end up in an influential political position and with whom we will still be in contact." said Samid Šarenkapić from CC DamaD. In the conversation also came up that it is easy to organize protests, but if there is no good social infrastructure, which can change the previous one, then protests cannot give important results. That is the reality we live in since the changes of 5th of October 2000 and the fall of Slobodan Milošević.

The position of youth

Novi Pazar is a town with a very young population. "The young people of Novi Pazar comprise around 35 percent of the population, making it one of the youngest cities in Serbia. However, despite the great potential of its

15 During this study I tried to come in contact with BNC representatives, in order to hear their side of the story, but unfortunately I did not succeed. The official contact form on the website of the institution is not in use, and even through private contacts, I could not reach a single representative of the BNC. *http://www.bnv.org.rs/kontakt/pitajte-predsjednika-io/* (visited 31st of August 2012)

predominantly young population, the city continues to be dominated by poverty, unemployment, socio-cultural tensions and above all corruption. Going through school, finding a job and starting life as an adult is difficult anywhere. But in the south-western Serbian city of Novi Pazar, the presence of corruption at all levels of society makes things even harder by dashing the hope that hard work and integrity are sufficient to get ahead in life," Jelena Avramović points out in an article published by OSCE.[16]

The city has three universities, which creates opportunities for a lot of young people to stay in their city and get education. "But when you have a high percentage of young people who complete training college, graduate and cannot find opportunities afterwards, then the problems of depression and disappointment arise." said Lejla Hubić. "People either study to gain some time (to postpone job seeking) or because of their parents as they are strongly aware that the degree and diploma is not valued and eventually you get a large number of disinterested, uneducated and unprofessional people" added Nedžad Mihović and continued "Yet, it is not the problem of a few individuals but that of all young people. Therefore, it means that there is a systemic problem, and it must be addressed quickly".

In Novi Pazar, as in the whole of Serbia, there is a problem to motivate youth to take action and work on making positive changes in their societies. "Young people often do not realize that it is not enough to fulfill the requirements but also they need to offer solutions and participate," Zibija Šarenkapić points out. Often, young people do not realize that doing their best at school and following the mainstream of the society is not enough, they also need to make proposals and participate in the implementation of the changes they want to see. Young people must take more active participation and help themselves and the whole society to move forward, because otherwise it is the easiest way to be dissatisfied and practice apathy.

Involvement of young people in political parties is only a trend, but there are no substantial changes for these youngsters. "Today, in the Sandžak exist parties that have decided to go through a transformation, redefined their policies and are open for cooperation. But these parties attract

16 *http://www.osce.org/serbia/57701* (Visited 26th of August 2012)

young people because they are powerful and influential, and not because they offer the possibility to empower young people. However, the positive thing is that they offer visibility to some young people", Samid Šarenkapić said. At the end of the interview Samid made specification of young politically active people in Novi Pazar: first, the politically active youth who has no power to change anything even within their own party. Second, the enthusiastic and proactive youth part of a given party but for whom there is no media space and no systematic mechanisms to show that they are involved in a political party. This group is generally tired, shrugged and end up leaving politics.

When there is an initiative, the local government is usually more preoccupied with politics than with setting up a framework to support youth. Engaged young people who are struggling to improve their situation in the city say they receive support from a handful of private owners who, for example, donate food when young people organize humanitarian campaigns. Meanwhile the local government's support is of symbolic nature and only comes once the main work is done by civil society organizations. What usually helps is to have an ally or supporter who has more influence in local government than the average citizen. Without support of people in high places, it is harder to gain a position in government institutions. One of the representatives of Inter-ethnic Youth Alliance said that: "We had an action supported by private businesses and institutions (Institute for Urban Planning), but if no-one in the community, recognized as a profiled and influential person, would have supported us initially, people would have been reluctant to get involved. Local government seems to have no confidence in young people." Politics in Serbia is based on strong people that build an organization around them. In order to gain influence you need such a person to back you up.

The youth activists of the Alliance would like the local government to treat their initiatives as their own. The purpose of the Alliance is to initiate the integration process; government should finish the work that they started. Local government should make it their job to facilitate integration. Hopefully more youngsters will join the Alliance and their cause to facilitate a more closer dialogue and cooperation between Serbs and Bosniaks and the government will no longer be able to ignore these efforts.

How the Media build stereotypes about Novi Pazar

When Novi Pazar comes up in conversation in Serbia, various stereotypes that describe this city and its problems dominate the discussion. For the purpose of this research, I had the opportunity to do a few interviews in Novi Pazar with representatives of civil society organizations and random young people. According to the interviewed inhabitants, in Novi Pazar, there are not many things that are not typical for the region. The stereotype is that patriarchy of the Orthodox Church and Muslim community in Novi Pazar is dominating social life, but this is actually not different from other places in Serbia. The stereotypical images of Bosniaks are catastrophic, since the propaganda of the Milošević regime painted them black in the media since 1989. There is not actually that much difference in value system between Novi Pazar and the rest of Serbia or even the Western Balkans. However, the stereotypes persist.

"The overshadowing of important problems by trivial news and not giving enough attention to young people, is all to distract attention from the fact that this is a multi-ethnic community and that we must seek the source of the problem and its solution right there," said Zibija Šarenkapić. In the media there is not much information about the successful actions carried out by young people for example, from the Interethnic Youth Alliance, dealing with mutual integration of the Serbs and Bosniaks through the implementation of joint actions. But you will find a lot of news about what was said by religious leader Muftija Zukorlić or political leaders of Bosniak minority in Serbia as Rasim Ljajić or Sulejman Ugljanin, representatives of the two biggest politic parties of Bosniaks in Serbia (Social Democratic Party – Ljajić and Party of Democratic Action of Sandžak – Ugljanin). The only possible conclusion is that the media and political scene share the same passion to polarize rather than integrate.

Conclusion

All in all, it is possible to conclude that Serbia is not on the right track to have a more diverse and improved multicultural society. The term "multicultural politics" in Serbia is rarely used. Instead, frequently it is the term "minority policy" that is used. In Serbia, however, there is a large number of ethnic minorities who are mainly concentrated along the border

and in predominantly homogeneous areas where minorities are the majority. The main problem that Serbia currently faces is that the government is running away from its responsibilities towards minorities and doesn't have the will to understand and reconcile differences between various communities. Serbia through its multicultural policies is a classic example of striving for quick solutions. In order to join the EU as soon as possible, Serbia was prepared to accept the various elements of the system for the protection and promotion of the rights of national minorities. Serbia is a signatory to many conventions that are pledged to secure the national minorities to exercise their rights. Also, in Serbia there is a solid legal framework that defines the rights of national minorities.

The problem arises when theory is to be translated into practice. One of the problems is the lack of capacity and lack of a system that can implement and enforce the legislation related to minority rights. The government is interested in quick fixes, and many think it is sufficient to just enact laws. Unfortunately this is not enough. A huge effort needs to be put in; the whole society needs to be prepared (both minorities and majority) for those changes. Government should provide a system that is able to make theory become practice and will help implementation of mechanisms that Serbia wants functional. When it comes to what is the solution, it lies in young people.

New generations are already young enough to not remember the breakup of Yugoslavia and the wars that followed this period, and again adult and mature enough to be able to accept responsibility and make participation. What is important is to remember that changes, empowering youth and improve future diversity and multiculturalism cannot be done in a year or two but is very slow and is a time consuming process. People have to become aware that we have some common problems that we can solve together, one by one. Yet it is the only true path along which problems are solved from the bottom up and it is the only way to really turn Serbia into a democratic society that will be respectful of its legislation and practices of law.

Research Paper – Arbër Selmani

Multiculturalism in Kosovo: The Case of the Historical Centre of Prizren

In terms of the impact that international institutions and international mission have had on building a multicultural platform in Kosovo, there are millions of examples of improvement and also the destruction of this discourse. It is clear that Kosovo is in a more sensitive situation compared to other countries in the region when it comes to dominance and rule of international law, bearing in mind that since the war in 1999 and still, many institutions, budgets, grants, funds and responsibilities for creating multicultural tranquility have been carried by internationals.[17] Since 1999, many citizens blame exactly internationals for the lack of perspective that the country still suffers from since the war.

One of the most prominent internationals is Martti Oiva Kalevi Ahtisaari. He is a Finnish politician, the tenth President of Finland, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and United Nations diplomat and mediator, noted for his international peace work. Ahtisaari was a UN Special Envoy in the Kosovo status negotiations, who aimed at resolving a long-running dispute in Kosovo about the status of the country. Negotiations between the Serbian and Kosovar government did not lead to a solution, however did produce a plan where both sides gave in on practical issues. Kosovo declared its independence from Serbia in 2008. In October 2008, Ahtisaari was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize: "for his efforts on several continents and over more than three decades, to resolve international conflicts". The Nobel statement said that Ahtisaari has played a prominent role in resolving many conflicts in Namibia; Aceh, Indonesia; Kosovo and Iraq, among other areas.

The plan that Ahtisaari made for Kosovo is of great importance to the City of Prizren. Prizren is one of the oldest settlements in Kosovo and in the Eastern Europe and has always been a crossroad of cultures and trade throughout history. Prizren was an important cultural, economic and diplomatic centre. Located in the middle of the ancient Istanbul-Venice

17 In Kosovo we use 'internationals' to refer to the foreigners living and working here.

route, this city holds memories of all time. Since the antiquity, it is recognized as a unique place in the Balkans for its historic and cultural heritage values, civilizations and various religions. Thanks to its favorable geographic position, harmonic merge of different cultures and enviable number of monuments of all times, the city of Prizen with a full right holds the epithet of the "City Museum", "Museum under the open sky", up to ranging as one of the most beautiful cities of Kosovo.

The riots that happened in 2004 in Kosovo created a new reality. Churches and buildings were damaged while the international administration and Kosovo's authorities had taken measures for their reconstructions. Concern about the preservation of the orthodox heritage was evident and this was one of the points discussed in the talks on the status of Kosovo in Vienna, then preceded by Ahtisaari himself.

Ahtisaari developed a comprehensive proposal: the "*Ahtisaari's package*", which aimed to create a regulatory framework for policy development in economy, health sector, education, and every other sector of life of Kosovars. In Annex 5, of the in total 12 annexes of the package, the articles that should be respected concerning the Historical Centre of Prizren can be found. Ahtisaari envisaged also the creation of a special area in this Centre. The International Civilian Office and its highest representative, Pieter Feith, along with the government of Kosovo turned the Ahtisaari's idea into a Draft Law.

The first two articles of the Annex 5:

> **1.1 – The Serbian Orthodox Church in Kosovo will be offered protection, its privileges and immunities as provided in this Annex. The implementation of these rights brings with it other duties and responsibilities to act in accordance with the laws of Kosovo by not violating the rights of others.**
>
> **1.2 – Kosovo will recognize the Serbian Orthodox Church in Kosovo, including monasteries, churches and other buildings which are used for religious purposes as an integral part of the Serbian Orthodox Church based in Belgrade, Serbia.**

This law is the subject of this paper; subsequently different actors are cited, revealing the sensitivity of the case. I conducted two interviews, one with Samuel Žbogar, representative of the EU in Kosovo and another with Liburn Aliu from the opposition party in the Kosovo Assembly, Vetvendosje. Further sources are statements from actors in the media.

NGOs and the Parliamentary Opposition, against the law

Now, regarding this law, Hajrulla Çeku from "EC Ma Ndryshe", a non-governmental organization, which was the main voice against the law, adds that the drafting and negotiation of the Ahtisaari Package has gone through a very superficial circle of consultation with civil society groups. Moreover, according to Çeku, its makers have been more influenced by political pressures instead of respect for the local cultural context.

"Through this law of protected areas are created enclaves of cultural heritage, and through it has violated principles of secularism. In general, referring to this document, state institutions have excluded the society from decision-making" says Çeku and he continues: "Above all, this document has extremely politicized the culture, transforming ethnicity in the main feature of the cultural heritage. Paradoxically, by attempting a multi-culti society, this package has achieved exactly the opposite effect, creating the difference between monuments belonging 'to them' or 'to us'" says Çeku. The Kosovo Constitutional Court recently declared the law eligible. In the parliamentary opposition, "Vetevendosja", one of the largest opposite parties, said that this law practically promotes Serbian nationalism and chauvinism. "Protected areas, as mentioned in this document, only protect the nationalist instrumentalization of these monuments, by alienating multiculturalism in a catastrophic way" says Liburn Aliu, deputy of "Vetevendosje".

I argue that the Historic Centre of Prizren is one of the most distinguished zones of urban heritage in Kosovo, with valuable traces of diverse historic and cultural heritage. Although it represents a major asset for social and economic development of the city, for a long time its immense potential, including cultural, historical, tourist and environmental, has not been treated with the appropriate approach that would preserve, promote and materialize those cultural treasures. The laws and regulations for the Historic Centre of Prizren mainly envisage measures that freeze development, not allowing for possibilities to develop the city and integrate the heritage into modern daily life. This is not in the public interest, as the civil society argues. However, the international community pushes through its multicultural values, without taking an interest in local tradition. The cultural heritage is to be divided among the ethnic groups,

making it part of the political struggle rather than using it to overcome socio-political differences.

Ahtisaari, Feith and Žbogar put the parliament under pressure to approve the law

The law in question, according to Ahtisaari, needs to be respected if Kosovo wants to be integrated in the European Union and other important international instances. Pieter Feith – the head of International Civilian Office in Kosovo, said a few months ago, when the idea of creating special protected areas in the Historical Centre of Prizren was declared legitimate, that the law shall not give extraterritorial status or excessive power to any particular community in Prizren. "Kosovo laws will remain and the Municipality of Prizren will continue being the responsible authority," said Feith.

Although the statements of both parties, international and national ones, contradict each other, the civil society from Prizren said not to be asked about this destruction and removal of their cultural identity. Hence, the civil society considers the heritage to be a joint one, including a mixed identity of different cultures. In January, the civil society together with the members of the parliamentary opposition protested against the law. At the time the law had not yet passed through the Constitutional Court. According to Feith, who along with Ahtisaari and Samuel Žbogar, is the representative of the EU in Kosovo, the draft law (once it also obtains the approval of government and Constitutional Court of Kosovo) will raise the responsibility of the authorities that will manage the Historical Centre. "This means the involvement of Prizren's civil society, cultural heritage experts and other representatives of religious communities, in the case the Catholic Church, Muslim community and Serbian Orthodox Church, in its supervision and development" says Pieter Feith.

Dardan Gashi, Minister of Spatial Planning, who together with the Prime Minister Hashim Thaçi and Feith had participated in the last meeting of Parliamentary Committee of Agriculture, Forestry and Spatial Environment where the disputed points were harmonized with the deputees of the committee and the government, says that this law is not discriminating, like Kosovo's society prescribes. "The law is derived from the Ahtisaari package, but is not discriminatory. We as a government have

proposed that in the council where the issue was discussed should be the Orthodox Serbian Church, the Muslim Community plus the civil society, so I do not see a discrimination here" says Gashi.

Samuel Žbogar, representative of EU in Kosovo, has said about the law that it ensures the preservation of the character and beauty of this unique place. "The protection, preservation and promotion of the cultural heritage is a core European value for the good of Kosovo and its inhabitants. I believe that these laws provide a legislative basis for the development of this value", says Žbogar, when I interviewed him for this paper.

"I encourage the Kosovo institutions to quickly move forward the implementation of the law. This will ensure that the future urban development and construction will not harm the beauty and harmony of this Centre, and will care also for the cultural and religious heritage for the next generations" adds Žbogar.

> *The Historic Centre of Prizren includes:*
> *11 mosques, 2 Serbian Orthodox Churches and a priest school, 13 springs and mills, 10 Public Buildings, 55 houses, 4 schools and 4 architectural objects, 5 Masjids. Neither public activity, nor construction is allowed in the vicinity of theses buildings.*

Kosovo's Council for Cultural Heritage, against the law

Against the law is also the highest state institution for cultural heritage, Kosovo's Council for Cultural Heritage. In a statement to "Koha Ditore" newspaper, Gjejlane Hoxha, executive director of this Council has rejected all of the points in the law.

In the conclusions that this Council has sent to the Functional Parliamentary Committee in November of last year, it states explicitly that the contents of the draft law of the Historic Centre of Prizren and the law on creating special protected areas near to the Centre, are inconsistent with the requirements set forth in Ahtisaari Package, contrary to the Constitution and international contemporary practices and principles of culture heritage, as the precious treasure of Prizren.

After a long and tough debate, the members of the Assembly have approved the draft law on the Historic Centre of Prizren, on April 20th. The adoption of the law was done by handling each of the amendments

separately. The MPs were instructed how to vote in advance. Amendments list were given to the MPs with specific instructions, where specified with YES or NO for each one.

The municipality of Prizren has no access to its Historic Centre

Since April of this year, when this law was approved and adopted by the MPs on the grounds that the implementation of this law helps Kosovo to pass the surveillance phase of independence, the Municipality of Prizren could not do anything, because they were not allowed inside this Centre.

So said Urim Ukimeri, Culture Official in Prizren, during a debate about cultural heritage held this year in the framework of DOKUFEST – The international Documentary Festival, which takes place not far from the Historic Centre of Prizren, every summer.

"We are really taking measures to affect in this case. Realistically, if recently we could at least monitor the conditions of the Centre, now with the approval, God knows who is engaging to it" says Ukimeri. According to him, however the people's choice according to this topics can be, what is done has no salvation.

America supports the law

The approval of the laws was welcomed by the Embassy of the United States in Kosovo. The Embassy through a press release said that "is satisfied that the Assembly took action to move the country closer to the goal of ending the supervised independence".

"The adoption of the four last laws remained by the Comprehensive Settlement Proposal (CSP) and recognized as liabilities from the Assembly at the time of independence, represents an important turning point. Moreover, the law on Historic Centre together with three others (The law on village "Hoça e Madhe", Tax administration procedures and amendment of the law on Public Enterprises) themselves are good for Kosovo and it was the right thing to do" says the press release sent to the media by the Embassy of United States in Kosovo.

Petition of civil society, not taken seriously

The civil society, the only actors that lives near to the Historical Centre of Prizren, since the beginning of last year started to collect signatures for some petitions, which sought to prevent the approval of the law. According to them, there has been no consultation with the civil society on this issue. Zejnullah Hoxhaj, ordinary citizen of Prizren, on a cold tone says that he understands the purpose of the Ahtisaari package. "I understand the package and its goals through Kosovo's situation. But what I don't understand is that even today the Municipality itself doesn't have access to it, this culture is ours and belongs to Prizren" he stated. "Multiculturalism is not clearly understood. If this package really aims for multiculturalism, then why is it not permitted coexistence with the rest of the centre, but everything is going in the hands of Serbs and the Serbian Orthodox Church based in Belgrade? Here we are in Prizren, in the cradle of culture", says Hoxhaj.

Drita Stublla, Prizren citizen as well, says that the Centre in the very first beginning has no reason to be victimized so that Kosovo integrate herself. "This Historical Centre belongs to Prizren, and this should be known by everyone who decides to create a boundary between this relationship. Orthodox Church has also some rights on this Centre, but for this there is no need to create new protected areas, because by being protected everything is becoming untouchable there, impossible to happen", Stublla says. She has signed the petitions, which never went anywhere.

The politics of multiculturalism are implemented top-down in this example. The cultural heritage of Prizren is one of peaceful coexistence, however political agendas from both internationals and central powers in Kosovo and Serbia have their own interpretation and interests as this paper has shown. In this case politics is a threat to multiculturalism even though it claim to respect it. Prizren is not from one side or the other, it belongs to a collective of people and consists not only of buildings, but also of people and cultural values as well. These values transcend ethnic identities as they are politicized in the Kosovo context.

Research Paper – Alexander Chaplin

Continued Lack of Knowledge About Eastern Neighbours Despite EU Integration

When examining the case studies from Kosovo and Serbia, we see that the EU's imposition of multicultural policies on candidate-members(-to-be) leads to great challenges. Yet even within the EU there are people who disagree with the way the EU deals with multiculturality. To aspiring EU candidates, long-term members like the Netherlands may seem to take up a comfortable position – after all, they have themselves taken part in founding and developing the EU and thus do not have to comply so much with outside demands as with 'their own' policies – but the workings of the EU also lead to discontent in these countries.

This case study takes as its point of departure a recent initiative in the Netherlands that revealed one such form of discontent, and that led to a wave of commotion throughout Europe: the February 8, 2012 launch of the PVV's (Party for Freedom's) 'Meldpunt Midden en Oost Europeanen' ('Hotline Central and Eastern Europeans') – to be introduced hereafter. This event can help us think through some of the challenges multiculturality in the Netherlands faces in light of the country's EU membership. We will explore the question of whether these challenges are just shallow bumps on a generally happily traversed road leading to increasing EU integration, or whether we should take them more seriously.

The PVV hotline (from now on simply 'Meldpunt') is a website – fully in Dutch – on which people are invited to report problems with citizens from Central and Eastern European countries. The problems can be of any nature: the website viewer can tick off boxes for disturbances caused by Central and Eastern Europeans as diverse as noise, parking issues, drunkenness, (house) deterioration, job loss, and complaints of another kind. A banner continuously displays rotating newspaper articles that suggest that 'Eastern Europeans' (sometimes distinguished by nationality/ethnicity and mentioning predominantly Poles – who have come to the Netherlands in the largest numbers – but also Bulgarians, Rumanians, and finally Roma) have increasingly become a problem for

the Netherlands: the Central and Eastern European 'group' is portrayed as responsible for numerous recent crimes. The suggestion is that the EU's open labour markets are directly responsible for these problems.

The Meldpunt evoked strong political reactions, not only in the Netherlands itself but also in other European countries. Ambassadors of Central and Eastern European EU countries were quick to react, asking "the Dutch and their political leaders to distance themselves from this objectionable initiative." Dutch commerce – and employer organisations spoke out against the Meldpunt, noting how much they value and need the new EU member countries for importing workers and exporting Dutch goods, and how much damage the Meldpunt does to the Dutch image abroad. Both the European Parliament and – finally, after a long period of silence on the part of the government – the Dutch Parliament adopted a resolution that condemned the Meldpunt and also asked the Dutch government to distance itself from the initiative. The (then-)prime minister refused, however, arguing that since it was the private initiative of a political party, he did not need to speak out about the Meldpunt.

Yet not only politicians,but 'normal' people all over the Netherlands and Europe agitated against the Meldpunt. Several parodical 'Meldpunten' (pl.) were set up, e.g. to report *Limburgers* (inhabitants of the Dutch province from which Wilders, the PVV's distinctive leader, hails); to report PVV members; and to list good experiences with Eastern Europeans. In Poland, a comedian devoted part of his show to ridiculing the Meldpunt and persuading his audience to bring down the website – which temporarily succeeded. Another interesting initiative was the organisation of the *Overlastfeest* ('Disturbance Party'), which brought Western and Eastern Europeans together in a Dutch café for a night to create a party so big that they could all become the alcohol-fuelled loud nuisances the Meldpunt portrays (only) the latter to be. This report focuses on this party and on two other, more long-term initiatives to create a more nuanced and positive image of Central and Eastern Europeans in the Netherlands. But let us first expand on the significance of the Meldpunt for this report.

In the debates surrounding the PVV Meldpunt, criticisms of the core principles on which the EU operates were touched upon. While EU member states (in contrast to aspiring member states) still have a relatively large say over their internal migration and minority policies, intra-EU

migration is practically entirely arranged on EU level: the EU principle of free movement of persons (and the free movement of goods, labour, capital, and services) allows people to reside and work freely in any other EU country (currently only Bulgarians and Rumanians need to obtain work permits in certain countries, including the Netherlands, but this rule will expire in 2014). For a long time, other Europeans coming to the Netherlands were generally considered 'western migrants'. As such, they were left out of the intense immigration debates that held the country in their grip over the last decade – debates to which Muslims (mostly from Turkey and Morocco) were central. With the advent of migration from the EU member states that joined with the expansion waves in 2004 and 2007, intra-EU migration suddenly also became a topic for increasingly heated discussion (surrounded by negative sentiments for which the Polish ambassador already warned in early 2011[18]). This situation culminated in the launch of the Meldpunt, only to soon give way to debates about the future of the EU itself when the European economic crisis turned more and more political in the spring of 2012 (the Party for Freedom has since sought to attract voters by propagating the withdrawal of the Netherlands from the EU, which at present would also be the only way of controlling migration streams from other EU countries).

The number and intensity of the reactions condemning the Meldpunt (from both within and outside the Netherlands) are interesting given that there *does* seem to be a rather widespread distrust of Eastern Europeans in the Netherlands, or more precisely, a lack of knowledge. This shows for example in the fact that many Dutch people – even those who condemn the Meldpunt are not exempt in this respect – all too readily accept and themselves use generalising references to 'Eastern Europeans' (or even the more derogatory Cold War-term *Oostblokkers*, 'Eastern Block people'), as if the diverse people and countries these new immigrants represent form some kind of identifiable and unified whole. We therefore need to take the Meldpunt seriously: as often as it may have been dragged through the mud, it still resonates with sentiments that a significant number of residents of the Netherlands may share.

18 Volkskrant (25-2-2011) 'Ambassadeur Polen: houding jegens Oost-Europeanen is 'tikkende tijdbom.'

"What the farmer doesn't know, he doesn't eat": The role of media

This report will present the views of a number of people who have striven towards spreading more accurate and nuanced knowledge about the new and yet-to-be member states from Central and Eastern Europe: Hellen Kooijman, editor-in-chief of Dutch in-depth magazine on Central and Eastern Europe 'Donau' ('Danube'), and freelance journalist in Bulgaria; Franka Hummels, a freelance journalist and self-proclaimed 'Eastern Europe freak' who co-organised the *Overlastfeest* (Disturbance Party); and Aleksandar Velinovski, mastermind of the successful Eastern Neighbours Film Festival, whose 7th edition will be held in The Hague this fall. The stories of these engaged individuals show that the Dutch public (still) has much to learn about its eastern neighbours (*and* vice versa) – and that that in the first place is why the Meldpunt could strike a chord with some people, and lead to such intense discussions. Yet the spread of more nuanced knowledge faces plenty of challenges that are not easily overcome.

Hellen Kooijman connects the origins of the Dutch wariness of 'Eastern Europeans' most strongly to the Cold War period: "people assumed that 'those Eastern Europeans' were poor, repressed, and yet did not take many initiatives themselves either." Such stereotypes are deeply rooted among the Dutch, says Hellen. They are not quick to change, since most of the Dutch have only very limited experiences with people from the Eastern half of the continent: sometimes a holiday or two to a popular lake – or coastal destination, but otherwise just what they see in their surroundings and hear from others. Moreover, there is an ingrained distrust of otherness among the Dutch, which Hellen explains to her Bulgarian newspaper audience through the Dutch saying "what the farmer doesn't know, he doesn't eat" (i.e. doesn't trust). She stresses that the PVV and its Meldpunt are products of Dutch society, and that you find similar thoughts and sentiments in other parties – albeit a bit more obscured and fragmented.

Hellen adds that, in light of this situation, the frequent negative media attention surrounding 'Eastern European' immigrants has reinforced existing negative views. Indeed, stereotypical images are often called upon in the media, and media reports are selective, favouring the out-of-the-ordinary and the problematic rather than the normal and the everyday. On top of

that, the whole controversy about the Meldpunt was primarily fought out in and through the media. We could therefore easily slide into a critique of media and the process of mediation itself.

Franka Hummels's story of organising the *Overlastfeest* (Disturbance Party) to protest against the Meldpunt only aggravates suspicions of media. As a freelance journalist and an insider to the media business, Franka knew that she had to be extremely cautious when announcing the party to the press. Her co-organiser and her decided not to speak about the PVV party or its leader, nor even about disturbances: that might allow journalists (and subsequently, readers/viewers) to simply set aside their initiative as a political statement, coming from people who represent a particular spot of the political spectrum (a leftist one, so only leftists would need to consider going to the party or reading/watching on) and try to win souls for their own interest – all of which would distract from their intentions. They therefore reduced the message they spread to a single one: "Eastern Europe is fun," Franka repeated to numerous journalists, putting on a happy, smiling face to so many of them that it soon threatened to turn into a grimace. But stressing nothing but 'fun' was the only way in which Franka could expect not to have her announcement hijacked by journalists. That is the way media work, Franka explains: "if you only communicate *one* message then you know that message will end up in the paper." She used the same tactics as the PVV: "if you repeat something often enough, then people will start to automatically associate those things – even when the association is not justified. You can do very little about that." Moreover, for journalists referring to and making use of existing frames makes it easy to 'score', because it allows for an easier connection to the reader. In technical terms, Franka and the *Overlastfeest* added a different 'frame', which tried to associate 'Eastern Europeans' with fun and disassociate them from negative things.

All in all, this picture of the workings of media is rather sad, and it is easy to scold the media for 'creating' a negative image of Eastern Europeans. Too easy: Hellen warns that the media should not receive too much blame, because bad news – for example news about disturbances caused by immigrants – is also news, and journalists need to bring it out. Moreover, as she adds in the introduction to an intriguing issue of magazine 'Donau', media tend to appeal to images that people already hold, and at most only adjust "what was presumed anyway."[19]

19 Donau (2011, no.2) 'Mens-erger-je-nieten.' (by Hellen Kooijman)

Aleksandar Velinovski is all too aware of this. He is the mastermind and co-organiser of the Eastern Neighbours Film Festival, a several days long festival in which many new and interesting films from mainly the South Eastern European region are shown, interspersed with lectures, debates, and workshops. Fuelled by a personal drive to show that "not only thieves and plumbers are coming from the Balkans, but that this region has much more to show to Western European countries," Aleksandar and his team make sure that their festival and films appeal as little as possible to such existing images (or frames): they carefully select their films – only from countries that have not (yet) joined the EU, because they consider these least known – in order not to risk presenting skewed, or simply clichéd images to their viewers. They try to present the contemporary situations (and not history) in these countries, showing the "progress made", "in terms of cinematic production, in terms of cultural development, in terms of economical and social development." Movies by film directors like Emir Kusturica, who has had great successes in Western Europe, are deliberately left out of the festival, for his movies risk only reinforcing existing views that "there are only gypsies living in the Balkans, riding donkeys and horses."

The risk of positive stereotyping

Franka did not try as strongly to avoid such 'enjoyable' stereotypical images – as long as the message "Eastern Europe is fun" came across, her main goal would be achieved. Of course, the name itself, and the association of 'Eastern Europeans' with fun drunkenness, good (crazy) music and general enjoyment were part of the ludic attraction of the party, and in that sense did little to disassociate 'Eastern Europeans' from stereotypical images. Paradoxically, we see that the same stereotypes that lead some people to look down on people from the new or aspiring EU member states, are celebrated as positive by others (and such processes are even salient to the objects of these stereotypes: Serbian cinema for example is now going through a phase of exploring – and sometimes celebrating – the 'barbaric' aspects of the Balkans).[20]

Hellen, who also attended the Overlastfeest, agrees that an initiative like that always risks reinforcing stereotypes and merely giving them a

20 Balkan Insight (18–6-2012) 'Serbian cinema plays up to Balkans' 'Barbaric image.' See: *http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/serbian-cinema-plays-up-to-balkans-barbaric-image* (visited 4–9-2012)

positive twist. She feared the party might only point attention to "the fun Eastern European who is a good musician and who is hospitable and friendly," instead of recognising that "they are just people, like the Dutch, perhaps with different norms and values." Hellen regards the production of clichéd images, even if they are positive, as dangerous. After all, even positive stereotypes do not allow people's individuality to be appreciated in its own right. But Hellen's fears were calmed when the party turned out to work very well: "It was just good, and what I immediately thought about that was: of course it is like this much more often, and this thing that is occurring in the Netherlands, that *Meldpuntje* (insigificant, small Meldpunt) that some people visit – does not really say so much about how others, perhaps even the majority in the Netherlands think about Eastern European migrants." Even the media reports were received rather well by the organising team. TV channel POW News, known for its sometimes harsh and satirical items, even said that they couldn't find 'the stereotypical Eastern European' at the party – the people there were simply too diverse. Point taken.

Summarising: in the face of media outlets that by and large seek out the abnormal, and audiences for whom the power of association works in favour of reinforcing existing images of 'Eastern Europeans', one of the few ways of succeeding in getting across a different image of 'Eastern Europe' is to ignore such existing views altogether. The result then is a more implicit engagement with stereotypical views about others, which – as the *Overlastfeest* and also the Eastern Neighbours Film Festival show – can be successful, but it also runs the risk that the interpretations by (members of the) audience(s) run counter to the intended message.

Recognising existing problems

Another risk of going against the Meldpunt and presenting a different image is downplaying existing problems. We need to acknowledge that the sentiments that fuel the Meldpunt have a real, experiential basis for some people and are not just 'media fabrications': instances in which immigrants from the new member countries are connected to events that locals really perceive as problematic *do exist*. Through complex set-ups, some immigrants for instance are paid wages much lower than the normal Dutch ones, and thus risk outcompeting local Dutch workers; low

salaries can sometimes result in a lot of people sharing the same house, which naturally can lead to noisiness and lack of parking spots for neighbours; and so on.

Many of such problems were recognised by parties other than the PVV long before that party launched the Meldpunt. They proved very hard to resolve, however, partially because existing legislation is insufficient and partly because some laws are hard to enforce. Perhaps one positive effect of the Meldpunt – and all the counter-initiatives that followed – was that certain pressing problems were put (back) on the agenda. But the narrative that guided the Meldpunt certainly was not conducive to solving the issues. Hellen and Franka agree vehemently that the PVV initiative is an opportunist attack on all that is different, not even so much out of principle as in order to win votes from disgruntled people who seek scapegoats.

To Franka, terms like 'Eastern Europeans' or even 'Poles' would be superfluous if only legislation would be adjusted to the new situation the EU has created and would be properly enforced. For her, everybody should be treated on an individual basis and group thinking would never even have to come into play then. Hellen, on the contrary, sees it as necessary to explicitly refer to groups in news articles and in debates: we can then recognise that the term 'Eastern Europeans' does not refer to a unified group of people, but is made up of diverse people from a large number of very different countries. Moreover, she argues that different cultures *do* bring in different kinds of issues that might be experienced as problematic to different extents in the Netherlands. As an example she mentions that catholic Poles are probably more likely to cause disturbances related to alcohol abuse than Muslims. Nevertheless, Hellen thinks the Meldpunt hugely overestimates such problems and makes false suggestions about the causes. Indeed, the Meldpunt simply turns the presence of Eastern Europeans in the Netherlands into a culture 'problem', politicising cultural differences. Franka and Hellen also agree that one can legitimately question the role the EU should play (in issues of migration, multiculturality or anything else) and point out its excesses without going down the same way the PVV does through its Meldpunt and related politics. Being wary of some of the most basic elements of the EU to them is an understandable and acceptable viewpoint, and definitely is not the same

as being against multiculturalism or against the presence of people from Eastern European member countries. None of the interviewees necessarily propagate multicultural ideologies through their initiatives, nor support for the EU – only Aleksandar is explicitly laudatory of the progress the EU can bring in aspiring member states, but he refers most of all to the benefits that would bring to cinema and the arts in general. What Hellen, Franka, and Aleksandar *do* explicitly set out to do, and what connects them, is the desire to nuance views and debates on 'Eastern Europeans' in the Netherlands. They have all seen successes in this respect but plenty of challenges also remain. The interviews leave the impression that the most pressing challenges are reaching out to a wide(r) audience, to address people who earnestly sympathise with the Meldpunt.

The difficulty of reaching out

We may wonder to what extent we should agree with the interviewees' suggestions that the Meldpunt, and all it stands for, is a reflection of but a very tiny part of the Dutch population. "There still is no hard expressed xenophobia in Holland among people," says Aleksandar. But he might be wrong: none of the interviewees knew of any figures of the numbers of people supporting initiatives like the Meldpunt – we did not find reliable ones either – and mainly extrapolated from their own personal experiences. Relying on one's own experiences might be better than relying on hearsay or speculation, but it risks basing judgments too much on one's experiences with people from within limited social circles, and thereby miscalculating the widespread nature of some of the more extremist and unpleasant thought that Hellen argues to be a part of the Dutch society – not just of certain members, but of what one could in short only refer to as Dutch *culture*, with its histories and traditions.

Reaching out to people who might not be readily interested in coming to know or enjoy the other's culture – in fact, exactly the people one would think are more predisposed to see the sense in the suggestions of the Meldpunt – is one of the biggest challenges. Indeed, we need to understand and appreciate unsatisfied people better: why, after all, would residents of the Netherlands all *have* to be celebrate a multiculturality that many have experienced as simply unfolding itself around them without any leaders ever asking whether they desired it? Don't they have the right to distrust certain developments? But people who are distrustful

seem hard to reach. The initiatives explored here do much to help better acquaint a number of people in the Netherlands with the cultures of their eastern neighbours, but generally seem to attract a different audience. The aesthetics of the *Overlastfeest*, the sophistication of the Eastern Neighbours Film Festival's cinema, and the academic prose of the 'Donau' magazine: they all mainly speak to audiences who are already interested in getting to know the Eastern Neighbours, and deepening their knowledge and understanding – and probably have little to no sympathy for something like the Meldpunt.

True, Hellen and Franka sometimes reach wider audiences through their newspaper publications. As a reaction on the Meldpunt, one of Hellen's Donau articles for example was reprinted in influential daily 'Volkskrant', and the *Overlastfeest* was reported on in several big national newspapers and numerous smaller regional ones. Similarly, Aleksandar does not only reach out to people interested in South Eastern Europe through his festival, but also attracts people simply interested in high quality cinema in which the depicted country is mostly a background to more universally comprehensible human stories – a category of his audience that he highly appreciates. So while certainly open to more diverse audiences, it is hard to engage the people whose views could potentially be changed most. Concerns like protecting quality standards, working with established media, and also more idiosyncratic concerns like safeguarding careers, ensure that none of the interviewees feels able to really reach out to the people who are most distrustful of Eastern Europeans, and thus most susceptible to initiatives like the Meldpunt.

Of course, a more organically occurring spread of knowledge about the other might come about without initiatives like the ones reviewed here. More highly skilled migrants will probably blend in easier with their local colleagues. Some Dutch truck drivers interact with their colleagues from the east on rest stops around the Netherlands and across Europe. Dutch farmers who hire seasonal workers may come to know them on a personal level. Even the stereotypical example of a Dutch person hiring cheap(er) workers from Poland to renovate the homes may mean a lunch will be shared together in between the work. Things like this are happening as you read this report. People are connecting face-to-face. But on the whole, the speed of the process is hard to measure, and deeply ingrained

images and views about the other may continue to exist alongside or instead of newer ones – sometimes hampering relations, sometimes feeding interest in the other. Such views will perhaps never disappear completely, and maybe that is not necessary either. But we need to be aware that it may take time before a truly productive atmosphere conducive to good relations between immigrants from the Eastern half of Europe and locals comes about in a country like the Netherlands. And, we should add, the same might go for 'Eastern European' countries, if they will ever face high(er) numbers of immigrants from other European states (indeed, Aleksandar also tours Dutch cinema in South Eastern Europe in 'Highlights of the Lowlands', because there is a similar lack of knowledge about 'Western European' countries like the Netherlands there).

To produce that conducive atmosphere, politics and the public debate – and the way media deal with them and the public deals with media – certainly are important. The future of multiculturalism in the Netherlands – with regard to the 'Central and Eastern Europeans', but also in general – is hard to predict, but it is safe to say that the (at the time of writing, upcoming) September 12, 2012 elections will be very important for the direction and tone Dutch politics and debates in the public sphere will take.

General Conclusion

The future of multiculturalism is one that could go either way. If we look at Europe we see a rich cultural diversity, including the Western Balkans. Multiculturality is a reality across Europe. People have to live together and this calls for a sound perspective, something that multiculturalism can offer. This report has shed light on how multiculturalism could work by focusing on different cases. The case studies in the Netherlands, Serbia and Kosovo highlight the reality of policies concerning multiculturalism. What can we learn from such cases?

To be able to live together, it is of vital importance that people accept cultural differences. This is to say that what is your own and what is alien is not equated with good and bad. Both what is considered own and what is considered alien has to be seen as equal. If differences are considered equal, the promotion of diversity becomes possible. This could for example be reflected in the protection of cultural heritage, and we have seen that successful heritage protection indeed requires the resolving of past conflicts between groups.

This report has shown that it is good to involve civil society in decision – and policy-making processes. Policies will after all apply to this same civil society. If particular policies concern people, they should be allowed to say how they would like to see them work. Negotiations between political parties are insufficient to solve problems within communities with practical issues. The political scene is often entrenched along political conflict lines and treat issues as a zero-sum game, where the cultural diverse whole of the community is often better off with inclusive and practical deliberation focused at solving the issue at hand.

We have seen that stereotypes can stand in the way of successfully dealing with multiculturality. 'Eastern Europeans' in the Netherlands, for example, are (still) associated with all kinds of negative sentiments. People who want to promote more nuanced images of stereotyped groups face a difficult task. The media also plays a big role in portraying such issues, helping to shape people's viewpoints and opinions. If media would pay more attention to youth and their successes, images of others would most likely become more positive and constructive. That would also stimulate other young people to participate in politics.

For our future Europe to be a livable continent for a diversity of people, a lot of work is still to be done, but living together means getting there together. We should focus on the positive aspects and on what works, instead of exaggerating differences and posing them as immovable obstacles. The OFEU 2012 team believes that it is possible, but we all need a helping hand to get there.

Getting Together by Wouter Le Febre

- A European identity should not replace, but complement a national identity. It would function as a civic duty for citizens of the European Union.
- At this moment there is no strong European identity. Its course is still uncertain.
- A strong(er) European identity could strengthen cooperation when dealing with large scale issues.

Novi Pazar: Between Multiculturalism and Politics by Nenad Smiljkov

- Serbia embraces multicultural/minority policies on paper in different laws and the constitution of National Councils of Minorities, but Serbia fails to implement these policies.
- Partial interests, primarily politically fragmented, prevail over the general interest; as a result it is impossible to find any consensus about even the most fundamental and practical issues. The case of the Sandžak has shown this.
- Youth is ignored by the local government, as shown in the case of Novi Pazar. Government needs to focus more on the new generation and improve education and support civil society initiatives that are undertaken by youngsters.

Multiculturalism in Kosovo: The case of the Historical Centre of Prizren by Arbër Selmani

- Multiculturalism is not about advancing one culture and avoiding another one. It is about living and sharing the culture, losing some of the identity but still trying to co-exist in between.
- Not everybody wants to live in a Multicultural society. It is just like you do not want your neighbors to come into your house every day.

However, you do see them around the house. In Prizren, the historical city centre is a place where several communities peacefully coexisted and mixed for centuries. This culture lives on through people and buildings and is a heritage that cannot be preserved by ceiling off and regulating the city centre top down.

Continued lack of knowledge about eastern neighbours despite EU integration by Alexander Chaplin

- Dealing with multiculturality is difficult not only outside but also within the EU, as is evidenced in the recent launch of a 'hotline' for reporting disturbances and problems related to 'Central and Eastern Europeans' in the Netherlands.
- Although numerous counter-initiatives to the hotline show that the Dutch people are not unanimously suspicious of this newly arriving 'group' of Europeans, both negative and positive stereotypes are widespread.
- Spreading knowledge about each other may be the only way to battle such stereotyping, but this attempt is complicated by the workings of the media and the difficulty of reaching out to people who hold the stereotypes.

The Paradox of Youth Political Participation

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Introduction

> Arenas for youth involvement in political and, more broadly, public life appear to be more numerous than ever before, yet few would claim that these opportunities have resulted in the widespread and effective participation of young people. […] The pessimistic conclusion is that, in turning their backs on democratic institutions, the young of today are jeopardizing the democracy of tomorrow.[1]

Following this general observation of Joerg Forbrig, we wonder if the societies of Kosovo, Serbia and the Netherlands today are characterized by such an absence of youth political participation. The main reason why it is relevant to ask this question is that young people are an important factor for the future of every country: they are the future leaders who have to make the wise decisions of tomorrow. Ideally speaking, processes of youth political participation help the young to prepare for this task. This is also why a decrease of youth political participation could be interpreted as a signal that 'the democracy of tomorrow' is in jeopardy.

Forbrig points out that there is something strange going on with youth political participation. Everyone, including youths themselves, would like the young of today to become politically engaged citizens, and arguably there are enough options to do so. Yet at the same time, it seems to have become increasingly difficult to interest and engage youngsters in

1 Forbig, E. (ed.), *Revisiting youth political participation. Challenges for research and democratic practice in Europe* (2005), 7. Available through: *http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/* (last visit: 10 September 2012).

politics. This therefore can be called *the paradox of youth political participation*: youngsters feel that they should be politically active, while only a minority commits themselves to active political participation in practice. This is the main problem this research will examine.

It should be immediately made clear that the goal of this research is not to measure actual degrees of youth participation. To do so, youth political participation would have to be defined in a measurable way. It has been one of our core findings that this would be highly problematic, for it would require setting up a model that determines when someone is actively participating in politics, and when someone is not. Being mindful of Forbrig's remark about the numerous arenas of youth involvement, a model to measure participation would have to encompass to be representative, and considering that every aspect of life can be politicized, and that defining 'active involvement' is difficult in our digital age, it became clear that this was far beyond the scope of this research.

We therefore let go of the idea to make proving or disproving the hypothesis that there is a (seemingly) low degree of youth participation today . Instead, we used it as a provoking question during the interviews we conducted – on which more below. Nevertheless, it should be added

that also we could not do entirely without some traditional benchmarks, like voting behavior and the average age of members of parliament, in order to give at least a basic impression of the level of youth political participation in the three countries.

In order to circumvent the problems sketched above and still get a good idea of what moves youths in Serbia, Kosovo and the Netherlands to participate in politics or not, we took on a different approach. By focusing our research on the motivations of youths to engage with politics or not, and on what they perceive to be accessible possibilities for political participation, we decided to let the subject matter of our research speak for itself first.

Therefore, we formulated open questions to guide us in our research: is today's youth motivated to influence their countries politics? What possibilities do they have to become politically active? Are there clear differences with youth political participation in the past? In answering these questions, we will provide the reader with an overview of the motivations and possibilities that young people nowadays have to be politically active.

The next part will shortly explain how we put our approach in practice, and which research methods we have used to examine these questions. After this, in order to start our discussion about youth political participation in Serbia, Kosovo and the Netherlands, the team members of the respective counties have sketched a basic picture of the past and current situation of youth political participation in their own countries, supplemented with some further questions they will further address in the main part of the research.

The main part consists of three separated, country-based analyses by the team members of the Netherlands, Serbia and Kosovo, based on the various answers they received from the research subjects. As the team members were free to design their own parts as they saw fit, these parts vary in outlook and structure. The research ends with a conclusion in which the country-based results are compared.

Research method

In order to assess the situation regarding youth political participation in the three countries, we designed two research methods. The first is that we made our own surveys, and disseminated these amongst youngsters in our own networks, and amongst students enrolled in higher education institutions. These surveys have provided us with some statistical data on the topic of youth political participation, as well as qualitative information on the common opinions amongst youngsters on several issues related to political participation.

It should be noted that because of the way we selected the respondents, the survey results are biased towards youths with a higher education. The research therefore does not claim national representativeness, for which of course the number would also be simply too low. Time-wise it was the best and most feasible option for us to aim for students in higher education. However, we do believe that the surveys give further insight into some fundamental problems underlying the paradox of youth political participation, which will be explained in the following sections.

The second method was a series of in-depth interviews with, amongst others, members and leaders of youth wings of the major political parties in each country, members of youth councils or youth parliaments, and former youth activists from the biggest protest movement in our countries' histories. We decided to interview both former activists and youngsters in order to make a comparison between youth political participation now and in the past.

It was inevitable that the research process slightly differed per country, for example, in how many questionnaires and interviews have been conducted. Moreover, as the general political situation in all three countries is completely different, it is of course no surprise that next to the process also the results are quite diverse. Though this has made it difficult to compare the data sometimes, but we have done our best to draw meaningful parallels and conclusions that will be of interest to the reader. As announced, the results of the three different countries will be presented separately, after which the separate conclusions will be put in comparison.

In the case of Kosovo, the surveys have been spread on paper. A total of 60 students in Pristina, Mitrovica and Prizren have filled in the survey. As is the case for the other two countries, this means that respondents generally belong to the higher educated segment of society. Interviews have been realized with different actors, who are politically active nowadays, and the ones who were active in politics during the 1980s and 90s.

The Kosovo research team has conducted a total of six in-depth interviews. Three of these have been conducted with young people who are currently governing different youth and political positions, most notably Memli Krasniqi, Minister of Youth, Culture and Sports, Saranda Hajdari, president of the European Youth Parliament in Kosovo, and Arian Bugari, president of the youth wing of the Democratic League in Kosovo (LDK) in the municipality of Rahovec. Three former youth politicians or activist have been interviewed: Avni Alidemaj, a former youth activists engaged in the different protests during the 90s, Fisnik Ismaili also a former youth activist and known as the designer of the NEWBORN sign in Pristina, and finally Ibrahim Berisha, one of the participants in Students Movement in 1981.

In the case of the Netherlands, the research team conducted 82 online questionnaires. Also here spreading the survey in youth networks has resulted in an overrepresentation of higher educated youngsters in the group of respondents. The research team conducted five in-depth interviews. Due to the busy schedules of many former youth movement leaders the team had contacted, only one expert in youth activism was interviewed: Roel van Duijn, who led several successful youth movements in the 1960s and 70s.

As part of the present active generation, the Dutch team interviewed Bart Voorn, one of the founders of the G500, a new political initiative for youngsters in the Netherlands. Also, several board members of the youth wings of three main political parties were interviewed: Jauke Lodder and Victor Strengers of the young socialists (JS), part of the Labor Party (PvdA), Hans van den Heuvel of the youth wing (CDJA) of the Christian-Democrats (CDA), and Michelle Foolen of ROOD, the activist youth wing of the Socialist Party (SP).

When it comes to Serbia, the research team conducted an amount of 40 questionnaires. The lower amount of finalized polls compared to the two other countries is a consequence of the fact that the Serbian team was smaller than the other two teams. Also in the case of Serbia, a majority of higher educated people participated in the poll.

Four interviews were conducted in Serbia: two activists from the late nineties, one public servant and one political party activist. The first two are Filip Pavlović, former youth activist and director of the NGO Fractal, and Rade Milić, an activist and former media officer of Otpor. The team also interviewed Zorica Labudović, head of the Department for Youth Co-operation, Ministry of Youth and Sports, and Marija Stamenković, vice-president of the youth branch of the Democratic Party in Lazarevac and coordinator of the young women network.

Youth political participation today and in the past

Some traditional benchmarks of youth political participation

As explained above, no research on this topic can do completely without any statistical data on the level of youth political participation. It is important to note that the explanatory value of such data should not be overestimated, but that it also offers a general impression that can be used as a point of departure. Below we present some of these basic facts. Before everything, however, it should be shortly explained whom we have considered to rank as 'youths' when talking about youth political participation.

Defining 'youths' is no less problematic than determining when they are in fact actively participating in politics. The question where to draw the line is always subjective and depends entirely on the question with which the topic is approached. Age, level of education, certain political rights, social position, all these and many other criteria that can be used to delineate this vague and versatile social category will never result in a definition everyone can agree on.

As setting up our own definition would furthermore lead to problems in assembling some core data, we decided to let the norms of established institutions guide us in this respect, taking for granted that comparisons are not always perfect, and that it led to small differences in the data per country. This has resulted in a flexible definition of youths in terms of age, which broadly encompasses all people between 15 and 30. So what do the statistics of some of these institutions tell us?

There are 2,524,000 people between 18 and 30 living in the Netherlands. This comes down to 15.1% of the total Dutch population of about 16.7 million people.[2] With regard to this group's voting behavior, in 2006, 29% of the people between 18 and 25, and 31% of the people between 25 and 35 did *not* vote. In the 2010, 41% of the people between 18 and 25, and 26% of the people between 25 and 35 did not vote. These percentages are the highest of all age categories.

2 Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, available through: *http://www.cbs.nl/.* Last visit: 18 oktober 2011.

It can thus be concluded that when it comes to voting, the participation of young people in the Netherlands is not only lower than that of other age groups, but has also decreased over time. The percentage of youngsters of age 18–25 that did not vote grew from 26% to 41% in 2010, while the percentage of people aged 25–35 who did not vote declined only with 5%. One might find it strange that the 'future generation' in the Netherlands does not take its responsibility to be politically involved when they have the chance to do so, and wonder why this is the case. Are they not interested? Are they using other methods to raise their voices in society? We will try to find out why this is the case.

Also when it comes down to political activity in the national parliament, senate and government, there is a lower participation degree in this category compared to other age categories. A parliament is supposed to be a good reflection of the population in categories such as ethnicity, sex, religion but also when it comes down to age. When looking at members of the Dutch parliament however, only 5 members out of the total 150 are younger than 30.[3] In the Dutch senate the situation is even worse. At the moment of writing, only one person out of the 75 members has an age of 29 years old. In the current Dutch government, no one is younger than 30. This is certainly not a good reflection of the entire population, although it can be (partly) explained by the lack of education and work experience of young people.

For Kosovo, reports from international organizations have made it common knowledge that Kosovo has the youngest population in Europe, with about 70% of its estimated two million inhabitants younger than 35, or, in different terms, with every second person being younger than 25.[4] Based on the results of Central Election Commission of Kosovo, voting turnout is 45.29%, from over a million and half (1,632,276) registered names. Unfortunately, exact data on voter turnout of youths, as of yet does not exist. Still, considering that less than half of the population voted in the last elections, it is clear that in this sense the level of youth political participation is not as high as it could be.

3 Data retrieved from: *http://www.tweedekamer.nl/*. Last visit: 11 September 2012.

4 Fitzgerald, M., 'Europe's youngest state: no work, no way out, no country for young people', *Irish Times* (2012), available at: *http://www.irishtimes.com/* (last visit: 17 September 2012).

One other reason that shows why Kosovo is in need of more youth involvement in politics is exemplified by the relative age of the governmental cabinet. For example, in the Prime Minister Cabinet are six deputy prime ministers, and sixteen ministers. All of them are over 40 years old. Only two of them are 32, the youngest people of the cabinet: the minister of youth and minister of agriculture.[5] The youth of Kosovo is a treasure that is not well appreciated, and is experiencing some major difficulties in general. Their mobility generally remains limited within the borders of Kosovo. Moreover, reports have estimated youth unemployment as high as 73%.[6] National unemployment rates vary from report to report, but estimations ranging from 38% to 45% leave no doubt that unemployment is soaring.

The category of young people in Serbia encompasses persons from 15 to 30 years.[7] According to this definition, in Serbia there are around 1,5 million young people, that is 20% of the total population. There are about 200,000 unemployed young people. Finding a job for young people is hard. Many of them actually become members of political parties hoping this will enhance their job opportunities. Paradoxically, Serbia thus has a lot of youngsters in politics, but arguably not because of idealistic motivations. Besides, when they get actively involved in politics, they are not decision makers. They are often servants of party leaders.

Youth engagement with politics: a historical perspective

Youth can be engaged in politics in a formal way, since nearly every political party has a youth wing. Furthermore, there are well-established institutes trying to influence political policy and decision-making in favor of young people, such as de *Nationale Jeugdraad* (National Youth Council) in the Netherlands, and the European Youth Parliaments in Kosovo and Serbia. Besides these institutional mechanisms, there are also different, more spontaneous and informal means to influence policy, such as

5 See for example: *http://www.kryeministri-ks.net/index.php?page=2,43* (last visit 17 September 2012).

6 Fitzgerald, M., 'Europe's youngest state: no work, no way out, no country for young people', *Irish Times* (2012), available at: *http://www.irishtimes.com/* (last visit: 17 September 2012).

7 For the statistical data we relied on the websites of the *Centre for Free Elections and Democracy* (*Centar za slobodne izbore i demokratiju* (CeSID)), *New Policy Center* (NPC), and the *Friedrich Ebert StiftungBeograd*.

demonstrations. The connection between political participation and massive street demonstrations is clear: by demonstrating and protesting, one can put pressure on the ruling government to start, change or abolish policy.

When looking at those massive street demonstrations in the Netherlands in the past, one thing stands out. While recent demonstrations were joined by numbers that hardly exceeded 50,000 people, demonstrations in the past, such as the demonstrations against nuclear weapons, were joined by far more people (approximately 400,000 in 1981 and 550,000 in 1983). When we look at recent demonstrations in the Netherlands, only a 2004 demonstration against budget cuts of the Balkende II-administration attracted approximately 200,000 people. Again, we wonder why youths are rather staying on their couch than on the streets.

Of course, not just young people joined these demonstrations in the past. But the fact that the number of participants declined, indicates that also the number of young people joining such a demonstration has declined. Especially because it was evident that young people were the driving factor behind big demonstrations in the past, such as those against the Vietnam War or against the placing of nuclear weapons. What can indicate this decline furthermore, is for example the student's protest of January 2011, against the then upcoming budget-cutting proposals on higher education. For the first time since 1988, between ten and twenty thousand students gathered in The Hague – which is still nothing compared to the many student protests in the '80s.

A recent initiative of Sywerd van Lieden (former chairman of the representative organ for high school students in the Netherlands, LAKS) has shown the lack of input of youths in Dutch politics. He set up a group of 500 young people (G500), who are supposed to attend party congresses and raise young voices. The group's immediate popularity and considerable degree of success showed that many agree that young people are not sufficiently represented in current politics. The question still remains what the reason is for this downward trend over the last years. Are the goals of the demonstrations of less importance to people? Have people gotten lazy? Have other forms of protest and political engagement developed? Is world peace on its way to be achieved, or are youngsters

today simply not interested anymore in what happens outside their city or country?

In Serbia, massive youth demonstrations have been a more recent phenomenon. The country that has been under the weight of communism for half century and after that under the repressive regime of Slobodan Milošević, managed to free itself by the unbelievable force of young, educated people. At the end of 1996 and the beginning of 1997, the students had enough of the situation in Serbia. After another electoral fraud by the regime of Milošević in local elections the protests started on the 17th of November. Until the March 22nd the students of Serbia stood together and marched the streets of several big cities. With their powerful protests they forced the Milošević-regime to sign the 'lex specialis', in which the electoral victory of the opposition was acknowledged and new local governments in several important cities were brought to power.

The students from Belgrade also demanded a change in the management of their university and the return of the autonomy of the University of Belgrade, which it always had. In the end the regime of Slobodan Milošević survived the nationwide demonstrations, but the genie was out of the bottle. The opposition (and the students) would continue to challenge the regime of Milošević until its fall in October 2000. The same students play a big role in politics nowadays. Some of them are even candidates for the Presidency of Serbia. Others are indirectly involved in politics but have big influence in politics trough the NGO sector.

Serbia's history has shown that, when it comes to youth political participation, no matter in which way specifically, the force of young and educated people can achieve tough goals. Youth, with all its power, has changed the whole system that was present there for long time. Does the youth nowadays have the power to do something similar? Is the youth doing something at all?

In this respect, for Kosovo the student demonstrations of 1981 should be mentioned, as it is considered as a turning point in the political history of Kosovo. With these demonstrations students in Kosovo demonstrated to defend the basic human rights against the then regime, requiring equality and freedom. The demonstration reflected the unsatisfactory attitude also for the same things that form the biggest challenges in the

society today: towering unemployment rates and a lack of social and economic possibilities and chances to develop.

Meanwhile, this generation had become the most powerful generation of Kosovo, with Jakup Krasniqi, head of the Kosovo Assembly, as its prime example. To work on a brighter future, youths need to be politically active. Without active participation it is hard to find solutions for the problems in Kosovo today. This sword cuts on both sides: youths will have to engage themselves, but also the current political leaders will have to set the right example and increase the motivation and will amongst youths to participate.

Youth participation in politics may be called especially important for Kosovo considering its affects a huge part of its population. As youth political participation prepares the young generation to participate in politics, for Kosovo it can be expected that it would consequentially bring a large number of present concerns more into focus of the political parties, the government and other institutions, which otherwise would not be paid attention to.

Youth political participation in the Netherlands

The importance of youth political participation

While for some the political engagement and active political participation of the young is obviously important, we do not assume it to be apparent for everyone. That is why we asked our poll respondents about their opinion on the value of youth participation. It turns out that both the youngsters who responded to our questionnaire, as well as the interviewees emphasize the major importance of youth political participation. About 85 per cent of the youngsters agree or strongly agree with the statement: "I believe that political involvement of youngsters is important for the future of my country".

With what reasons do youngsters and "experts" claim that it is important that youngsters are politically involved? Several explanations prevail. The first is the argument that youths are the future. They are the ones that will have to face society's future problems, and amongst them we also find the politicians of the future. The "transition period" from an 18-year-old adolescent to a fully-grown adult is very important here. If people become more politically aware and politically active on an early age, this will result in an actively engaged political life. In the words of a respondent: 'Political awareness of youngsters makes that we think about or possibly solve current and future societal problems'.

The second argument that we see a lot is that all groups out of a society should be represented, including that of youngsters. Youngsters especially may have a different perspective on certain matters than people from another age. They should give voice to matters that concern their own group.

A third, less dominant argument we have heard was that political involvement 'appears to be good for career building'. For some people it is simply a way to gain experience as politician. In general, youngsters also answered that people should always be politically involved because, as one respondent put it: 'we are part of a society, and a lot of political decisions will take effect in our lives in a great way'. Overall, youth political

participation is seen as something extremely valuable. All interviewees agreed with the importance of participation that is stressed by the survey respondents.

Changes in forms political activity

We have seen in many sources, but as well with our own eyes, that political activism in the Netherlands has declined after the roaring '70s and '80s. Big protests and manifestations against issues in the Dutch society and internationally relevant topics such as the former Vietnam War are no more. What we did not pay much attention to in the previous overview of Dutch youth participation is that a variety of new or other forms of being politically active have gained popularity amongst youngsters.

One of these new forms is the eruption of a new political movement in the Netherlands: the G500. This is interesting for our research considering that the movement claims to fill a gap in the current Dutch political system that is characterized by major flaws and ineffectiveness. The G500 is a social movement consisting of hundreds of young people, who by visiting party congresses try to influence that particular party's agenda and statements. According to Bart Voorn, one of its founders, the membership of the movement has grown so rapidly due to the lack of effectiveness in the current political system. The G500 thus might have grown due to the decreasing popularity of the entire political system in the Netherlands. In general, there is no significant decline or increase in popularity of youth wings. The popularity shifts from one party to another, or even to another way of political activism.

Other forms of modern political activities involve the use of social media. The *KONY 2012* video is a good example.[8] Within days, hundreds of millions of young people all over the world shared this video about a Ugandan war criminal in order to raise attention. The question however is if this kind of activity is effective. At the moment that the actual spreading of posters and flyers had to take place to raise awareness and support, youngsters seemed to have already forgotten the Ugandan child soldiers and decided to stay in rather than to go out on the streets. It is

8 The reader is referred to YouTube.

such instances of, as one article calls it, "'slacktivism" or "clicktivism", or simply clicking on something on a webpage without following up on it in real life, that make it hard to conclude something about the level of youth political participation based on forms of online communication.[9]

The array of possibilities for youths to potentially influence politics

There is an array of possibilities or so-called opportunities for youngsters to become politically active in the Netherlands. As also in many other countries, voting in the national or local elections is perceived as a core political activity. With this in mind, we need to make two remarks. First of all, almost everyone in this research emphasized that voting is quite a "lazy" way of political involvement, and that voting is not really the way to actually influence the political arena.

Another core political activity, which is commonly mentioned as a possibility for youngsters, is (youth) political party membership. For example, someone has a variety of options to participate after they have become a member of a respective youth wing. The youth wing is for instance allowed to raise its opinion in a party meeting, allowed to visit party congresses or to take part in an advisory committee. Jauke Lodder of the JS for instance mentioned that he, as international secretary, is present at monthly meetings of international social democrats and that he has the opportunity to raise the Dutch JS voice on this international platform.

According to the G500, someone is not able to influence politics by using the method described above: a party works too bureaucratic for an individual to raise an issue that is against the will of that party. Therefore the G500 tries to influence parties by visiting party congresses with a big amount of people. The difference between the congress method of the G500 and the congress method of the youth wings is that a youth wing is only able to adjust the agenda of its own party. G500 does the same but with multiple parties, eventually leading to a possible majority in parliament for its agenda. Whether this method will succeed we can only tell after the elections for the Dutch parliament have taken place in September.

9 Cohen, R., 'Why Did "Kony 2012" Fizzle Out?', *Nonprofit Quarterly* (26 April 2012). Available at: *http://www.nonprofitquarterly.org/.*

As mentioned before, it is also possible to be politically active in a less institutional way. According to Roel van Duijn (1943), who set up some revolutionary youth movements in the 60s (PROVO's and Kabouters),[10] a good way to influence politics used to be protesting and demonstrating for what you stand for. Nowadays demonstrating is not as common as it used to be. Van Duijn explains that the reason for this is the existence of the youth wings of political parties. Youth wings are basically formed as an institutional way of expressing the opinions of young people. According to Van Duijn they might have replaced the massive protests and demonstrations, while at the same time the group of young people being engaged with politics has become significantly smaller.

However, Van Duijn also points out that those massive protests look massive only when compared to the current size and amount of protests. At the time it was "mostly revolutionary and not specifically big or massive". That is why they got so much attention. In general, Van Duijn defined political participation as "helping to improve society and willing to work for that". The members of the youth wings of the political parties agreed with this, and they added that political participation is more than just voting, and that it comes down to engagement with society and the willingness to participate in improving this.

When we asked our respondents about their own political participation, they mentioned, besides demonstrating or membership of a political party, that they were active through writing blogs or articles, that they were also involved through attending (panel) discussion groups regarding politics, that they work for a politically or socially engaged organization or that they are teaching about politics. One respondent replied that he is not politically active in any of these fields but that he is thinking and interested in politics and therefore considers himself as active. People also mentioned being active in a university board as being politically active, since they are part of the politics of an institution.

Overall, most youngsters answered that voting was their main way of being politically active. In the light of the interviews this is interesting, since all of our interviewees made clear that political participation in their opinion is contributing in an active way to improve society, and that

10 These movements existed in the 60s and 70s and were directed against the political establishment, environmental pollution and overconsumption.

it entails more than just voting. The big group of young people, therefore, that considers themselves politically active by voting are, in the opinion of the interviewees, not active! To sum up, it is clear that there are many mechanisms to be politically active. Although some ways require more time and work than others (voting versus the active membership of an organization), according to our poll respondents, most youths are active in some way.

Motivations for young people to influence politics

We have seen that there exist several main motivations to be politically active, but what matters as well is the process before that: what are their motivations to actually take action? One of the major changes in motivations for political action that has emerged out of this research is a shift from being politically active for personal reasons instead of for international or national causes.

Almost everyone we have spoken agreed that nowadays people are not demonstrating for world peace or any other topic that affects the world as a whole anymore, which was the case in the past. When people are demonstrating, they do that for themselves. An example is the 2011 student demonstration against the fine for long-term students. This was a demonstration directed against a law designating that students who take too long for their Bachelor's or Master's degree are punished with a €3000 fine. Major issues such as international conflicts do not receive as much attention and engagement for action from Dutch students.

According to former political youth activist van Duijn, this egocentric attitude and behavior can be explained through the growing consumption-addiction and materialism. Back in the days, Van Duijn resisted against this consumption-addiction and materialism with his movement. At the moment, such movements, if any still exist, are not as big as in the past. Youths in the Netherlands have become used to certain sense of luxury and are overall actually quite satisfied with the lives that they have, and therefore there seems no need to "fight" for issues that do not directly affect their daily lives.

Youth wings of political parties in the Netherlands agree with the growing materialism and consumption-addiction as causes of the decline of

demonstrations for things that do not directly affect the individual life. Hans van den Heuvel of the CDJA said that although people do care about others (Dutch people donate the most to charity in the entire world) they do not express this in an active way: they do not protest for their norms and values, they just donate money. Most people nowadays simply lack the time – or do not see political activism as important enough to spend their time on – and motivation to go out on the street and raise their voice for the cause of others. The JS mentioned that young people nowadays also spend less money on political activism due to this materialism. They feel a social pressure or need to have a shiny phone, nice clothes, a car and prefer to spend their money on beers than on membership of a political organization.

To be honest, we agree that there are not so much big problems in the Netherlands that require protesting or demonstrating to grab the public's attention. The students who protested in the seventies and eighties had more profound reasons to be angry, because it was a time when more injustices and inequalities existed in the Dutch society. As a result of these major student protests many things have changed – Dutch youngsters gained more rights and more opportunities to influence politics – things we currently consider for granted. On the other hand, there still exist major world problems, such as Iran's nuclear program, the euro crisis or the war crimes going on in Syria. Today's world still faces human rights abuses and ward crimes similar to those of the seventies and eighties, the only difference is that youths appear less eager to contribute to bringing change.

All of this has lead to different motivations to become politically active. Youngsters express more egocentric reasons to become a member of a youth wing. People look for a place where they can have a drink with people who share the same norms and values, improve their political skills, are aiming for a political career and want to feel useful. Most of all, they are often influenced by a problem in their personal environment and would like to solve that politically. Being a political activist in this way can also be motivated by future career opportunities.

To conclude, motivations for young people in the Netherlands to be politically active are mostly self-centered. Sacrificing yourself for the greater good is not as important as reasons like time, improvement of skills

or solving a problem that you face yourself, as opposed to a problem you do not face but you do feel engaged with. While Dutch youngsters will definitely click to sign a digital petition, like a link on Facebook to support peace activists in the Middle East, or deposit twenty euro to realize the building of school somewhere in Africa, we will not find them on the street to raise awareness about it, or protest against similar injustices themselves.

Towards a politically active youth in the Netherlands

We have suggested that Dutch youngsters lack the motivation to be politically engaged in their society. This in turn necessitates the question: how can we achieve more political engagement and activity amongst youngsters in the Netherlands? Our interviewees gave several tips for a policy based on the improvement of youth participation.

Education is very important, for instance. The JS proposed an expansion of social studies in secondary education to make young people aware of the importance of politics. Michelle Foomen of ROOD stated that youths are not that interested in politics anymore, because politics are not that interested in youths. A way to change this would be to engage young people in areas that are of actual interest to them. All members of the youth wings shared the opinion that politicians need to talk more with young people in order to understand what is going on this generation. A PvdA politician, for instance, invites young people to the parliament each week to eat pizza with them and to talk about society and what should be improved.

Of course, we must realize that there will always be people who are more easily engaged in politics, while others cannot be brought into politics with any means. There will always be people who criticize politicians on the way they interact with 'the people'. If a politician gives too much attention to youngsters, other people might feel that they are lacking attention.

The youth wings also emphasize that it is important that politicians should not just talk, but also listen and act after hearing concerns of the young generation. By doing that, they will get the feeling that they actually matter and do have a voice. Needless to say, this is not just a measure specifically for young people, it would basically help politicians to get people in general to be more engaged.

Conclusion

At the outset of this project, we set out to examine and answer the question: what processes in case of the Netherlands have determined the massive political activism in the past, and how are they different from the processes that influence a seemingly lower level of youth political participation today? At the beginning of this research, we assumed a lower level of youth political participation than in the past, because of the absence of major political activism in the streets. Now we must admit that these assumptions did not reflect the image that has been shaped by the finding of this research.

It is true that major student protests as took place in the seventies and eighties do not occur on such a massive scale today, and that youth political participation has declined in terms of voter turnout. However, it has become clear that political participation is more than just voting, and it could be improved by raising the engagement between youth and politics. Besides, we have also seen that other forms of political participation have filled the space that the massive protests have left behind. It is exactly these protests who have paved the way to more modern ways of political participation, such as blogging, awareness raising by sharing online, an initiative like the G500, and to name but another example, the internet-based Occupy movement that did not miss its effect on the Netherlands. Another observation we made is that the membership of youth political parties has declined compared to the past, but that we can still find enough youngsters who do dedicate their time to this type of political activity.

When it comes to the motivations of youngsters to participate in the political world we can be clear. The Dutch youth of today is more egocentric and less eager to be politically active than in the past. This can be explained through the more materialist and consumer-oriented society we live in today. Compared to the seventies and eighties, youngsters are generally more satisfied with their lives, and do not have to address so many issues which affect them personally – that was already done for them by the student protesters in those earlier years. Dutch youngsters of today do not feel an urgent need to fight for their rights on the streets, and find more benefit in more "lazy" methods of political participation.

It is therefore not surprising that Dutch youngsters also remain seated when they are called to fight for the rights of others in the world.

The most important question that follows from this research is how to engage youngsters in the Netherlands to become more politically active. We think that it is important to speak on matters which youngsters consider relevant themselves. Furthermore, since we have seen that youngsters are engaged in politics for egocentric reasons – such as CV-building or improvement of their social and political skills – there should be more political opportunities in which youngsters can follow up on these specific motivations. In other words, instead of criticizing or lamenting the seemingly low level of youth political participation, especially when compared to the past, we need to adapt to the changed political climate. Only when the new forms of political participation are given a place in the political climate we might see more youth political participation.

In this era in which communication has become relatively easy through social media, television and other devices, politicians must use these possibilities in order to engage young people more directly with politics. There are also signs that this is happening: many Dutch politicians are for example actively twittering, blogging, and on Facebook. However, as was noted before, appearances can be deceiving. Recent research shows that only 4% of the entire Dutch population actually looks at political *tweets*.[11]

Therefore, more important than using the new forms of engagement is the finding that if we want to engage youngsters in politics, we should address topics they consider directly relevant for their lives, or make more effort to show how bigger topics might have direct consequences for their lives in the future. As can be concluded from the major student protest against the budget cuts on higher education in 2011, it is currently still possible to engage the new generation of seemingly uninterested youngsters. We must make use of our knowledge that youngsters of today can become easier engaged for politics when it concerns egocentric reasons, as described above. To engage youngsters actively in politics, the key might just lie in framing the problems in the right way, which is a lesson of equal importance for politicians and, for example, youth and student-interest based organizations.

11 Ronde, K., 'De politiek twittert, maar de burger niet', *Kennislink* (2 juni 2010). Available at: *http://www.kennislink.nl/* (last visit 11/09/2012).

Youth political participation in Kosovo

Survey Results

The research team from Kosovo used paper surveys with students from universities of Prishtina, Mitrovica and Prizren. 60 respondents took part in the survey. The average age of respondents was a bit older than 23, with an almost equal division between men (51.7%) and women (48.3%). The statistical data will be presented in following tables with the necessary clarifications.

When it comes to the question 'how many times you have voted before' in comparison to the question 'How many times did you have the opportunity to vote', we have this collected data on voting behavior of the total 60 respondents, described in percentage the table below:

	How many times have you voted before	How many times did you have the opportunity to vote
never	20.0%	16.7%
once	21.7%	15.0%
twice	23.3%	26.7%
more than two times	35.0%	41.6%

So, based on the answers on this comparison we found out that the number of respondents who have never voted is higher in comparison with the ones who never had the opportunity to vote. The reason for this higher percentage is that the respondents, who voted twice, had a different conclusion about the importance of vote – which is one of the ways of being politically involved. According to students' responses, the political system is one of the reasons "why people don't vote". Apparently, people vote less the more opportunities they have to vote. This is why, for example, 41.6% people had more than two opportunities to vote, while only 35% actually used this opportunity to cast their vote.

It is not surprising that students had much more opportunities to vote compared to the actual number of young voters. This is similar to the previous result, because of the dissatisfaction of the people towards the political system and governing institutions. These institutions include central and local institutions (government, and municipal governing),

security institution (Police and Security Forces), as well for international organizations, such as EULEX, UN, etc. These results generate the conclusion that youth has lost trust in above-mentioned institutions, when it comes to fight against corruption, crime and other negative phenomena.

To prove the lack of trust among youngsters, we have found the estimated political activity within the circle of friends considered mostly as average. To have the clear view on this see the table below:

Very high	Above Average	Average	Below Average	Very Low
0%	3.3%	50%	33.4%	13.3%

These statistical descriptions are very familiar and common among Kosovo youngster. Simply, no one responds that the political activity within the circle of friends is high. Or, at least, only two students concretely evaluated "above average". However, more efforts should be placed for the improvement of the political activity. Even though the respondents were not very critical of the political structure, they did not show a lot of appreciation neither.

I am interested in the politics of my country

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
13.3%	10%	36.7%	31.7%	8.3%

Most of the respondents simply have no information on youth political participation and its importance, while the main complaints revolve around the country policies. The respondents imply that the solving of current problematic situations should be initiated by governing structures, while they are not ready yet to understand these solutions. That could be the reason for expressing their attitudes on their commitments on politics as mostly neutral or undecided. When we look at the statement *I have a fixed political preference* we can conclude something similar to the results of the previous statement "interests on country politics". Neutral opinion is the most obvious response.

I have a fixed political preference

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
11.7%	18.3%	35%	26.7%	8.3%

I have always voted for the same political party

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
15%	25%	25%	20%	15%

Their indecision is observed at first glance. However, there are also those who for several years have not yet changed political preferences. Possible reasons are: family tradition for political preferences, political programs and the opportunities offered by political parties. But when it comes to voting for the same political party, we have totally different opinions.

On the respective question, the survey generated very diverse responses and data. There is 15% of the respondents who strongly disagree on the idea of voting for the same political party, while 25% disagree. Contrary to this, 15% of the respondents strongly agree, 20 percent agree, and 25% are undecided. During the interview process in Kosovo, it became clear that youths, regardless of their political preference, do not join on certain common points that address what they would like to change in their country. In other words, youths in general lack a common political agenda. This has everything to do with the fact that, they do not agree or disagree about their possible influence on the politics in the country.

I believe that I can have influence on the politics of my country

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
8.3%	18.3%	41.7%	25%	6.7%

From the 60 people interviewed, only one-third believes that youths can influence politics. Over 40% has no idea, and about a quarter of them thinks they cannot have any influence at all. We think a main problem causing this situation is a lack of information from policy makers. Therefore we deal with an unpleasant situation, where youth policies or policy-makers do not distribute the concrete information. And this may

occur because; firstly, it may risk their position, and secondly, they do not possess the basic knowledge about distribution of information in order to incorporate or expand more space for youth political participation.

We have an expected response about the methods/ways that youths could be politically involved. On the top is voting method. People think that through voting they can make changes, or can be politically active. 25% of the respondents consider themselves as 'politically non-active in every sense'. Listed below, it is described which methods are leading as way of participating in politics:

- Voting 66.7%
- Political Party Membership 15.0%
- Youth Student Movement Membership 8.3%
- Youth Parliament Membership. 6.7%
- Writing or blogging about political topics 5.0%
- Other, named (Social Networks, Facebook) 3.3%
- Organizing protests or manifestations 1.7%
- Attending in protests and manifestations 1.7%

A vote can make a significant change. According to the results, we can conclude that motivation is the key to increase the number of voters and youth participation in politics. Voting is the most reasonable way to achieve changes in any political system. So, special attention should be given to finding the right mechanisms to increase youth motivation. In another perspective it is not only the political system to be blamed, it is also youths general disinterest to be politically active, which means that they prefer to take care of their families and education rather than being politically active.

I believe that the political involvement of youngsters is important for the future of my country

Strongly Disagree	Inclined to Disagree	Neither	Inclined to Agree	Strongly Agree
0%	5%	5%	66.7%	23.3%

In this light, it is interesting that 90% of the respondents answered that youth political participation is important for the future of the country. This clearly shows a contrast in what youths deem to be important, and what they actually do in practice. It is evident that motivation is missing

as well the proper courage. In the explanation of the reason, why it is importance of youth being involved in politics, we have 52 different answers derived from 60 respondents. We can find some similarities in the given answers, differences as well. Some of the answers favored a particular party, however many answers were based on the idea that the political situation in the country needs to change. This came as a result of civic discontent against political system, as economic and social aspect. "To be politically active, economically satisfied you ought to be a member of a political party". This statement came from a lot of respondents. Political activity should be a form of social collaboration, not another way that leads to personal benefits.

When we talk about the definition of Political Participation, we received many different opinions. Debates and protests are the proper ways to be politically active. In addition, you have to be informed about countries politics.

Meanwhile, the options for participating are different as well. From our respondents' preliminary answers it is clear that VOTING is the most preferred option. In addition, there are some opinions that employment and different financial stimulations are very useful. Therefore, the lack of options to encourage has a bad impact on youth political participation. It is an opinion, which can be found in almost every interview with our respondents, that motivation is an important key for participation especially for political activities. If a young man has no motivation, at least is not encouraged for his participation in a relevant activity, he will be disappointed and political participation will not increase. Again, we will describe a rank list, which describes the motivations of being politically active, as well a rank list which describes the motivations for not being politically active in Kosovo:

Motivations to be active

- To make a contribution in the society I live in 30.0%
- To bring change to my society 18.3%
- To discuss social issues 16.7%
- To express my interest on political issues. 11.7%
- To address issues that need to be heard in politics . . 8.3%
- As a practice for my future in politics 8.3%
- As a social activity to meet people 6.7%

Motivations not to be active

- I'm not interested in politics 21.7%
- I don't have time to be active 21.7%
- I haven't found the right way to be active 15.0%
- I don't know how to be politically active 13.3%
- I don't believe that I can have impact in politics . . . 13.3%
- I think I'm too young to be active 11.7%
- Other 3.3%

The short conclusion that can be drawn from all these answers is that the youth wants to make changes. Thoughts, ideas and attitudes of students should be well analyzed by policy-making bodies. Policy makers should take into account all these opinions and data and see what options there are to change anything specific which is not helpful to youth.

Interviews

As part of efforts to better understand Youth political Participation in Kosovo, the research team in Kosovo has conducted interviews with young people who are currently governing different youth and political positions,[12] also the team has conducted interviews with a group of elders[13], who in the past, during the 1980s, have been part of student movements and political movements, which have been known to organize massive student demonstrations, and are regarded as the fraction point of the past regime. The interviews have included questions regarding youth

12 Memli Krasniqi, Minister of Youth, Culture and Sports, Saranda Hajdari, President of the European Parliament for youth in Kosovo, Arian Bugari, president of youth party LDK in municipality of Rahovec

13 Avni Alidemaj, civil society independent advisor and participant of different protests during the years of '90ies, Fisnik Ismaili Creative director, founder and leader of Ogilvy/Karrota and Team Leader and creative director of NEWBORN monument, Ibrahim Berisha, Activist

political participation with the aim to make comparisons between present and the past.

Some of target interviewees considered that Youth political participation in Kosovo have drastically advanced, estimating that new generations are being worthily represented in Kosovo parliament and municipal assemblies.

Memli Krasniqi, Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports, commented: "Compared to the past, there is a significant increase of Youth political Participation in Kosovo taking into account the fact that the representation of young people in Kosovo's parliament is much larger compared to previous mandates. The same can be said also for municipal assemblies in Kosovo, where young people are the ones who lead the departments and municipal directories".

However, Fisnik Ismaili does not estimate youth political participation as efficient. Ismaili, also member of the movement "Vetevendosje" (self-determination), has created his unique and attractive method to be efficiently active. He uses the social network Facebook to get closer to the audience (especially youth), encouraging them in different ways, simply and easy to understand. 'I've been working for many years to come where I actually am. I've worked hard to create a readership of about 20 thousand individuals'. Specifically, Ismajli chose that through satire and humor, explaining the current situation in our country through episodes of his series "The Pimpsons".

"There cannot be political influence, or you may not be politically active through various social networks and change the actual situation for the good of the young people" said Avni Alidemaj, civil society independent advisor and participant of different protests during the years of '90s in Germany and abroad. Alidemaj states that the time of protests and demonstration yet has not passed. According to him, a very simple method to be politically active may be protests and demonstrations.

Youth political participation nowadays is growing but with no effects, says Bugari. Hajdari emphasises that youth political participation is low. On the other hand, she thinks that the persons who represent youths in Kosovo are always the same. The possibilities of youths getting in politics are therefore not given. So, young people today have no specific political

influence because the presence of experienced elderly members, which disable the space for young people to act because key positions on political parties were occupied by elders.

The inability of young people to be politically active is unsatisfying due to the fact that nowadays, youths are showing widespread passivity towards the problems that occur in Kosovo. Their willingness to make changes is not consumed, as interviewees mention: 'the channels to penetrate to the key positions are through family announcements, which is a form of nepotism'.

There are so many talents, there are young people with opinions and good ideas, but the initiative and platform for young people to express their opinion has always lacked, says Mrs. Hajdari, while, on the other side Mr. Bugari mentions that 45% of young people in Kosovo are unemployed and 10% of them are young people who have the potential to make major changes. These young people have completed their studies and they are experts in different areas. So, considering that Kosovo is a small country, this 10% could bring many revolutionary changes in front of actual social and political situation.

Ibrahim Berisha, member of the student movement during '80s, asked about what is the reason behind the fact that nowadays young people are politically negligent in comparison to the past, says: "At that world (time) there were no political parties or other mechanisms where the youth could have the possibility to get membership, but it was the student movement where young people participated. While today, there is youth political participation, but not too stressed because youth sees Kosovo as a state (even though Kosovo still has not gained its full sovereignty) and they try to find themselves through political parties aiming to reach beneficiaries, but the feeling of patriotism lacks comparing to the past."

Today, the unity of the youth is fractured through different mechanisms: political parties, parliament, youth movements (parties) through public and private universities, etc. Perhaps the concerns are not the same compared to the past because at that time the goal was equal treatment of Kosovo with other states of the former Yugoslavia. But, are there not other problems today which are concerning enough, important to be treated, which affect youths in their daily lives? Alarmingly growing

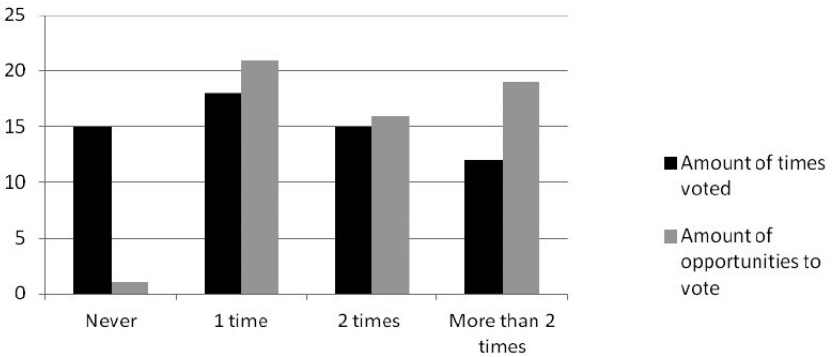
unemployment is affecting almost all young people. Isolation of youth and non-integration into the healthy group of European youths, and many other problems that Kosovo youths are confronted with everyday, all require full attention of society, decision-makers and especially youths, and demand their unity by expressing dissatisfaction democratically and move towards a comprehensive solution.

Youth political participation in Serbia

Survey Results

This research should show us what young people think about politics in Serbia, what their opinions about it are, and what preferences they have when getting or considering becoming actively involved. It can give a further idea of what political participation means to them, and how they define this concept. The questions of the poll are listed as names of the tables. In some questions, the respondents were asked to react to a statement, as it is indicated in these figures.

Figure 1. Times voted and opportunities to vote in percentage of total respondents in Serbia

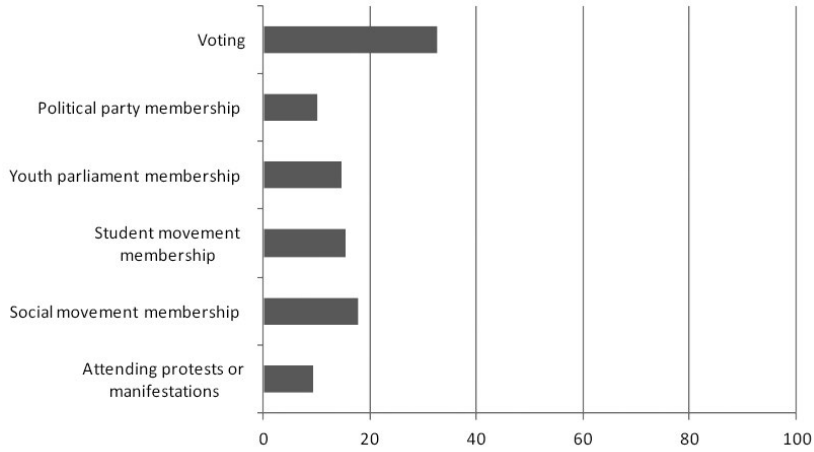


What this first table shows is that even though many people vote for the first time, this amount decreases along with the amount of opportunities people have had to vote. When asked how many times people had the opportunity to vote, the answers of the respondents who had 2 or more times to vote roughly confirms this tendency. It is this group that shows the most marked decrease in times voted, contrasted to the amount of opportunities they had. Moreover, the table shows that while there were hardly any respondents who never had an opportunity to vote, there were many people who decided to cast no vote at all.

Most of the respondents have answered that they *agree* and *strongly agree* with the statement that they are interested in the politics of their country. Based on the survey this gives a positive image. But in real life it is not the thing we are looking for. It is nice to be interested in something,

but can you really bring change by only being interested in something and not being active? As we could see from our first question, people use their opportunity to vote and use it quite regularly, so it is not unusual to see that out of the total number of respondents, 37 of them responded with voting as one of the mechanisms for being politically active. But is that enough? And is that the only way of being politically active? To get a better understanding about what people think about this, we asked the respondents, in the case they *are* interested in politics, in which ways they are active.

Figure 2. Political involvement of youngsters – as percentage of the total – in Serbia



Due to the fact that most of the respondents are students, it explains why the answer "student movement membership" as a mechanism for political participation was chosen by 18 of them. But it is interesting to see that 21 of them also consider social movement and other social organizations as one of the mechanisms for being politically active. This forms a contrast in the light of political party membership. Not many respondents are members of political parties.

This shows that for youths, political participation does not depend on being engaged in a political party. This goes against the common idea that in Serbia people can only be politically active when they are members of a political party, and they are in political parties usually because of their own selfish goals. This survey would instead give the impression that youngsters do not follow this tendency, and are more focused on

social problems. This is also confirmed by the next question, about the motivations to be politically active.

Figure 3. Motivations of youngsters to become politically active – in Serbia

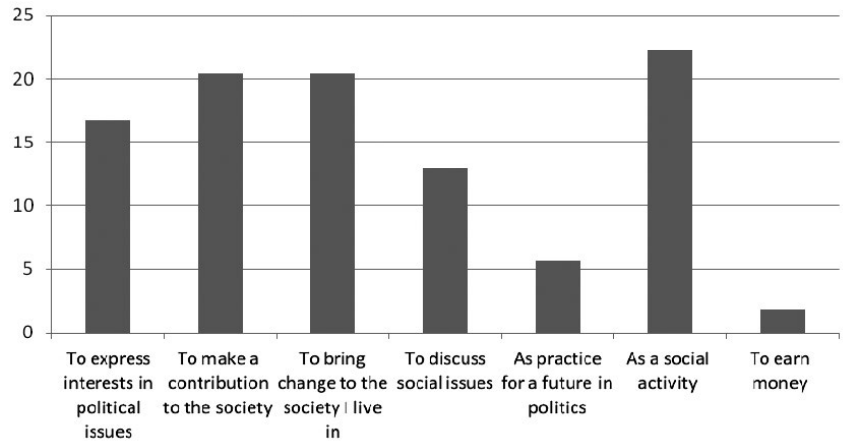
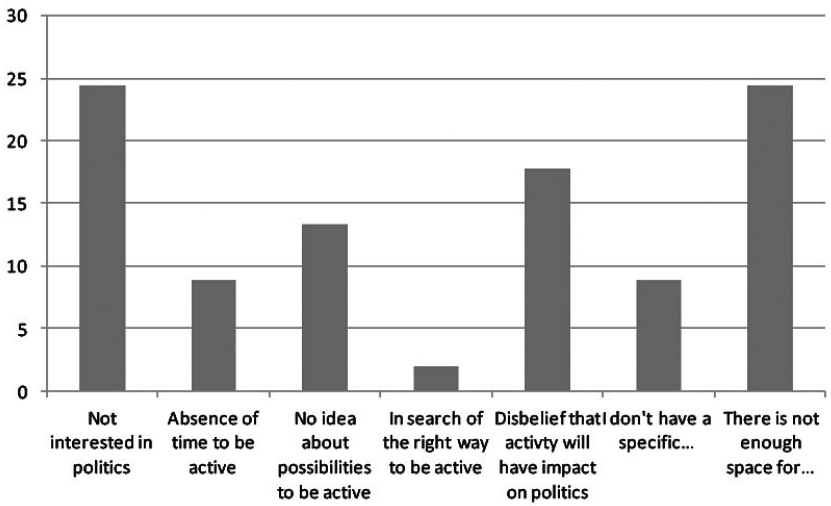


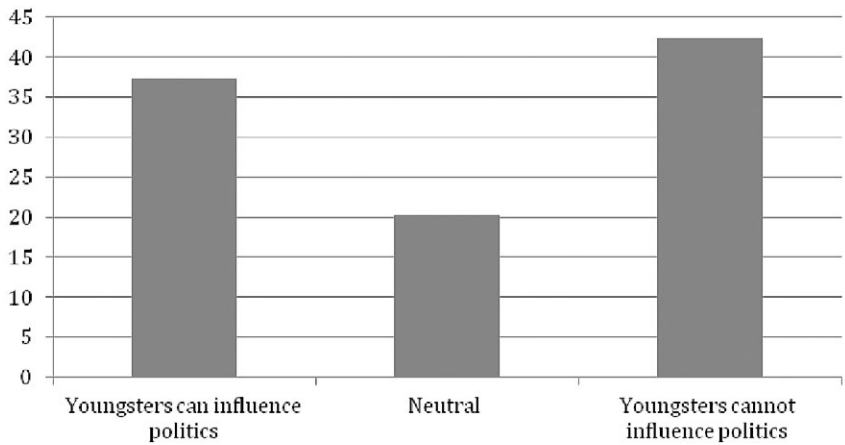
Figure 4. Reasons of youngsters not to be politically active – in Serbia



Most youngsters have answered here that they see politics as a social activity, a way to make a change or a contribution to the society they live in, or that they are motivated to become active because they are interested. But this overview alone might amount to a too idealistic idea of what can youngsters move to be or become politically active. What if somebody is not satisfied and disappointed in the previously mentioned mechanisms for participation? Maybe somebody does not want to be active because of some specific reason, no matter if he or she is highly interested in these specific area. In order to get an idea of what may move youngsters away from politics, we asked them what motivations they have not to be politically active.

On this question, the majority of the respondents answered that the main problem encountered or imagined in becoming politically active is that there is not enough space for youngsters. While there is no legislation that determines the required number of youngsters in parliament, the people who decide about country's future, are much older than younger generations. Also, many young people see no possibility for their personal and professional development, and simply do not believe in politics. From these graphs, therefore, the image arises that youngsters are disappointed in politics, and do not look towards politics to improve their future. So, we wanted to see how important this disappointment is in the light of the question if youngsters think they can have real influence in politics, and if they expect they can actually contribute to their society by being politically active.

Figure 5. Belief that youngsters can influence politicis – in Serbia



We see that though many of the respondents answered they have the idea they can actually influence politics, there are still more people who denied this idea. In all, there is a clear tension between two main groups of respondents: those who believe it is important to make a contribution by being politically active, and those who think it has no use, because they cannot influence politics anyways. If this is alarming, the answers to the next statement seem again to contradict this tension. Almost al participants agreed that it is important that the social group they belong to is involved in politics.

What can be said in general about the results of this small research? What impression does it give about the situation of youth political participation in Serbia? Young people are generally interested in politics. They are voting, trying to find specific ways to be politically active, and seem to possess good knowledge about which mechanisms exist in order to become active. Still, the level of political activity seems to be not so high. Despite interest and ideals, youths do not seem particularly eager to become actively involved in politics, even though we have seen that they have more idealistic than selfish or materialistic motivations to become politically active.

Despite the fact that youngsters want to change things and seem to be aware of the importance of being politically active, something is hindering them. One thing is that they are too disappointed in politics. Part of the reason why is that of the politicians in power. They do not create enough space for young people, and the available space does not have a function that leads to actual political influence. It is a space where young people can just be a part of politics, but not take part actively.

We have to deal with this problem together. This research should also be considered most seriously; because if young people are not included in the political life of their country, or feel like they are not, it is likely they will move away from their country to find better opportunities. Then there are a significant number of youngsters and dissatisfied people, who do stay in their country, but "contribute" only by means of destruction and violence on the streets.

Interviews

The Serbian team interviewed four persons: two activists from the nineties,[14] one public servant and one political party member.[15] By choosing these different types of interviewees, we wanted to see what people who were politically active in the past and people who are active today think about "youth political participation" nowadays. We wanted to get their opinion about youth political participation and compare nineties' youth activism with nowadays. By conducting these interviews we concluded that youth political participation nowadays is on a lower lever than in the nineties.

The importance of youth in the political activity is very big. Young people all around the world represent fresh energy and new ideas. With their ideas and energy they are the corner stone of good changes – political, social or economical – and also they create a system of value. Regarding to that, all our interviewees agreed that being politically active, especially for youth is very important.

What kind of change(s) do the interviewees notice about the behavior of the youth in politics? Is their implication bigger or smaller? Activists of the nineties agree with the ones active today to say that the young people nowadays are very lethargic when it gets to participation and engagement related to politics.

It is a fact that youths in the early nineties have done big and important things for Serbia. The regime of Slobodan Milošević and the war situation were the trigger moment to raise the students into a massive protest all over Serbia. They were very well organized and compact. They had the goal to change the political regime – dictatorship – and to bring democracy into Serbia. They could manage to organize themselves even if they had not assimilated the mechanisms so as to be politically active. Also, the number of NGOs was very little. Despite all these difficulties, they succeeded in their ideas.

14 Filip Pavlović, former youth activist and founder of NGO Fractal
Rade Milić, activist and former member and media officer of Otpor

15 Zorica Labudović, Department for Youth Cooperation, Ministry of Youth and Sports
Marija Stamenković, student of Archeology; Coordinator of Young Women Network in Lazarevac, branch of Democratic Party; Vice-President of the Youth branch of the Democratic Party in Lazarevac

Nowadays, situation is better. The Ministry of Youth and Sports – formed in 2007 – is dealing with a lot of problems and on many different ways is trying to encourage youths to various programs and projects. The main job of the Ministry of Youth and Sports is on one hand to create mechanisms or strategies to get the youths of the country socially engaged; and on the other hand it grants projects that raise the capacity for young people to participate into the public life.

Despite all the improvement in the mechanisms to get young people involved into the political life of the country, we still have a low rate of politically active youngsters. Serbia is a country with a lot of talented and smart kids, but is suffering of a brain drain that gets always bigger and bigger. The politicians in power disappoint youths: they actually don't believe in politics at all. Political life is seen as negative.

Motivation is the key in every process we participate in; it gives us a will to start working and to go to the end. It's about motivation to improve the environment in the park, to improve ourselves and also, to participate in politics. Is there enough of it?

In 30 years, Serbia went through socialism, Milošević regime and democracy. We must compare the thoughts of our elders and youngsters in order to see the difference. The ideas and values of youth at the time, especially before the death of Tito were different. For the youths in the past, materialistic norms and wealth were not highly valued. And today in the whole world success is measured by the amount of money you have. Older generations were interested in making changes for the community. They participated into the political life to improve the laws for their municipality or the society in general.

What is with youth today? With those who are involved in politics, their goals are strictly materialistic and selfish. There is a small number of those who have ideal and fight for it. Mostly young people enter in political parties because that is the way (sometimes one and only possible way) to find a job, to make money and sometimes to be above the law.

"Today, young people do not enter political parties for some ideas or an inner feeling that something is wrong in the state but they are more motivated by their personal interests, for their career or to find a job; this

is true for the government parties but also for the opposition parties", pointed out Rade Milić.

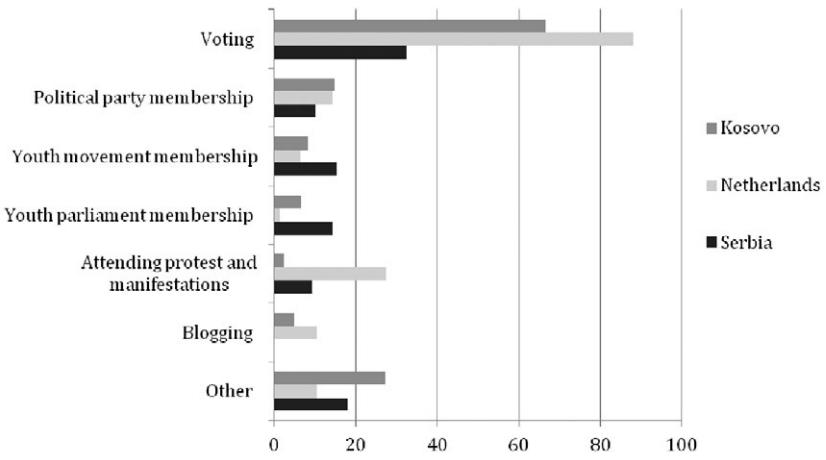
Is there a lack of ideal for youngsters in Serbia? Is there a will at all to change anything? Or are youths lethargic because they know that they cannot do anything in order to make some improvements for the community at all? Disappointment of youths in politics and disinterest for political engagement (dirty profess, corruption, no hope, no changes) has brought them to increase their mobilization into radical parties. As an effect, youths are now seen more as a threat than resources and creative energy.

General Conclusion

Our main goal was to analyze and research youth political participation in the Netherlands, Serbia and Kosovo. We have conducted interviews and a poll in order to research this phenomenon in all three countries. The result should be seen as an impression that is part of a larger picture, to which this research has sought to make a contribution; further research will be needed to analyze the political behavior of young people with lower education, for example.

In this research, we have focused on the two cornerstones of political participation. First of all, we investigated what the different *possibilities* are to be(come) political active, to what extent people use these possibilities and if they are aware of all the chances they have to be active. Secondly, we analyzed the different *motivations* of people to be active or not. Why people are active, why they are not, if these reasons have changed over time, and most important: did the motivation drop? These are the main questions that will be answered below. Certain possibilities and motivations will be compared between the three countries. By putting them in comparison, it becomes possible to discern between country-specific characteristics of youth political participation, as well as to determine, for example, what sort of motivations to be politically active are important for youths in general.

Figure 1. Political involvement of youngsters – as percentage of the total



Possibilities

The most popular form of political participation is voting. In the three countries, the right to vote is a legal right of every citizen. However, there are differences in the way this right is used. Youngsters in Kosovo and the Netherlands, for example, are more willing to vote when they have that opportunity than those in Serbia. In these first two countries, the amount of times voted corresponds quite closely to the amount of opportunities the respondents had to vote.

Young people in Serbia don't use their opportunity to vote as much as in the other countries. Many Serbians use their first opportunity to vote, but this amount decreases as the number of opportunities they have to use this form of political participation increases. As is suggested by the answers in the survey to the question about the motivation not to be politically active in Serbia, this decrease might be linked with disinterest and disappointment with Serbian politics.

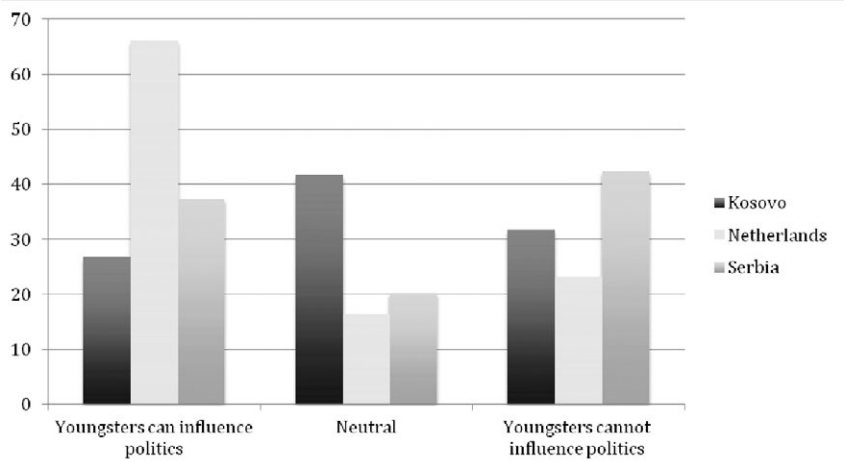
In all three countries there are not many people active in a political party, while many youngsters actually do see it as one of the main possibilities to be politically active. As said, in the Netherlands, Kosovo and Serbia voting is chosen most often as the way of being politically active. A difference is that besides voting youngsters in the Netherlands are barely involved in the youth parliament or student movements, while a lot of people in Serbia and Kosovo do take part in these forms of participation. Especially in the Netherlands the survey points out that the youngsters make use of a lot of "new" forms of political activity, such as blogging, attending discussions, and reading and writing about political activities. Dutch respondents specifically mentioned these forms when asked about the opportunities available in the Netherlands.

The final possibility in which youngsters can be politically active is demonstrating for a certain cause. As the surveys showed, however, few respondents consider this as a main political activity. As was concluded from the interviews, in the past people seemed to be much more eager to demonstrate for their case. Their motivations have changed.

How do the young citizens of Serbia, the Netherlands or Kosovo perceive their potential impact on politics? In Kosovo opinions on this subject are divided. Most of the respondents, however, do not have an opinion about

it at all. Perhaps this is the due to the relatively young age of the Kosovar democracy. By comparing Serbia and the Netherlands, we noticed similar or almost identical answers and perspectives on this question. The polls give an image of two different types of people. On the one hand are youths who are interested in politics and are strongly confident that they can influence politics – with the voting process as the most essential tool to do so – on the other are youths who believe that they do not have any influence on their country's politics, even if they are interested in politics and use their right to vote.

Figure 2. Belief that youngsters can influence politics in percentage of the total



Motivations

When comparing motivations of youngsters to be active in Serbia and Kosovo, one can clearly see the similarities: people care about their country, they want to bring about change and feel that they should address certain issues. Although, contrary to Kosovo and the Netherlands, for youngsters in Serbia politics is primarily seen as a social activity, the top reasons why people should be active in the Netherlands and Kosovo are listed above.

What stands out when comparing motivations not to be active, is that there are relatively big groups 'in search for the right activity' or 'ignorant about the activities'. In Serbia, the three main motivations not to be politically active are related to a lack of interest in politics, disbelief that youngsters can make a change and the idea that there are no possibilities

for youngsters to be active. This disbelief is reflected by their relatively negative stance towards the statement about their importance in politics.

Figure 3. Motivations of youngsters to become politically active – in Kosovo

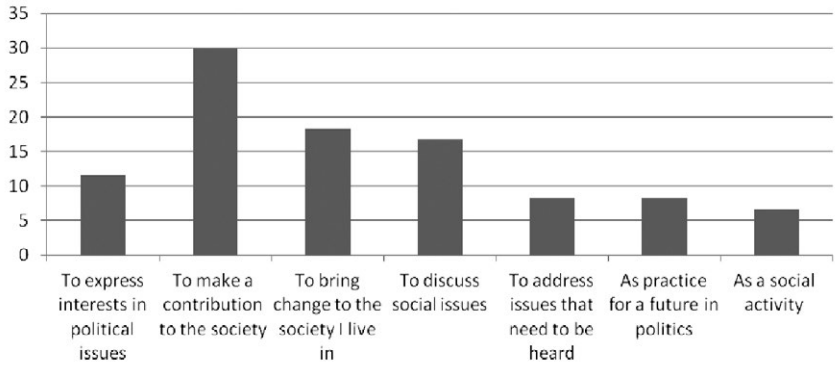


Figure 4.Motivations of youngsters to become politically active – in the Netherlands

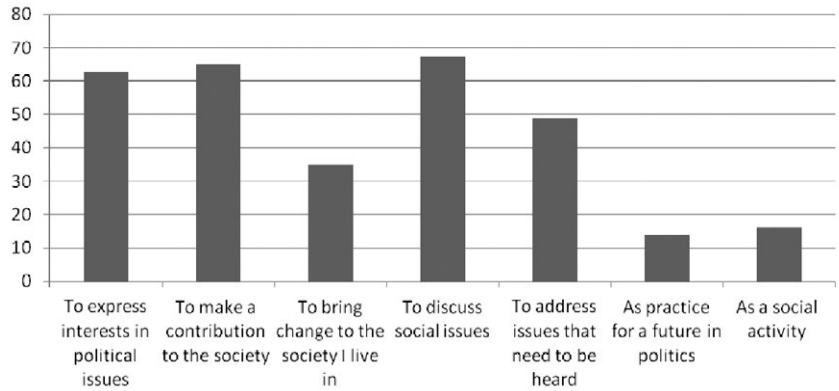


Figure 5. Motivations of youngsters to become politically active – in Serbia

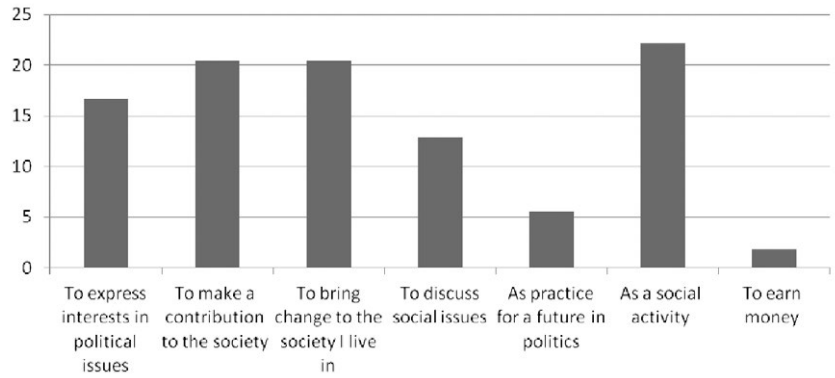


Figure 6. Motivation of youngsters not to be politically active – in Kosovo

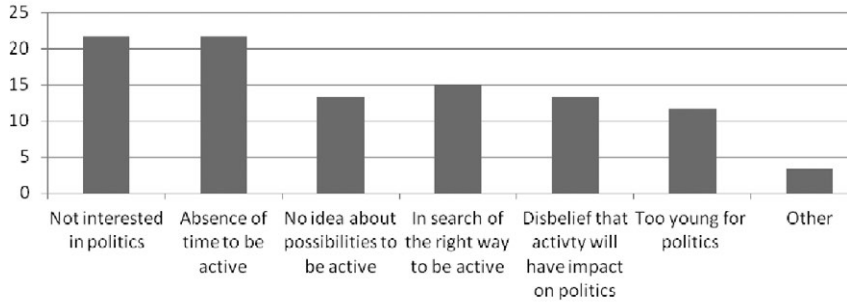


Figure 7. Reasons of youngsters not to be politically active – in the Netherlands

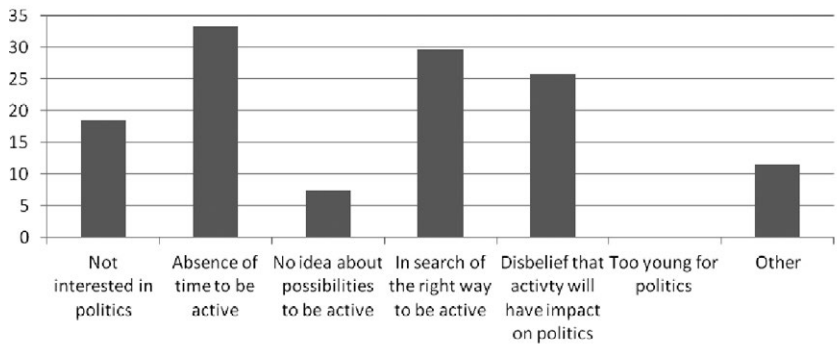
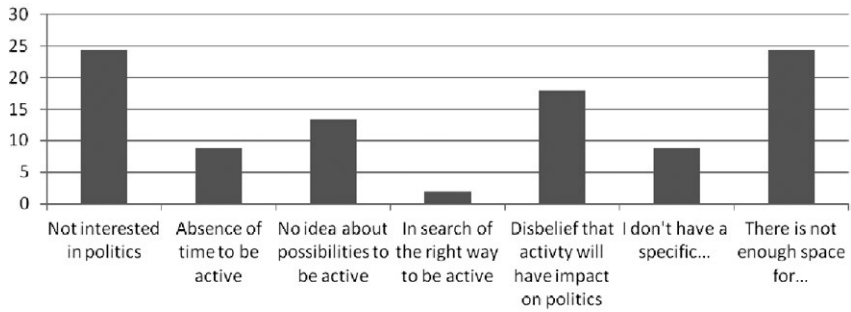


Figure 8. Reasons of youngsters not to be politically active – in Serbia



However, it is not just disbelief playing part. Demonstrations in all three countries are not what they used to be. Processes of political pacification, relative economic growth and more passive forms of political

participation seem to be the main causes for this general shift in motivation, and consequent decrease in usage of this form of political participation. Several experts in the Netherlands have connected these causes with the growing materialism and the lack of time of people nowadays.

The Dutch poll also showed that a lot of respondents do not want to be active, because of this lack of time. People would rather buy a new phone or work to get money to buy one, than they would devote time to a demonstration against, for example, Syrian war crimes. This is not just something typical for the Netherlands; the poll in Kosovo yielded similar results. In Kosovo's case, this is even more interesting. On could say that people in the Netherlands got used to political and military stability, while in Kosovo this is probably not the case since it's recent past. Further research for this is needed.

A main problem is that many respondents, as well as the interviewees, feel that youth political participation should be higher somehow. This is the main paradox we encountered in our research: on the one hand, youngsters feel that they should be more active, while on the other hand, the most popular political activity is merely voting, and only a minority commits themselves to really active participation, such as being member of a youth political party. In Serbia and Kosovo, this is even more evident since youngsters there, on average, are rather negative about their input in politics. This shows us a gap between the intention to be active, and the actual input. Of course, reasons to (not) participate in politics show huge differences between a country like the Netherlands and a country such as Serbia. But when looked at the big picture, they are nearly the same.

In conclusion, therefore, it can be said that youths in Serbia, Kosovo and the Netherlands are generally interested in politics. They consider themselves talented, with good ideas and fresh energy. Many think that they can influence the political life of their country. However, they are also unsatisfied with the limited possibilities to get involved in politics. They think they have too little space to have impact, and that their voice is not heard. This is a significant fact, because without young people in politics a country has no future. The question is of course how we can overcome this gap between the opinion that young people need to participate more, and the actual participation. Our interviewees told us in general that they feel that politicians should do their best to engage young people more with politics. They have to give them the insight that politics really can solve problems and that young people can make a difference.

THE Guide: How to Act Like Men and Women? NO ☺!

Analyzing Gender Stereotypes in Kosovo, Serbia and the Netherlands

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Wired by: Ana Ranković
Wout Dingenouts

Introduction of the Gender group

A short introduction of our research group is necessary in order to obtain a full understanding of our research paper. Our group is known as the Gender thematic group. After an intense introduction and workgroup sessions in Pristina in March 2012, the six of us decided we wanted be involved with everything that concerns gender.

For half a year we had countless of Skype meetings and weekly brainstorm-sessions, we drowned in a seemingly never-ending rain of emails of our-future-gender-perspective email address and we observed our close surroundings, daily practices through the so called gender lens. We noticed among ourselves that we are situated in a world where everybody seems to stereotype when it comes to gender roles and that gender stereotyping is (re)produced unconsciously. For some of us, the topic was somewhat new and we had to dive into the literature of gender studies. Some of us cannot hear the word gender anymore without getting the chills.

This has been a surprising journey. Sometimes not knowing where it is going to take us, and sometimes getting this insight in the deep of the night, which was telling us that we are getting somewhere with our research – at least for our own understanding of gender patterns. It also has been an enlightening journey where six different personalities from three different societies, Kosovo, Serbia and the Netherlands and our fantastic personal coaches had to endure each other's way of communicating, but in the end getting an understanding for what the other is (trying) to say.

We are proud of our end product. A research paper, including the visual representation of international gender stereotypes in a series of cartoons, is the result of our cooperation in the last six months. Even though many Internet connections got lost during Skype meetings, people immigrated to Finland and also a ruptured Achilles tendons formed difficult challenges at times, we survived and more importantly so did our research paper!

Because our research is about gender roles, patterns, and polarization we explored various definitions of gender and gender polarization. Especially the term gender polarization is worth emphasizing, because polarization is intrinsically linked with the core of the term gender. The term gender in itself already divides men from women, since gender differences have been constructed as a result of confrontation, "men" as opposed to "women".

We looked into gender stereotypes and perceptions of our target group of university students, to see what sort of socially defined cultural patterns, attitudes, characteristics, behaviors are ascribed to men and women. In the end we aimed for the understanding of how gender stereotypes relate to gender roles, and how characteristics which people ascribe to others (individuals and groups) influence their expectations from others as well as the roles they perform accordingly. Especially the notion of self-perception was extremely interesting for us and yielded very fruitful results, as it made us conscious of our own daily gender practices. This self-perception is also illustrated by the cartoons included in this paper. The cartoons in the end illustrate the outcomes of our surveys. The explanation of how we conducted the surveys will follow now.

Check out our Method

We conducted surveys among university students at Universities in Serbia, Kosovo and the Netherlands asking six simple basic questions:

1. What comes to your mind when you think of women from Serbia?
2. What comes to your mind when you think of men from Serbia?
3. What comes to your mind when you think of women from Kosovo?
4. What comes to your mind when you think of men from Kosovo?
5. What comes to your mind when you think of women from the Netherlands?
6. What comes to your mind when you think of men from the Netherlands?

In each country around thirty university students were asked to answer those questions no matter what kind of stereotypes came to their mind. As is represented in the cartoons, many surprising, and also some less surprising stereotypes of gender roles came out. Here we like to introduce and thank Visar from Pristina, Jana from Belgrade and Thi Tran from Alkmaar for helping us with their talent and skill to express complex and sometimes even contradictory responses of the university students through cartoons.

By creating and publishing cartoons, our intention is not to strengthen existing stereotypes. On the contrary, our wish is to challenge them as well as to encourage debates about the gender in Kosovo, Serbia and the Netherlands.

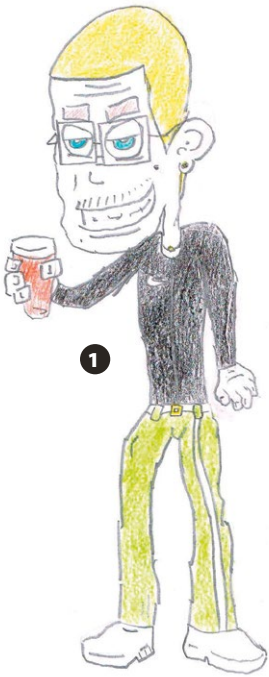
In our view, cartoons illustrate a clear need for self-reflection in our societies and a need for more openness, contact and learning about and from each other. The cartoons demonstrate a complex interplay of gender, ethnic, cultural, social factors influencing the way we see each other. For instance, aspirations to join EU on one hand as well as the conflict and painful recent past between Kosovo and Serbia on the other influence the way people from Serbia and Kosovo see each other and the way they see the Dutch. Though comprehensive analysis of these images exceeds the scope of our present paper, we hope that they provide a good ground for some future researches.

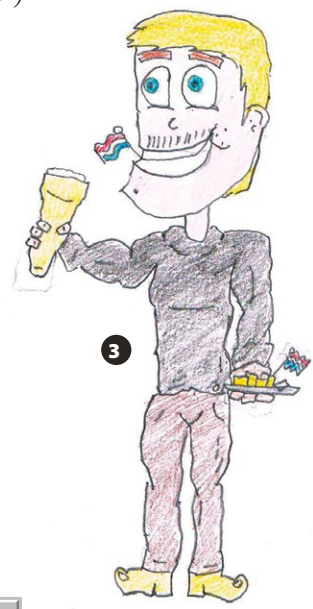
Before digging deeper into our research paper, please have a look at the cartoons.

Cartoons: How do we see each other?

PLAY AND TEST HOW GOOD YOU ARE AT RECOGNIZING AND DECONSTRUCTING STEREOTYPES

(check your answers by clicking on images, or on pages 108–119)





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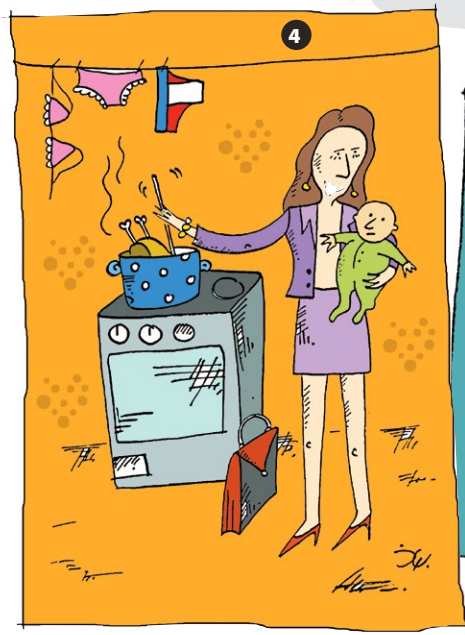

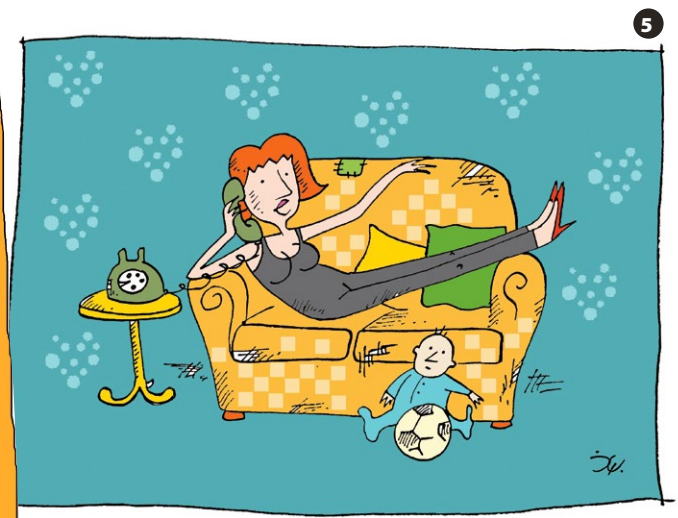

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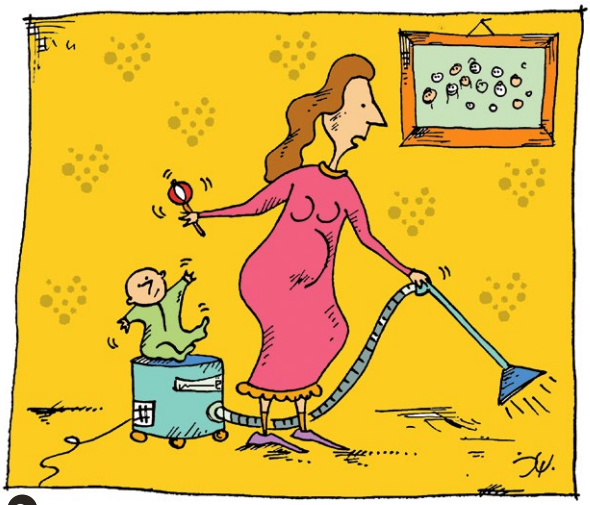

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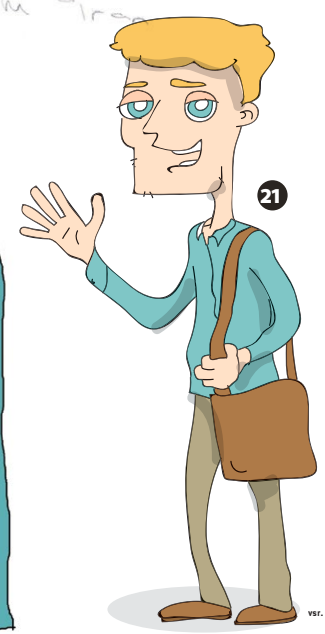

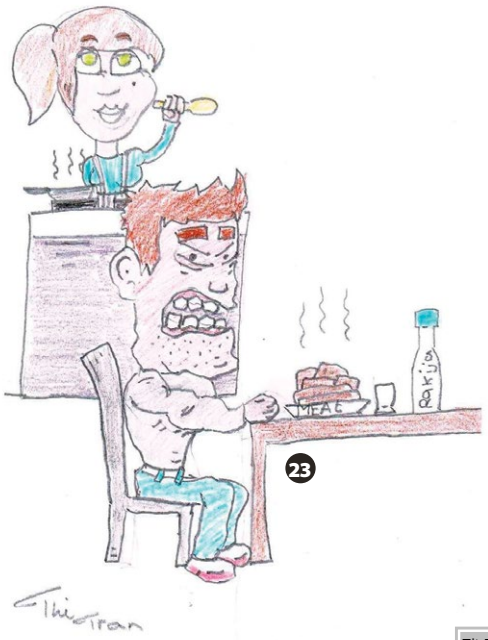

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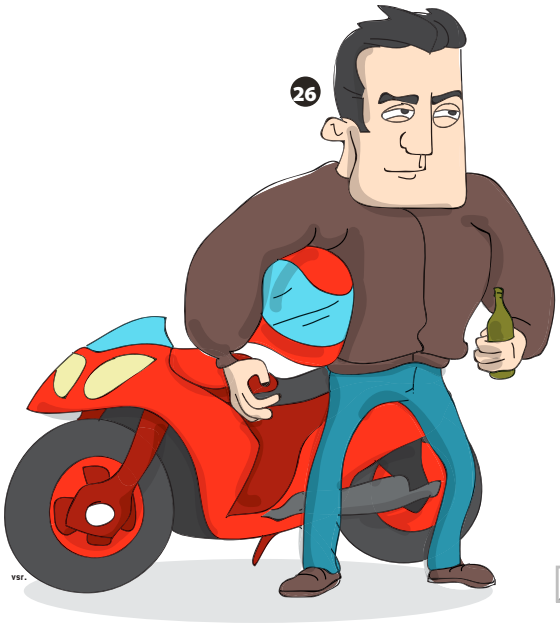

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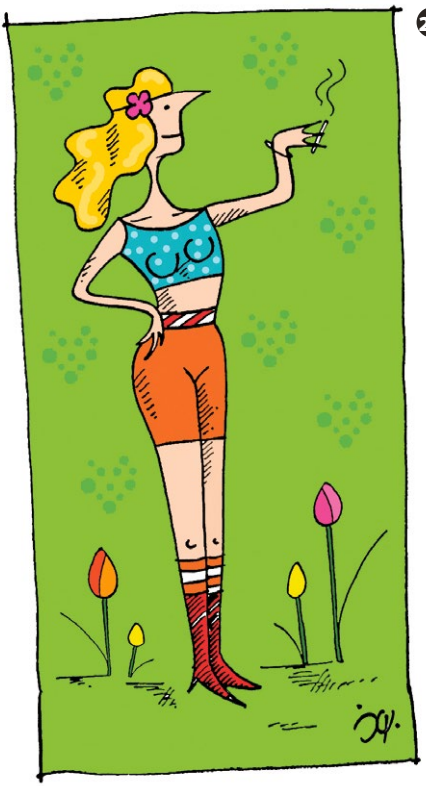

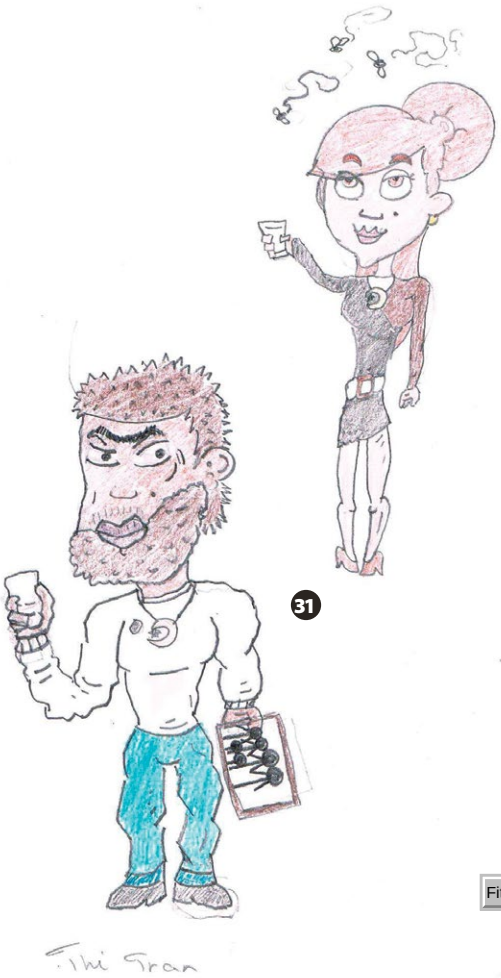

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Answers to the cartoons

We asked students from every country to share with us what comes to their minds when they think about men and women from their own and other societies. With their answers, we generated word -clouds, which you can see here.
The cartoons were drawn based on the clouds.

1. Men from The Netherlands on Men from The Netherlands

2. Men from Kosovo on Women from The Netherlands

3. Women from The Netherlands on Men from The Netherlands

4. Women from Serbia on Women from Serbia

5. Men from Serbia on Women from Serbia

6. Women from Kosovo on Women from Serbia

7. Men from Serbia on Men from Kosovo

8. Men from Serbia on Men from The Netherlands

9. Men from Serbia on Women from Kosovo

10. Men from Kosovo on Men from The Netherlands

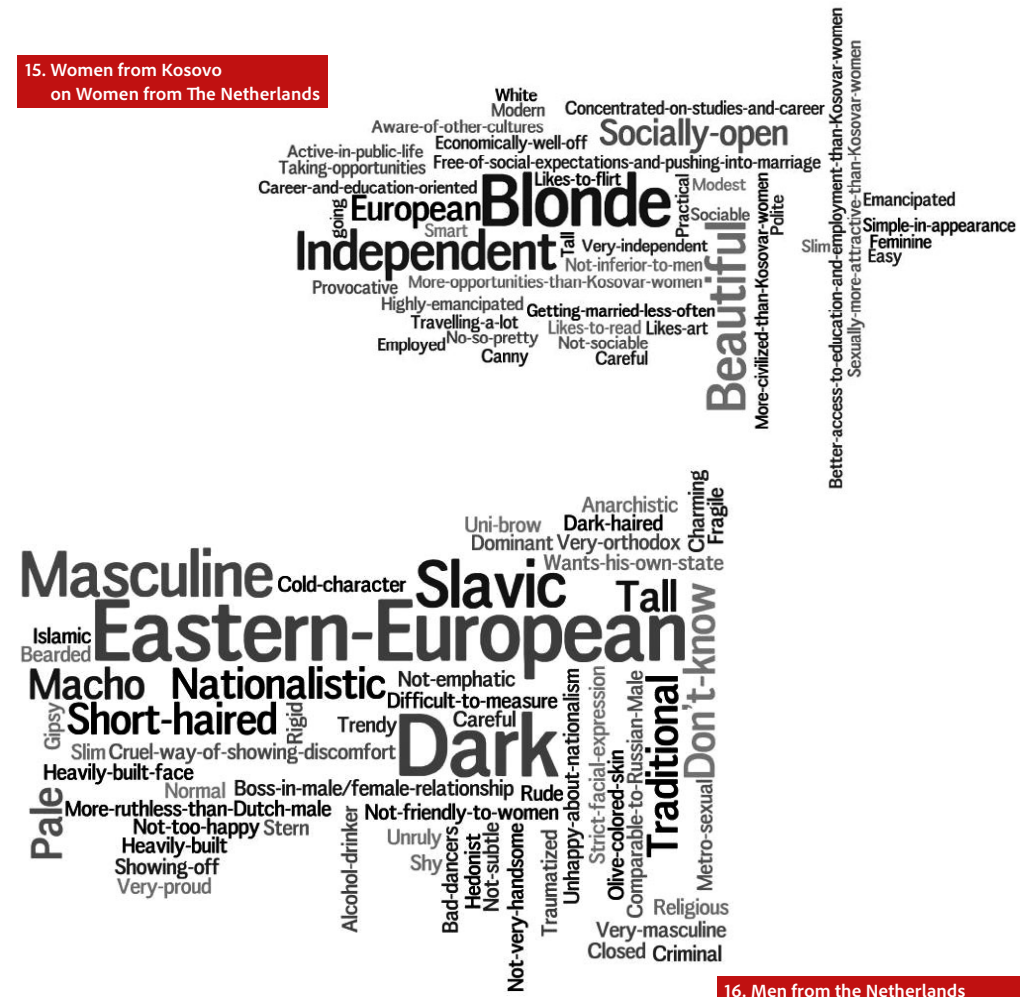
11. Women from The Netherlands on Women from The Netherlands

12. Women from Serbia on Women from Kosovo

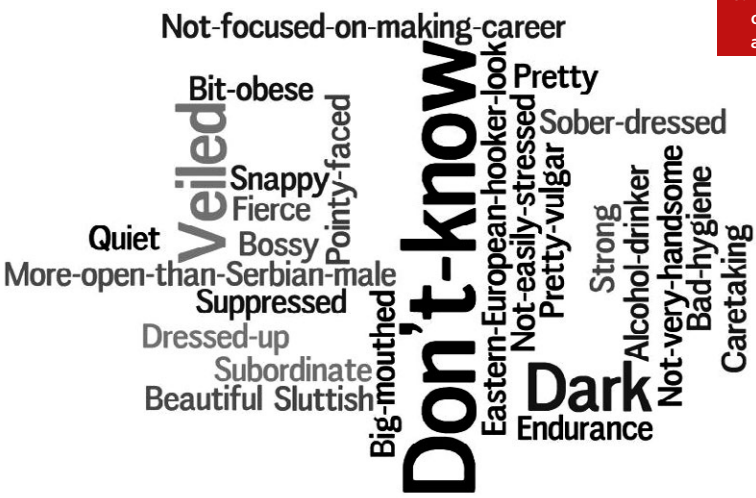
13. Women from Kosovo on Women from Kosovo

14. Women from the Netherlands on Men from Kosovo and Women from Kosovo

15. Women from Kosovo on Women from The Netherlands



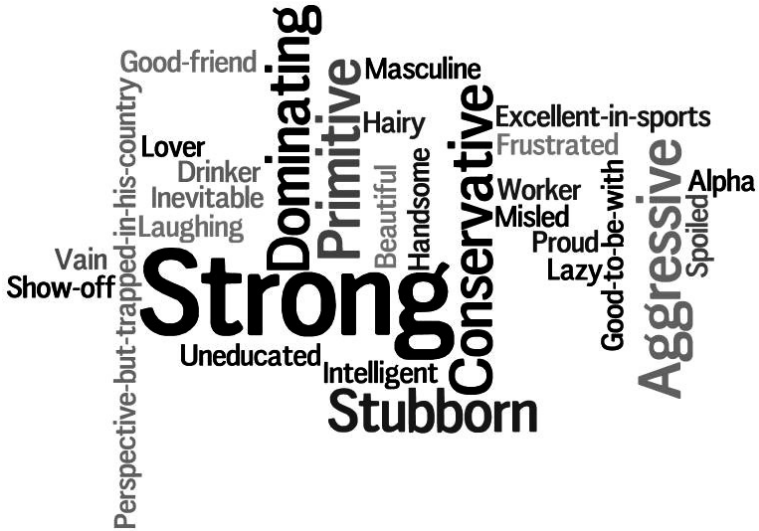
16. Men from the Netherlands on Men from Serbia and Women from Serbia



17. Men from Serbia on Men from Serbia

18. Women from Kosovo on Men from Kosovo

19. Men from the Netherlands on Women from the Netherlands



20. Women from Serbia on Men from Serbia

21. Women from Kosovo on Men from the Netherlands

22. Men from Kosovo on Men from Serbia

23. Women from the Netherlands on Men from Serbia and Women from Serbia

24. Men from Kosovo on Men from Kosovo

25. Men from Serbia on Women from the Netherlands

26. Women from Kosovo on Men from Serbia

27. Women from Serbia on Men from Kosovo

28. Women from Serbia on Women from the Netherlands

29. Men from Kosovo on Women from Kosovo

30. Women from Serbia on Men from the Netherlands

31. Men from the Netherlands on Men from Kosovo and Women from Kosovo

32. Men from Kosovo on Women from Serbia

What's your point?

Our goal in this research paper is to analyze and maybe even explain these (self) perceptions. Therefore we also interviewed a couple of gender experts in each country. These are persons who are professionally involved on the topic of gender. The interviews lasted about an hour and a half, and we used a standard set of fifteen questions. We asked, for example, what their definition of gender and emancipation was, what they mean with terms as femininity and masculinity, and then we continued asking them how they would explain gender polarization in (one of) the three societies.

On the basis of their answers we tried to illustrate how gender roles are situated in Kosovo, Serbia and the Netherlands; how, where and why gender polarization exists in these three societies. Because gender polarization is different in all three societies, we are using an intra-social approach where the gender patterns are being compared. The countries have all different backgrounds, although Serbia and Kosovo share a common history.

We noticed soon that our interview questions "aren't innocent at all" as one of the interviewees, Maarten van Onneweer mentioned. Our questions were already loaded with stereotypes. Some experts got triggered by these questions and were sometimes fulfilling stereotypes themselves. Others firmly stated they were not comfortable with talking or defining those words, just because those words are already stereotypes themselves. This was an important lesson for us and therefore we want to mention this beforehand.

We are grateful to the following list of experts, who were so kind to share with us their views and experience:

The Netherlands

Joseph Hoenen, coordinator Women, Peace and Security at Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.

Corine van Egten, senior researcher on emancipation, family and diversity at Aletta E-quality.

Maarten Onneweer, PhD student at the University of Leiden.

Jos Midas Bartman, bachelor in International Relations and did his bachelor thesis on the topic women and gender in BiH.

Elka Nikoleva, lecturer in South Slavic languages and literature at the University of Groningen. Her doctoral thesis "Immured women" considered the representation of gender in the oral tradition.

Serbia

Prof. dr. Dubravka Đurić, associate professor at the Faculty for Media and Communications, University Singidunum.

Vesna Miljuš, president of the Commission for gender equality in Novi Sad.

Pavle Karlečik, president of the Commission for gender equality in Zrenjanin.

Kosovo

Linda Gusia, MA in Sociology at the New York University, currently working on PhD at the University of Pristina on urban public spaces, performances and representations of gender identities.

Vjollca Krasniqi, lecturer at the Department of Philosophy, University of Pristina.

Sanela Lutvić, professor of French language in Prizren gymnasium and vice-president of NGO Equality.

Understanding gender

It is important to address the definitions of gender and emancipation given by our interviewees. Most of the experts share the same definition of gender. They define gender as a social construct and they stress that it should be separated from the biological factor, sex. Gender is something that is socially and culturally constructed as a person grows up. It is a role that is conducted; therefore we also speak of gender roles, or patterns. "Gender is not only about our biological sexes but has a cultural meaning of what it means to be male or female", Corine van Egten mentioned.

However, Vjollca Krasniqi and Jos Midas Bartman admit that when they speak of gender their focus actually lies on women and women emancipation. Sanela Lutvić for instance defines gender as "family", which is the view that some feminists would strongly criticize. Jos Hoenen stands alone in his definition of gender stating that "gender is acknowledging men and women have different needs, perspectives and interests. Men live for themselves and women live for the group".

Another issue that is important to address is that gender is often linked or is even defined by (domestic) violence against women. Many interviewees stress that when it comes to the discussion of gender the focus lies on the victimization of women. This discourse (intended or unintended) is subordinating women from the moment the discussion about gender starts. This is not to say that there are enough domestic violence gender discourses, but it should not be the only approach to the topic of gender.

Emancipation is for most experts the road to equality between men and women. This primarily means that both men and women attain the freedom to choose and perform the social roles they want. In practice, however, emancipation is still often linked to women who have to emancipate from a subordinated social position. This discourse is damaging for women and men. Onneweer, for example, states: "when you talk about women emancipation the men can do nothing with it". Egten adds, "Emancipation in the Netherlands means that men in high positions have to take care that women are also represented in these high positions. So the focus of emancipation and gender equality lies on men".

This is especially true concerning gender roles in the Netherlands. But it is also becoming an issue in Kosovo and Serbia. However, this situation is very different because there women and men have to recover from the discontinuities of war which also affected gender roles. There still has to be achieved full equality between men and women in law and "on the ground".

In the end, we maintain the definition of gender shared by the majority of the interviewees, namely that gender is social and culturally constructed and has to be separated from the biological factor of sex. An important note is that in this research paper the term gender includes women and men and should not be confused with women emancipation.

Inter-cultural approach

Different backgrounds, discourses, events and obstacles shape different gender roles in Serbia, Kosovo and the Netherlands today. The most important difference between Kosovo/Serbia and the Netherlands that we would like to address is the notion of continuity (in the Netherlands) and discontinuity (in Serbia and Kosovo), because it covers and explains many other differences in gender roles between these societies.

Serbia and Kosovo experienced violent disruption, chaos and deconstruction as a result of disintegration and wars in former Yugoslavia. The Netherlands on the contrary has had experienced a gradual development towards gender equality in the period after World War ll. With the second feminist wave in the 1970s as the main peak in this development did gender equality become embedded in Dutch law? Papić further clarifies that:

The external destruction of one sociocultural identity system in the war is the most brutal form of deconstruction. Briefly, in the last years of socialist Yugoslavia, four basic identity levels came under extreme stress: self-identity, gender identity, civic (urban) identity, and the identity of the Other[1].

We also found some common"areas" where gender polarization is the highest according to our experts, and on which we consequently focused

1 Papić Ž., 1999. *Women in Serbia: Post-Communism, War and Nationalist Mutations.* [online] Afkimar *https://afkimar.hi.is/05_kreakjur/greinar/brennid_papic_womenserbia.html* [Accessed on: 19 August]

our research. The private and public spheres include many gender stereotypes in all three countries. According to the majority of the experts the public sphere is still dominated by men and the private sphere by women, again in all three countries. Second, tradition and religion play an important part in gender polarization, especially in Kosovo and Serbia, but also in the Netherlands tradition still plays its role in gender polarization behind the curtains.

What's all the fuss about?

Gender roles in the Netherlands

For discussing and understanding gender roles in the Netherlands as they occur today it is important to briefly mention some key events that have shaped the current gender role division. In the Netherlands two feminist waves were of great importance in the development towards gender equality. One in the beginning of the 20th century, where women obtained the active right to vote – two years after all men had received this right in 1917. This did not mean the end of clear patriarchal divisions. Women's societal role was still mostly linked with reproductive settings.

The second feminist wave in the sixties and the seventies tried to make a break with this public mindset. Feminists fought for sexual and financial equality. They wanted to be equal to men in all perspectives. There were famous protest groups such as "Dolla Mina" who spread slogans like "Boss of my own belly", which referred to the right of abortion. The second feminist wave made equality of men and women embedded in law. Even though today Dutch women are regarded as emancipated, there are still enough problems when it comes to equality.

One of these obstacles is the debate about gender. Answers among the experts were pretty much the same on the question: do you think that discussions about the gender and gender equality are present enough in our everyday life? Jos Hoenen stressed that the debate about gender is pretty much focused on the (victimized) role of women, also in the Netherlands. Egten, Onneweer and Bartman stressed that the debate about gender equality has reached a certain level. At this level, women are represented in public life, have equal rights and use these rights. But is that enough? Onneweer disagrees: "the exploited debate about equality of work and income is over, but we are behind Scandinavia and Germany."

Indeed, in Scandinavia it is possible for women to work more hours because childcare arrangements are very convenient and cheap. In Sweden, parents are entitled to 480 days of parental leave when a child is born or adopted[2]. On the other hand, men in the Netherlands get two days off

2 Sweden.se, 2011. *Gender equality: the Swedish way to fairness.* [online] Swedish Institute *http://www.sweden.se/eng/Home/Society/Equality/facts/Gender-equality-in-Sweden/* [Accessed on: 16 August 2012]

work the day a child is born in contrast with women. Laws in these contexts already determine a role division: women at home with their baby, men at work earning money.

Onneweer emphasized that also the media is reinforcing gender stereotypes every day. Here we can find the most explicit forms of gender polarization. How can we get rid of the stereotype that gender means sex? Onneweer thinks it is about the unawareness. "If we would know what keeps the unconscious ideas alive we would also know how to change them, but we don't know. You can achieve much with structural changes and in the Netherlands we have accomplished that, but to change the unconscious ideas and expectations is difficult".

Egten strengthens Onneweer's argument by saying: "there needs to be more attention for stereotypes of traditional men and women roles". Onneweer adds: "the debate is about how men are successful at high positions and how women take care of the children". Taken together, this is a sad story for feminist who were active in the 1970s.

To conclude, on the one hand, the problem of the debate revolves around awareness of gender stereotypes, but on the other there is the argument: there are also women who actually want to work part time and stay at home with their children – thus confirming their gender stereotype. Nikoleva mentions that "many women even lack the ambition to make a career, saying that they want to spend more time with their children. In the end, it is up to individual women to work hard and achieve a career".

So do Dutch women actually choose independently to stay at home, work part time, and not work up to high positions, and do men freely choose the opposite? Or are our unconscious ideas and morals regarding to gender roles in fact still limiting our freedom of choice? This is a difficult debate to wage without victimizing women and reinforcing stereotypes yourself – as in James Brown's *It's a man's world*. It may also be the consequence of the fact that on one side women (as well as men) reproduce patriarchal patterns, but also that on the other side women usually do uncreative, low paid jobs, that they bear more dificulties in their professional life and that they often struggle to combine their responsibilities towards children with professional engagement. Although the private

patriarchy disappears, public patriarchy still poses informal barriers for women to fully enter in the economic and political sphere.

According to Onneweer the debate in the Netherlands is now mostly referring to gay and transgender emancipation, because gender equality is already achieved in Dutch law and women do choose freely to stay at home. While Bartman and Egten stress that the debate in the Netherlands is also focused on the emancipation of women immigrants, Onneweer adds that "in the Netherlands there is an idea we have to overcome all inequality. We don't like class or social hierarchy".

To conclude, in the Netherlands gender equality is represented in laws, but our unconscious traditional gender expectations reinforce gender stereotypes on a daily basis. The obstacles are mainly found in private/public sphere, and in tradition (awareness of gender stereotypes).

Gender polarization in public and private sphere

A division between the private and the public sphere is often made by the gender experts, because gender roles imply different representation and participation of men and women in certain spheres of social life: men in public sphere, women in private sphere. In the context of patriarchal tradition and culture in particular, two distinct spheres of social life belong to women and men, respectively the private and the public.

The two domains are unequal in terms of power and status, and men and women both dominate in "their" spheres in terms of substance and numbers. The public sphere entails the spheres of economy, politics, science, religion and art. This is the domain of power and wealth, and it is the domain that belongs to men. The sphere of the family and the household, the care of the children and the elderly belongs to private sphere, and is seen primary as the responsibility of women.

Gender polarization is the highest in the public sphere in all three countries. In Serbia and Kosovo polarization is also high in private sphere, by which these societies differ from the Netherlands. Papić uses an interesting, dynamic definition of the public sphere which goes back into history, and should be given here in full:

> The public sphere is the supreme, vertical level of Great History, Manhood, Nation, state, and world politics; it is the order of the despotic masculine power with the mysterious, silent, and invisible Great Master/Leader as the omnipotent Great Savior/Father/Provider/Controller of the totally subjugated female Nation. On this level, everyone is equally powerless except those who belong to Master's and Mistress's suite, but they are, for all that, an extremely expendable, insecure, and endangered species. They are to serve while their services are needed, and when the need for their services passes, they disappear in silence, as is expected of dutiful, discrete, and obedient servants. […] The private sphere, on the other hand, is the level of trivial horizontality, of everyday life, and real existence, the level of destructive and inglorious changes, of the breakdown of institutions as well as of the previous legal, financial, social, medical, and educational support systems and structures, as well as of the proliferation of ad hoc criminal forms of control over people's lives and properties[3].

The definition of Papić describes the heritage of the patriarchal society. In the Netherlands the public sphere once included a patriarchal tradition. This changed over the course of centuries, mainly with the enlightenment and emancipation of both men and women. Convention has it that it ended with the feminist waves; though this does not mean certain norms and values pertaining to the patriarchal society disappeared completely.

The observations made are that on the one hand women in the Netherlands are numerically well-represented in the work environment, but the majority of women (also higher educated) are working part time. Corine Egten said that "another way to look at it is to look at the labor participation of the women. In the Netherlands this level is very high although it is not that much when we look at the work hours of women".

Nikoleva adds that "at the workplace if you really consider positions of power and decision making, women are very poorly represented in the Netherlands". Onneweer adds that "in the Netherlands we don't talk about women emancipation anymore but about gender emancipation". Onneweer argues that the debate of women's representation at high positions has become boring and exploited, therefore the majority of women still take care of their children and this debate and situation seems to be accepted by the majority of women and men.

3 Papić Ž., 1999. *Women in Serbia: Post-Communism, War and Nationalist Mutations.* [online] Afkimar *https://afkimar.hi.is/05_kreakjur/greinar/brennid_papic_womenserbia.html* [Accessed on: 19 August]

Almost all our gender experts come to the conclusion that against many expectations women are underrepresented in the public sphere in the Netherlands. Corine van Egten: "We've got the rights and the laws, but in practice we can achieve more". The public sphere is still dominated by men and in the Netherlands gender equality is mainly related to the work environment. Therefore the public sphere mainly includes the representation of men and women in the work environment.

The debate of gender polarization in the public sphere (or the work environment) in the Netherlands is full of obstacles. The first obstacle is that it has to be avoided that men have to take care of the representation of women in high positions. The second is that most Dutch women are highly educated but seem to be "satisfied" with working part time and mostly want to take care of the children. The third, and probably the most important one: the debate tends not to focus on gender polarization, but on the emancipation of women, mainly because women are underrepresented. This makes the tone and direction of the debate already problematic. Questions if men are under pressure, or how they experience their fatherhood in relation to their work stay is out of sight. The Dutch government should look at role models as Scandinavia that provide the opportunity for gender equality.

Gender polarization in the private sphere

While there are still many problems when it comes to equal representation of men and women in the work environment, the private sphere in the Netherlands shows a more equal representation then in the other countries. According to Nikoleva, gender polarization in Serbia and Kosovo in the private sphere is high in those societies but "it is just the opposite in the Netherlands – at home there is for most households an equality of tasks, men vacuum clean and cook, or take care of the children".

Egten however mentions the opposite, namely that "polarization shows mostly in the household and in the different sexual expectations from male and female". She further explains: "for women in the Netherlands emancipation has the same negative implication as for male. Many women aren't bothered by being female; when you asked further though there are still some issues for example when it comes to pregnancy. Still young

men are preferred at jobs because with young women you take the risk that they get pregnant and you need to pay for their release".

What Egten actually says is that in Dutch society patriarchal norms (about motherhood) are still binding women to the private sphere, because society does not give them enough opportunity to combine the public and private spheres: pregnancy and work. According to Gusia, "these two dimensions would be a great chance to study masculinity and femininity as two spheres, while the public area is identified with masculinity and private sphere with femininity".

Hoenen adds more generally that women are more active in the private sphere, because they are more focused on the collective needs. However, it should be stressed that Hoenen unconsciously already stereotypes by characterizing men in terms of individuality, and women in terms of collectivity. Onneweer doubts if there is gender polarization in the Netherlands in the public as well as in the private sphere, but he thinks other people think there is.

To conclude, gender polarization is the highest in the public sphere and less in the private sphere in the Netherlands. For the majority of people less power and significance is to be obtained in the private sphere, compared to the public area. So as long as the public sphere is mostly linked to men, it is likely that full gender equality is not present in the Netherlands. While the number of women represented in the work environment is much higher compared to other countries, the Netherlands seems to run behind other countries, like those of Scandinavia, when you look at the hours of work and the opportunities given by society in cases of childcare and pregnancy. In the Netherlands moreover, gender equality for men and women, and a debate about it is lacking.

Gender polarization caused by tradition and religion

Tradition and religion seem to play no role in Dutch society when it comes to gender polarization. At least that is what Dutch people think. Although secularization is increasing and religion does not play a defining role like it used to, there are enough arguments to show that tradition and certain patriarchal and religious norms and values still (unconsciously) define gender patterns and roles in Dutch society. The

Netherlands still has an enormous Calvinist heritage where Calvinist norms and values: soberness, and individuality are still found in today's society. For Bartmans this already is shown by the popularity of the political party, the Christian Democrats. Although its popularity decreased the last years, it ranked among the biggest political parties in the last decade, and participated in several cabinets.

Đurić is very critical when it comes to the stereotypes of open-mindedness and independence of the Dutch. She mentions: "Dutch society although open is incredibly self-centered and closed nationally (see recent political support for Wilders). It is amazing to me that people do not really care about other countries and certainly not about the plight of women and children in other countries. See how little support there was for the Tsunami disaster in Japan, or the Sudan massacre now. Syria is in the news, but politically Dutch diplomats seem not be really concerned, but are waiting for the US to take measures. Although there is press liberty very few people are really informed or want to be informed about life in other countries. The press information is very insufficient, leaning towards the clichés".

Tradition and nationalistic tendencies influence ideas and expectations of gender roles. Tradition and nationalistic feelings are concerned with preserving an identity which is indirectly linked with the idea of women related to the reproductive context. According to Đurić, "women are decoration, because of their reproductive role in society. They are considered necessary for the survival of society". She also criticizes the Dutch media saying it is leaning towards clichés. The media, as in many countries, profits from stereotyping women and men. Naomi Wolf explains in her book *The beauty myth* (2002) that commercial and capitalist practices shape gender roles:

Advertisers are the West's courteous censors. They blur the line with editorial freedom and the demands of the marketplace. The magazine may project the intimate atmosphere of clubs, guilds, or extended families, but they have to act like businesses. Because of who their advertisers are, a tacit screening takes place. It isn't conscious policy, it doesn't circulate in memos, it doesn't need to be thought about or spoken. It is understood that some kinds of thinking about "beauty" would alienate advertisers, while others promote their products [...]. Women's magazines

are not alone in this editorial obligation to the bottom line. It is on the increase outside them, too, making all media increasingly dependent on the myth[4].

With "the myth", Wolf refers to the beauty myth, in which, according to her, Western societies have found a new obsession. Pushing and capturing women in gender stereotype roles where female appearance is of most importance. Wolf is mainly talking about women, but this is also true for men. Magazines as Men's Health constantly illustrate and confirm male stereotypes as trained and muscled, for example. The importance of the influence of the media in stereotyping gender also brings us to the discussion of capitalism.

4 Wolf N., 2002. The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women. 77–8. HarperPerennial.

Gender equality in Kosovo

Gender equality has been one of the "attractive" topics in many discussions in Kosovo in the last few years. Not that gender was never a topic, but, as with all other things, the Kosovar society was deprived of possibilities to take part in the gender equality movements around the world. The reason for this is that Kosovo was, and still is, facing major other problems and challenges – to name but two examples, the road to true national independence and its soaring unemployment rates – because of which gender equality was not seen as a primary issue.

People's perception and understanding of the concept of gender equality is in the process of transforamtion. Having in mind that Kosovar society is a patriarchal society, when the issue of gender came up it was perceived as something new and challenging. It was an experiment of how we can integrate already existing traditions into modern world values.

Exposure to processes of globalization has shaped the perception of men and women as well. In the post-war period after 1999, in Kosovo relationships between men and women have changed fundamentally in a modern way. One of such processes is, for example, the international presence in Kosovo following the war, which promotes equality also on gender basis with all kinds of projects.

As sociologist Linda Gusia comments, there is a change in the way how gender issues are discussed. It used to be considered by usually speaking of women only as a victim (with instances of domestic violence as the example). Gender discussions which are now taking place across all spheres of everyday life are also of a big importance. Sanela Lutvić claims that discussions taking place inside families are crucial because it can influence the intellectual development of the family and its view towards gender equality in a positive way. The conservative and patriarchal approaches to gender relations in most of Kosovar families just continues the tradition of putting women into an inferior position, and leads to the understanding of gender inequality as something natural.

In Vjollca Krasniqi's opinion, gender discussions are a marginalized topic in Kosovo at the moment. She thinks that the approach towards this topic is mainly institutional and integration-oriented instead of being an

autonomous process of development in Kosovar society in its own right. She adds that gender is basically treated as a concept through which other issues are being adjusted and excused. The presidential elections in Kosovo are a good example how people use gender issues to institutionalize certain decisions. Electing a woman as a president of Kosovo, who has formal role in decision-making processes shows the attempt of giving a different picture to the world.

On the other hand, many institutional mechanisms were adopted and approved since 2004. All these mechanisms guaranteed almost an equal presence of both genders in institutional structures, but it also shaped the perception of people towards gender equality as something formal and empty. Krasniqi says that despite all the gender discussions that took place in Kosovo all these years, the discussion is still a status-quo, with no visible transformation of the conventional perspective on gender relations. It is usually a marginalized issue until it grabs media attention from time to time.

When talking about the connection of media with gender issues in Kosovo, Sanela Lutvić thinks that the role of the media is very important because it potentially shapes the understanding of the importance of gender equality in society. She further criticized that when media promotes non-existing equality among men and women, it creates a wrong perception of people towards the concept of gender equality, which only results in new barriers and obstacles.

Media promotion of certain models of women in Kosovo constructs an idea of women much more sexualized than ever before. In Kosovo, it is possible to see on billboards how women are presented and treated as objects of male sexual desires. However, experts in the Netherlands and Serbia also confirm this argument concerning their own society. This has to do with marketing influence and trying to appeal on people's basic and fundamental needs in order to increase purchase of certain product or service. Furthermore, it is reflected in transformation of system of values and twisted perception towards gender.

At the end, we might say that there is a strong pattern of gender polarization in Kosovo and a lot of discussions about men and women as if they belong to two separate dimensions. While the formal side of gender

equality was solved by adopting laws that should guarantee the presence of gender equality, Kosovo is still struggling with gender equality issue in the practice of daily life. It is definitely an underrepresented topic, which requires a lot of work and commitment, but gives a little of tangible improvement that people can see.

Gender polarization in public and private sphere

The post-war period in Kosovo brought many changes on a very basic level of people's perception and understanding of gender. Those changes are slow but they are happening. The ways we define the characteristics of a men or women come directly from our values, our understanding of gender and the way how the conservative society influences the way we distinguish man and woman. Most of us are grown up with stereotypes and we have been taught that some things "have to be the way they are".

While men in Kosovo have more space in the public sphere of life, women are more present in the private sphere. In Kosovo there is a public opinion that the private sphere is owned by women, mainly because of everything that has to do with taking care of household. At the same time, it should be noted that women's presence in the public sector is increasing every day. This ratio is not proportional yet and will take some time and work untill it changes significantly. Women who started to work and take part in public life are less available for household tasks, which necessitates that men, who are also part of the family, get a larger share in these tasks, which has led to small transformations in men-women relationships.

Having in mind that Kosovo is a collectivist society, there is a different model of emancipation than in the traditional western societies. Vjollca Krasniqi said that the labor market in Kosovo includes just around 20% of women, leaving more space to be filled up by men. That is one of the reasons why public sphere "belongs" more to men in Kosovo.

But when it comes to women employed in the governmental institutions and politics, Kosovo is one of the leading countries with high percentage of women in decision-making positions. Krasniqi furthermore adds that there is more confidence in young women in Kosovo who are trying to change the idea "what you got to do to be a woman".

When we made a comparison between Kosovo, Serbia and the Netherlands we found out that Kosovo showed the highest level of gender polarization. Experts' opinions say that it is due to patriarchal type of society where the concept of gender equality is mostly observed through patriarchal patterns. The good thing is that these concepts are being challenged and are changing progressively as we speak.

Gender polarization caused by tradition and religion

If we connect gender polarization issue with influence of tradition and religion in Kosovo at the moment we will get a very interesting and juicy topic of discussion. Current levels of gender polarization in Kosovo are mostly influenced by strong traditional and cultural patterns, typical for collectivist societies. While some people claim that they are proud of having such strong traditional values in this era, where everybody is more or less exposed to the influence of globalization, others claim that these values are sometimes an obstacle in the process of gender equality and breaking already existing stereotypes of femininity and masculinity.

While the public sphere in Kosovo is more reachable through media, ideology, marketing, politics, and music, the private sphere is a nest of traditional and religious values. Most families in Kosovo are educated to foster traditional collectivist values that have been transferred throughout history over many generations. When we put it this way, these two spheres look like totally separated spheres, but it is interesting how they can be changed by the influence of one on another. A good example of this phenomenon is the changing the private sphere through one of the biggest tools of public sphere: education. Some of the most effective changes in history were made in this way. Education can be used to change or even create a new idea of gender roles in a society, and develop new perceptions towards gender issues.

Linda Gusia thinks that at the moment Kosovo is dealing with the post conflict re-traditionalization period. It is known that people under stressful situations such as wars, conflicts, regressions turn to the tradition, religion and fundamentalism for hope and security. That is what was happening first few years after the end of the war in 1999. Another important factor that shapes public opinion of masculinity/femininity is religion, which has a strong influence on Kosovar society. Religious leaders

promote women as the "productive" part of the family, while men have a kind of "hunter-gatherer" role. To reduce this influence of tradition and religion is a tough and challenging process especially in rural areas. It takes a lot of time and effort.

But as Linda Gusia points out, those positions are being renegotiated, even though this is more present on urban life, but still it is an indication that things are changing.

Gender (in)equality in Serbia

When discussing gender (in)equality in Serbia it is important to take a short look at the history of this country. Even though the Serbian society looks unequal in terms of the social positions of men and women, it should be mentioned that feminist movements in Serbia existed since the beginning of the 20th century. As happened in other parts of the world during that time, these movements addressed problems such as access to education, chances for meaningful work and equal salary.

One of these movements was the "National Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian Women Alliance", established in 1919. The alliance also joined the International Council of Women (ICW) and was an active member that followed movements and events around the world. Another important organization, called the "Antifascism Women Association", was established in 1942, and was strongly supported by the president of former Yugoslavia[5], Josip Broz Tito[6].

The Yugoslav constitution supported women's rights. The constitution from 1946 confirmed gender equality in all spheres of social life. All later laws strictly respected this principle. The law on marriage (1946) made the position of women and men in marriage the same, and a family law of 1947 gave equal rights for outside-marriage children. Social security legislation was introduced to ensure against all risks, which included paid maternity leave and pension entitlements under the same conditions for both women and men, although women used to retire before men. The right to abortion followed in 1951, though only the constitution of 1974 granted women full control over giving birth, and since 1977 abortion is permitted without restriction within the first ten weeks. Former Yugoslav legislation also incorporated all international conventions relating to the status of women[7].

Despite the progressive legislation and proclaimed gender equality, the reality of daily life still differed from the written letter. Women had to

5 The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) was the Yugoslav state founded during World War II until it was dissolved amid the Yugoslav Wars in 1990s.

6 Stojčić M., 2009. Proleteri svih zemalja – ko vam pere čarape? Feministički pokret u Jugoslaviji 1978–1989. In *Društvo u pokretu, Novi društveni pokreti u Jugoslaviji od 1968 do danas,* ed. Đorđe Tomić, 108. Novi Sad.

7 Ibid.

fulfill a dual role as workers and mothers, and thus had a double commitment. The idea that women should have the primary responsibility to take care of the household was never really challenged, which resulted in a double work position. During this time, two parallel images of women existed: woman as a "socialist working man" in the public sphere, and Western consumer representation of femininity in the private sphere.

Patriarchal system of values still existed below the layers of egalitarian ideology of the former Yugoslavia. However, during the disintegration of Yugoslavia and wars in '90s, nationalistic mobilisation and militarisation of the Serbian society contributed to its revival. Gender identities and roles were polarized in an extreme way. Men were perceived as warriors and protectors, and women as mothers, wives and victims. Traditional power relations, social and cultural roles and norms were reinforced. Political, social and economic resonstruction became the sphere of men, while the private sphere, which is considered less politicaly important, was place of women.[8]

One of the questions we asked our experts was if the topic of gender equality is present enough in everyday life in Serbia today. All of the experts from Serbia agree that there are not enough popular discussions, topics and events that address gender equality in the Serbian society. Karlečik and Miljuš agree that there has been progress in past ten years, but that Serbian society in general still needs more improvements and movements to change people's perceptions on topics as gender equality. The experts believe that most people are still unaware about the forms of discrimination that women go through every day.

Karlečik and Miljuš both emphasise that it is apparent that when the media pays attention to a gender-related theme it is always something about violence or some family tragedy. The topic of gender equlity is often confined to the issue of gender-based violence, which paradoxically reinforces and reproduces the traditional role of women as victim. Miljuš said: "there are not enough discussions about gender and gender equality. Even when we hear about gender in media, it is usually about violence against women, murder, taking away children from women and similar stories. What we can hear mostly from the media is that women

8 Stojčić M., 2013. *Mogućnosti političke subjektivacije feminističkog pokreta u Srbiji,* in preparation for publishing.

are victims of domestic violence".[9] What all of them agree on is the fact that even though Serbia has all the laws that are connected with the laws of the European Union on this topic, and the constitution is supporting women in almost every single aspect, everyday life for women is still hard, and unfortunately gender inequality still persists.

Gender polarization in the public and private sphere

Although formally women and men are equal in all spheres of social life in Serbia, the reality on the ground is different. Men occupy most of the important and high positions and men figure much more prominently in politics in Serbia, for example. Miljuš also adds the problem of division between "male" jobs and "female" jobs. Young boys and girls are socialized towards different areas of high education which creates preconditions for later segregation in the labor market. Economic indicators demonstrate low participation of women in the labor market and around 30–40% smaller salaries compared to men for the same job.[10] When it comes to media, our experts said that it really depends, as some journalists are trying to achieve a certain level of gender equality, while others only talk in male contexts. On this point, Karlečik commented: "In media there are also a lot of women, but all editorial positions are taken by men". Dubravka Đurić furthermore says "that men are migrating to positions that bring more money and reputation." For example there are more women TV speakers nowadays, but there are not so many women among editors, and directors of media.

The polarization between men and women is perhaps more obvious in the private sphere. In a dominant view it is still normal that women take care of the children and the house. It is also normal that men are the ones who earn more money, are on higher positions than women and so on. One of our experts said: "the household is the place where polarization is high. In societies such as Serbia and Kosovo it is "normal" that women should do all the housework including cleaning, cooking, washing ironing and other things in the house. Also, it is expected from

9 See Stojčić M., 2009. *Pepeljuge i veštice u srpskim štampanim medijima*. Available at Zindok centar: *http://www.zindokcentar.org/bilten/3m01site/3m-01web.htm* [Accessed on: 7 September]

10 Dulić D., 2006. Rodna bezbednost i ljudska prava. In *Ljudska bezbednost vol. II,* ed. Dulić Dragana, 231. Beograd: Fond za otvoreno društvo.

women to take care of children, help them with school problems, make sure they have everything they need, and generally raise them".

However, it is important to mention that opinions are changing in Serbia, especially in urban areas and cities. Villages are still places where gender polarization is high. According to Serbian experts, women in Serbia have to make more efforts than men if they want to achieve something in their life that takes them away from their traditional gender role.

The general character of the private sphere is different between in Serbia and Kosovo on the one hand, and the Netherlands on the other. However, in the public sphere all countries face the problem of inequality, especially in terms of salary, as almost everywhere in the world men earn more money than women for the same job or position.

In Serbia this is also the consequence of the recent wars and current post-conflict reality of the Serbian society. Prof. Žarana Papić, a Yugoslav sociologist and anthropologist, one of the founders of the feminist movement in former Yugoslavia and the co-founder of the Belgrade-based Center for Women's Studies in 1992, commented on the private/public sphere in Serbia: "Here one must talk also of the swamping of Serbian cities with refugees, the chaos produced by the nationalist wars, the ever-changing immediate conditions of survival, the stress on the family and other informal strategies and networks, the reduction and minimization of needs, and the precipitous drop in the standard of living accompanied by widespread shortages of basic commodities including even medicines and resulting in the rapid pauperization of the urban, hitherto middle-class population. These circumstances have increased the levels of stress in families and personal relations and have induced people to postpone higher needs in the interest of satisfying unpostponable lower needs"[11]

In countries that suffer from a lack of basic commodities such as food, electricity and housing, it is often difficult to talk about gender equality and roles of men and women in society. People in more developed and stable countries can think about that and work on women's rights, but countries where people lack such basic needs, it is harder to mobilize

11 Papić Ž., 1999. *Women in Serbia: Post-Communism, War and Nationalist Mutations*. [online] Afkimar *https://afkimar.hi.is/05_kreakjur/greinar/brennid_papic_womenserbia.html* [Accessed on: 10 September]

and stir discussions about gender, sex or discrimination. Other factors play a role as well, such as for instance tradition and religion.

Gender polarization caused by tradition and religion

The interviews from Serbia and Kosovo are quite different from the interviews from the Netherlands on the topic of gender polarization caused by tradition and religion. For example, all experts from Serbia and Kosovo mentioned the huge influence of tradition and religion in this respect, while the experts from the Netherlands did not mention it at all. Is there any influence from the religious communities in Kosovo and Serbia that makes people think the way they do? Is it possible that strong religious groups can have such an influence and oppress women in one society more than in other?

On this topic, Đurić from Serbia commented: "I must criticize the influence and interference of church in the public sphere which contributes to reestablishing patriarchal relations in any society, and Serbia is no exception". The topic of secularization is tackled when the question of religion is brought up in Serbia. Although a clause in the constitution of Serbia officially separates the powers of the state and the church since years, the de-secularization process started in the early 1990s and has influenced the way gender polarization looks like today in Serbia.[12] In Kosovo, on the other hand, it is a strong religious tradition that can be brought in relation with the position of women in society. Prof. Lutvić from Kosovo described the situation between men and women and tradition's influence in Kosovo as follows: "One of the reasons is a long period of traditionalism which has been present in Kosovo. It resulted in some kind of isolation where awareness could not develop and get raised. Another factor is the lack of education of women and their limited access to public life. That is why awareness of gender inequality in Kosovo is low".

On a more positive note, it should be mentioned that in both societies these things are changing today. This is something that we all should work on, in the private sphere as well as in public.

12 Back in 1990s, religion was politically used with the purpose of nationalistic mobilization and confrontation, Us versus Others. Religion was a logical choice as it presents the only significant difference between the nations of former Yugoslavia.

General Conclusion

When it comes to gender relations in Kosovo, Serbia and the Netherlands there is a lot to learn still. During our research process we did obtain very interesting results from our surveys and the interviews with our experts. We most importantly learned that gender is an analytical tool thanks to which one can see also the development of other political, ideological, economical and cultural factors, and how they are all connected together.

In Kosovo, gender polarization turned out to be the highest. This is mainly explained through the fact that it experienced the war and it declared independence only four years ago. Because of the war, patriarchal tendencies and religious practices got reinforced again. However, involvement of women in top positions seems to be increasing and according to some experts young generations are more prone and conscious about gender role division.

In Serbia, regardless of a wide range of normative instruments for the promotion of gender equality, in practice, there has been very little progress. The reason for this lies also in the fact that institutional responses and approaches to addressing gender equality mainly deal with consequences rather than causes of gender inequality. As a result, the topic of gender equality is often confined to the issue of gender-based violence and as such still lacks the full potential to substantially change reality on the ground. However, many of our experts have noted that there has been progress in past ten years, but that Serbian society in general still needs more improvements and movements to change people's perceptions on topics as gender equality.

In the Netherlands, it is mostly thought there is gender equality, however according to most experts there is no gender equality at all. In the public sphere women are still not equally represented and it turned out among the surveys of the university students there are no gender issues in the Netherlands. Arguments that are given are that women choose to work part time and they want to stay home with their children. If this is really a free choice that can be argued. Laws in pregancy already determine who is going to stay home and who is going to leave the house in order to maintain the family. As it turned out the Netherlands still has to put a lot effort in order to obtain real gender equality. Maybe, in Holland we

don't have full equality and maybe you don't want full equality. And here the unawareness part plays a crucial role. If we know what keeps the unconscious ideas alive we know how to change it, but we don't know how to change those ideas. As Onneweer mentioned before, you can achieve much with structural changes and in the Netherlands we have accomplished that but to change the unconscious ideas and expectations is difficult. The Dutch government should look at rolmodels as Scandinavia that provide the opportunity for gender equality.

In our research paper, one of our main obstacles turned out to be relating gender with also men. Even we tried to not fall into the trap that gender means women emancipation, we still did, mainly because women are still underrepresented. The challenge for the gender debate is that gender issues will not end up in a victimizing discourse for women. Another challenge is to relate the debate with the situation of men. Important notes that we keep alive in our minds are that when we talk about women emancipation men can do nothing with it. Thereby we need to look for new strategies of transforming the public discourse and discussing the gender equality as an emancipatory endevour, which is important for both men and women since gender polarization is equally damaging men and women although in different ways and different consequences.

Despite difficulties and barriers identified in our research paper, we think that it is important to acknowledge that addressing gender inequality is not a misterious mission. It is rather a matter of willingness, allocation of resources and commitment to steps that need to be undertaken including–coming to terms that discrimination exists, analysing how it functions and how it manifests itself (gender roles, gender sterotypes, division between private and public, different life chances, opportunities and positions of women and men in real life), intervening in education, improving legislation, raising awareness about the role and importance of gender equality for entire society, taking affirmative actions.

This is a slow and challenging process but one worth fighting for.

About the Authors

Multiculturalism Group

Alexander Chaplin

Alexander Chaplin is a PhD candidate in the department of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the Free University of Amsterdam, in the Netherlands. He is conducting research on online hospitality exchange network "CouchSurfing", investigating what opportunities and constraints its intercultural encounters offer for overcoming stereotypical and one-dimensional views of others ("strangers"). His fieldwork mainly takes place in Serbia. Alexander strives towards dialogues between academics and the wider public. For him, the OFEU project is worthwhile because it offers to students the opportunity to not only engage with this wider public, but also with each other in an international setting.

Wouter Le Febre

Wouter Le Febre was born in 1991 in the Netherlands. He is a History student at Utrecht University and his interests lie in political history and European integration. Wouter enjoys working together to broaden visions and to gather and spread knowledge. That is also one of the main reasons for him to participate in the OFEU project. We can make a better world, if we join together and put our shoulders to the wheel!

Arbër Selmani

Arbër Selmani was born in 1991 in Pristina. He worked as a journalist for various TV and radio stations in Kosovo and currently works as a cultural journalist for the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network-BIRN as well as for "Zeri", a daily newspaper based in Pristina. He is studying Marketing and Sociology. Arbër is a co-founder of "Culturist", a cultural NGO. He used to collaborate with different digital media like Cafe Babel, Think Young Brussels and Toonari. He has won some international awards in literature. He decided to take part in the OFEU project in order to break some boundaries and clichés created in the relations between Kosovo and Serbia.

Nenad Smiljkov

Nenad Smiljkov was born in 1991 in Niš, Serbia. He graduated from the YIHR New Policy School (Youth Initiative for Human Rights) where he followed a one-year-study program about Human Rights, Transitional Justice and European Integration. Since that, he started studies at the Faculty of Economy in Macedonia. Nenad started in 2006 to work for the NGO Open Club in Niš. In 2009, he co-founded and leaded the non formal group Youth Interactive Network, and ran projects for youth. He sees the OFEU project as a great opportunity to acquire new skills and knowledge on journalism research and multiculturalism. This way, he feels he gives his contribution to the development of his community.

Youth Political Participation Group

Tessa Bakx

Tessa Bakx was born in Maastricht, in the Netherlands. With a background in the field of interdisciplinary social sciences, she has now obtained a master degree in Conflict Studies and Human Rights. She graduated on the topic of Local Governance and Decentralization in South-Eastern Kosovo. She wanted to be part of the OFEU project to follow her interest and motivation to study the Balkan as a whole, and the inter-cultural exchange aspect of it.

Lulzim Hakaj

Lulzim Hakaj was born in 1986 in Kosovo. He is now studying Public Administration. He used to work as a sport journalist for the daily newspaper "Pristina Post". From 2009 to 2011, he participated in the National Democratic Institute Program called "Youth Engagement in Political Process". He currently works for the NGO CBM (Communitiy Building Mitrovica) as a Project Assistant. He wanted to be part of the OFEU project because he found the topic of Youth Political Participation very attractive.

Wouter Kuin

Wouter Kuin was born in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. He is currently involved in the BA International Relations and International Organization and also in several student organizations. In 2011, Wouter travelled to the Balkans and found this a very interesting region. Therefore, he decided to write a paper on the intervention in Kosovo for one of his university courses. Participating to the OFEU project was a great opportunity for Wouter to expand his knowledge about this area and to work intensively on a project with people from different cultures.

Bardhyl Metkamberi

Bardhyl Metkamberi was born in 1987 in Rahovec in Kosovo. He has a bachelor degree in Judicial Department, Political and Diplomacy Sciences. He is working as a local coordinator for RDSA in projects for rising awareness on hazardous child work in agriculture. He is the Chairman of Local Youth Action Council (LYAC) in the Municipality of Rahovec and a member of the Central Council of Youth Action of Kosovo, of the Local Action Committee for prevention of child abuse and a member of Peace Champion in Kosovo (UNESCO). He took part in many others workshops, seminars and trainings. His motto: "Be a soldier of peace before becoming soldier of war". Being part of this program was a particular challenge because the OFEU project helped to aspirations for the future.

Vladan Velojić

Vladan Velojić was born in 1990 in Zaječar, in Serbia. He is currently studying at the Faculty of Law of the University of Belgrade. He is a former professional basketball player but then found interest for social activities. That is one of the reasons why he applied for the OFEU project with the group of Youth Political Participation. He enjoyed working in the project.

Gender Group

Nataša Kuručki

Nataša Kuručki was born in 1988 in Serbia. She graduated from the electrical engineering-department for power and energy efficiency of the Faculty of Technical Sciences at the University of Novi Sad. She also studied Political Sciences. She is involved in many non-governmental-organizations and had a couple of projects in Serbia, mostly working with orphans and children with special needs. She was a volunteer in Ghana, South Africa and Vietnam, and is also part of UNICEF. Nataša is very interested in international relations, conflict transformation and peace building. She was interested in participating in the OFEU project because of her abroad experience and will to break boundaries between people.

Sara-May Leeflang

Sara-May Leeflang was born in Amsterdam in the Netherlands. She graduated in 2009 in Language and Culture Studies at Utrecht University with a major in Political History and International Relations. She recently graduated on the topic "Regional Co-operation in former Yugoslavia, EU's normative power in Serbia and the region" and obtained her master degree in "European Identity and Integration" at the University of Amsterdam. As an alumni participant of the OFEU project in 2010, she decided to join the research project this year again. Mainly, because she developed a great interest for the region due to courses in her studies, her travels and her participation to the previous edition of the OFEU project.

Tanita Zhubi

Tanita Zhubi was born in 1989 in Kosovo. She will graduate in Sociology at the University of Pristina. She was involved in many projects with non-governmental-organizations in Kosovo, projects that had to do with youth empowering and human rights. She is very interested in diplomacy and peace building, and that's one of the reasons why she joined the OFEU project.

Mirza Sagdati

Mirza Sagdati was born in 1990. He is studying international relations and public policy. Since the age of 16, he dedicates his free time working as a volunteer in the civil sector. He is highly interested in politics and international relationships in the Balkans, in political theories and in the influence of globalization in third-world countries. He found challenging to work on the research topic of Gender from a European Perspective. It is a field that he is getting familiar to and a topic that manages to change some of his personal points of view.

Iztok Suša

Iztok Suša was born in 1987 in Belgrade, Serbia. He graduated in 2012 in Security Studies at the University of Belgrade. He was engaged in many international projects on the topic of security and social studies. He enrolled the OFEU project to spread his knowledge and to participate in multicultural research group.

Irma Verstegen

Irma Verstegen was born in 1987 in Venray, in the Netherlands. She recently obtained her master degree in Cultural Anthropology and Development studies at the university of Leiden with a specialization in Media, Material Culture and Visual Ethnography. During her studies Irma was very active with several organizations among which a Dutch organization that focuses on the Balkan. An affinity with the region was born. This was one of the reasons to participate in the OFEU project. She enjoyed working together with fellow young professionals in an international sphere.

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