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Epistemic Justice and Everyday Nationalism: An Auto-Ethnography of Transnational Student Encounters in a Post-War Memory and Reconciliation Project in Kosovo

In the coffee shops of Prishtina and in social media posts online, debates about Kosovo-born international stars abound. The current hype among ordinary, young adults of the majority Albanian community, both at home and abroad, about internationally leading pop singers such as Rita Ora, Dua Lipa or Era Istrefi; sport icons such as Olympic gold medallist, judoka Majlinda Kelmendi; or prominent football stars playing for several European leagues (and, hence, sometimes against each other), might qualify as typical expressions of 'cold', everyday nationalism.[1] However, while the pride in these prime stars' international recognition and success might be ubiquitous in everyday chatter, both in situ and online, such talks often also channel deep frustrations with the positioning of a collective Self vis-a-vis 'the West'.[2] Arguably, these utterances both conceal and respond to an acute sense of global injustice and exclusion: how can there be such an overwhelming recognition of these superstars, internationally, while the recognition of the nation state, declared independent only in 2008, remains incomplete? How is it that ordinary citizens, subjected to international oversight and 'NGO-isation' since the 1999 NATO intervention, remain excluded from fulfilling their potential, held back by an EU-imposed, restrictive, humiliating and exclusionary visa regime? In this vain, also routine expressions of distrust in, or fatigue with, internationally-funded interventions, including civil society projects aimed at fostering 'reconciliation' and 'dealing with the past', complicate everyday nationalism in Kosovo.

We argue that everyday nationalism and its underpinning epistemologies in Kosovo cannot be understood through a focus on the local or national context, nor on the 'hot nationalism' associated with war and violence of the late 1990s, alone. Not only is Kosovo's everyday nationalism situated in a contemporary, wider, geo-political context, to which people as those overheard in Prishtina's café and bars respond and through which they refract their attitudes and world views. Everyday nationalism anywhere, including in the UK, has been related to processes of globalisation and the ways in which these engender the need and desires for ascertaining rights, entitlements and certainties in an increasingly unpredictable world (Skey 2013: 81). 'Belonging to a specific social group [including nations] is an important source of collective strength for many' and may, in fact, serve to counteract wider regimes of inequalities and exclusion (Calhoun 2008: 434). This is acutely felt in Kosovar everyday life, where the physical borders of the nation have narrowed and become much less permeable since the demise of Yugoslavia, the 1999-war and international intervention. For the case of

neighbouring Serbia, sociologist Spasić has linked her post-Yugoslav nation-state's 'vulnerability within global symbolic hierarchies" to its 'insecurity [which] breeds [national] self-consciousness' (2017: 39). She warns of analysing everyday nationalisms by ignoring 'the differential effect of global positioning' at Europe's geo-political margins. On the one hand, such positioning determines who 'belongs [or not] *without question*' (Skey 2013: 84; original emphasis). In cases such as Kosovo this is negotiated on a global scale and, hence, beyond an inward-directed focus on the rights and views of minority groups alone (as discussed in relation to Britain in Yuval-Davis 2011; Skey 2013: 95). On the other, the geo-political challenge to Kosovo's nationhood might go some way in explaining its citizen's specific ways of knowing of what constitutes and makes them members of their nation. As anywhere, their epistemologies are likely to be contingent on the specific context, in regard to what taken-for-granted criteria become relevant in 'making sense of their lifeworlds' (Skey 2011: 4) and which needs and concerns are addressed in evoking and constructing a 'settled sense of identity, place and community' (Skey 2013: 84).

However, scholars of everyday nationalism have pointed to the risk of 'methodological nationalism, if the socio-political unit of analysis is presumed rather than deduced from the actual, often transnational, connections and interactions which matter in social reality (Beck 2007; Szulc 2017: 56). Furthermore, Spasić (2017) alerts us to the risk of Orientalist (or Balkanist[3]) simplifications which would associate the Western Balkan states with malign and 'hot' nationalism as opposed to the purportedly benign, 'cold' or 'banal' nationalism of the supposed 'established' and more cosmopolitan nations of 'the West' (noted in Billig 1995: 43-49; partly in reference to Ignatieff 1993). Indeed, nationalist attitudes, also according to Calhoun, do not necessarily stand in opposition to cosmopolitan orientations, as frequently assumed (the latter suggestive of universalising human ethics rather than narrow in-group loyalties alone). In fact, when 'ordinary people find themselves interacting more often with people from other countries, cultures and religions' (2008: 429), whether they meet these people in person or not (such as in online encounters), 'cosmopolitanism and [national] belonging' … 'can be complements to each other' (2008: 434). Previous social anthropological studies have challenged the association of nationalism with the Balkans in symbolic opposition to the 'cosmopolitan West' (e.g. Brown 2000; Jansen 2002). When exploring the everyday relevance of nationalist myths and war histories to ordinary people in the wider region, these suggested that a reduction of nations such as Bosnia or Macedonia to the problem of nationalism in academic studies reified nationalist categories of ordering the world, arguably rendering the researchers the true nationalists.

This contribution introduces an exercise in epistemic justice (Dieleman 2015; Fricker 2007; Visvanathan 1997). It explores how everyday nationalism, in often unexpected and hidden ways, underpinned a co-creational, educational project involving several local (Albanian) and international staff and students collaborating on the theme of post-war memory and reconciliation in Kosovo. While the original project was completed in 2016, this study also employs selected participants' subsequent para-ethnographic'[4] as well as our own, auto-ethnographic[5] reflections in order to trace the everyday workings of mutual assumptions and constructions of a national Self and Other in such asymmetrically-positioned encounters. Representative for the ubiquitous presence of 'internationals' and the import of benevolent 'project culture' (Sampson 2002) in Kosovar everyday life since the end of the 1999, which often include 'cultural training' and critically-aware and cognisant collaborators, it resembled a microcosm for studying transnational social encounters and project collaborations in which the problem of nationalism, typically, is associated with one side only: here, the Kosovars.

Our post-project reflective exercise involved a selected group of sociology and social anthropology students only (the original student participants were of a wider, interdisciplinary background). Guided by Goffman's (1983) social interactionist framework of analysis, the students were asked to reflect on their presentations of Self in their previous social and educational encounters with each other while positioned as 'insiders' (Kosovars) and 'outsiders' (internationals) towards each other. Goffman's theories have previously been employed to study everyday nationalism in real-life interactions (e.g. Wallem 2017; Skey 2011: 87-88, 155; 2013: 84). Our study aims at identifying the hidden realms of everyday nationalism and its constitutive criteria in this inconspicuous, educational, transnational project (from design stage through to the actual collaborations in situ). We also hope to contribute to a more detailed understanding of how the underpinning power imbalances in knowledge production can shape distinct expressions of nationalism at the everyday level in such local/international encounters.

The analysis draws not only from Billig's emphasis on the implicit epistemologies of non-elite, everyday nationalism but also on Edensor's (2002: 93) idea of habitually enacted everyday nationalism. It also sits with the everyday nationalism debates' subsequent conceptual shift towards a focus on human agency (summarised in Knott 2015). The focus on our students' and our own 'microhistorical acts of nation-making' (Moreno-Almedral 2018: 651) recognizes the participants as cognizant agents of their interactions and presentations of Self in the deliberative spaces which the project created, both in response to, and independent of, wider structural and institutional constraints. Along the way, we also apply Skey's (2011: 11-12) five-dimensional analysis of national discourse (spatial, temporal,

cultural, political and self/other), in assessing the plurality of social constructions revealed, while the chronology of the project and the themes it covered, provide the order.

The ways in which we and our students found ourselves positioned towards each other teased out specific sensitivities and, occasionally, misunderstandings marked by moments of potential conflict. These moments, in particular, brought to the fore what otherwise might have remained tacit or intimate knowledge (Polanyi 1966; Herzfeld 1997). It was through the mutuality of these reflections and observations that we could identify unexpected collusions and revelations of 'everyday nationalisms' (Knott 2015).

Ways of knowing and epistemic justice, or how 'we' came into the project

Our co-creative reflections are based on a preceding UK-Kosovar student/staff project, conducted in 2016. Called 'Conflict Transformation through Gamification: Developing a Storyline and Game Design,' this original project tasked mixed student teams with developing potential storylines for an innovative, interactive, educational Game Design Framework (GDF). The storylines were supposed to foster critical engagement with Kosovo's conflicted past; recognition of the plurality of perspectives and identities; and an understanding of their broader nationalist exploitations. The UK participants consisted of four staff and twelve international students from Bournemouth University's (BU) four faculties, including students of sociology and anthropology, international law, tourism and gaming technology. Their counterparts at the University of Prishtina (UP) included four staff and eight students of social anthropology, sociology and social work, and some meetings were open for students of computer sciences. The BU staff team, self-organized as a cross-faculty 'conflict transformation studies team', had been granted full funding under BU's 'fusion' strategy for the student/staff 'reconciliation game' project, as it was initially known, including a one-week journey for all involved to Kosovo (Schwandner-Sievers subsequently insisted on renaming the project, 'conflict transformation game', in line with critical theories and debates [Eastmond 2010; Lederach 1998]). The project directly related to BU's vision and values of synergizing ('fusing') education, research and professional practice as well as global engagement, 'making a difference in the world', fostering cross-cultural awareness, co-creation, interdisciplinary and international collaboration among both students and staff. The involved staff members' research specialization included Kosovo's post-war memory; transitional justice mechanisms; dark tourism; and educational gaming design. Arguably, the project's aim of fostering critical engagement with Kosovo's conflicted past, conflict identities and broader nationalist exploitations through co-creating a GDF from the outset contained a

mono-directional, academically-missionary streak: supposed non-nationalist expert staff and their students from a Western university tasked themselves with fostering anti-nationalism and tolerance through introducing new pedagogical avenues of transnational student engagement.

In Prishtina, at UP, the project was led by sociologist Linda Gusia and her colleagues and tied to a three-year long collaboration between academic and civil society organizations (including the University Programe for Gender Studies and Resaerach, Civil Peace Forum Kosovo [Forum ZFD] and Alter Habitus: Institute for Studies in Society and Culture). Their long years of collaborating under the umbrella of what was known as Memory Mapping project and a more recently developed InsideOut/OutsideIn framework of analusis (Luci and Gusia 2019), aimed to create a critical space for interrogating knowledge and practices surrounding Kosovo's recent history. Specifically, it drew from over ten research-based 'ateliers' with students to interrogate the historical narratives of events memorialized in various commemorative sites. It also included site visits, literature, oral history, testimony, and archives. Their scholarly and educational focus was on contemporary remembrance and the comparison of public, private, state and other memory practices, and more recently they also began inquiring into the practices of transitional justice frameworks and victims' rights at post-conflict sites worldwide. All participating UP students had taken part in the Memory Mapping project and were thus much more literate in critical thinking about the nexus of nationalism, post-conflict memory studies and transitional justice in Kosovo as well as in the wider region than their BU counterparts. All UP participants had also shown considerable engagement in public activism on issues ranging from legal recognition of survivors of war-time sexual violence to analyses of ethnic and gender-based bias in the media.

Skey's (2011) 'Self/Other' dimension in everyday nationalism was evident from the preparation phase of the project at the respective home universities in Kosovo and the UK. In common with many 'internationals' still present in contemporary Kosovo, few of the BU students were familiar with Kosovo and its history before engaging in this project. Their planned visit was only transient in contrast to their UP counterparts' and families' emplaced social lives in Kosovo. (How such different situatedness structured both their emotions and knowledge became particularly obvious to them during the visit when Prishtina colleagues shared with them stories of their personal experience of violent expulsion from 'home' during the war). In pre-emptively balancing this difference in terms of experiential distance or proximity, our preparations for BU students included a briefing workshop on Kosovo's background and intervention history. It also aimed at sensitising them to the fact that 'reconciliation' and 'nationalism' were terms in Kosovo which, following long years of

international governance based on a therapeutic salvation narrative (Pandolfi 2010; Pupavac 2006), could well be perceived by their UP peers as patronising and an imposition. The BU-students also underwent a fish-bowl simulation exercise, which enabled experiential learning of the profound challenges inherent to reconciliation in practice,[6] in contrast to reconciliation as a moral expectation introduced from the outside (Eastmond 2010). The preparatory workshop further involved questioning students' motivations for their project participation. Based on critical literature reviews, it deconstructed some benevolent, yet implicitly self-superiorising, ideals and assumptions, such as wanting to 'help the victims of war' or 'bringing liberal ideas of tolerance' to Kosovo. Instead, it introduced the possibility that contemporary nationalism in post-war memory in Kosovo was an outcome of historical, political and other conditions as well as persistent human insecurities, including the exclusive visa regime and the frozen character of the conflict and the persistence of an only partial recognition of the new state. A couple of the international staff and student team members involved, in fact, hailed from states which have yet to recognise the Kosovo as a new nation-state.

For UP students and staff, motivation to take part on the project was manifold. The students at UP are generally eager, if not hungry, for opportunities to take part in international projects and communicate with peers from 'European' universities. They consider these opportunities for gaining academic knowledge and, possibly, accessing post-graduate programs, as well as meeting international peers and potentially making new friends. Their participation in the project did not entail the same academic requirements (various written outputs) as for their UK counterparts (for implications of this difference on our methods in capturing student reflections, see further below); rather they considered their participation an opportunity to actively create the stories that would inform the project. During the preparatory workshop at UP, students showed some hesitation and were ambivalent as to how sites of pain and violence could turn into an online gaming application. They raised also questions about who would control how local narratives, traditions and pasts could be turned into sites of tourism (Bacchilega 2007). However, having heard of stories from their instructors at UP about UN and EU advisors coming to Kosovo with only *Balkan Ghosts* (Kaplan 1993) under their arm, they became excited to learn that their counterparts were undergoing specifically designed preparatory workshops. Not only did they express readiness to serve as hosts to the UK guests, an obligation that is often carried and performed in adherence to an explicit nationalist narrative of 'Albanian hospitality' (Krasniqi 2005), they also felt compelled to act as social and cultural guides for the UK students. Forgetting some of the initial incredulity one student noted 'it's just how we are raised. It was really no bother and we were happy to take them around even after we finished the course work.'

At the same time, 'internationalising' UP is key to the institution's strategy, namely accessing and engaging in international research and publication projects. However, for the involved UP staff, a request for epistemic justice was an even larger priority: they aimed to foreground both the historical depth and contemporaneity of the cultural, historical and political context in their own terms. Therefore, they insisted on providing academic lectures for the entire project team, aimed at outlining their academic research and perspectives on the uses of war for the purposes of learning and tourism. To them, speaking from the 'inside' Kosovar perspective on the project would strengthen recognition of the research and theoretical contributions of their work. However, their insistence on dispelling the neo-liberal critique of 'Balkan nationalism' and complicating the notion of benign nationalism ran the risk of being perceived as relativistic and 'too close to the subject'. They found themselves negotiating between positions that, on the one hand, recognized the fluidity of categories and practices but, on the other, also confined and restricted them by the roles the project created and anticipated.

During the one-week stay of the BU team in Kosovo, we allocated our students to mixed, interdisciplinary teams of four to five members each, respectively collaborating with selected supporting staff from both involved universities. Each such team was tasked with engaging in preliminary 'quests' (or task sheets) through the topography and material culture of memory and memorialisation in Prishtina and across wider Kosovo. These 'quests' aimed to jointly guide the students through different historical layers and contestations of Kosovo's recent past and post-conflict memory, including both silenced (e.g. gendered) and dominant narratives. The quests thus, simultaneously, served as structural pre-cursors for potential gamification. Each 'quest' discussed here[7] – 'Gender' (focusing on gendered contestations of war memory); 'Onions' (as in unpeeling different, often silenced, layers of history); 'Branding' (as in national identity constructions based on selected historical myths and symbols); '*Pajtim*' (the Albanian term for reconciliation and representing local traditions in contrast to internationally introduced expectations and practices); 'Graffiti' (as in political protest art of Kosovo's younger generation) – included a theoretical background and suggestions, critical questions, visual aids, and practical instructions. Harking back to critical theory in nationalism studies, the 'quests' were designed to foreground social and historical context contingencies of each theme and the specific expressions of collective (national) memory. In addition, the visit included joint team excursions to Albanian and Serb monuments and memorials across Kosovo, including to Prekaz (a commemorative site of a 1998 massacre including the killing of KLA commander Adem Jashari and his extended

family); and Gjakova (Ferdonije Qerkezi's House Museum, which was dedicated to her life before and after the abduction of her husband and four sons during the war).

Following the one-week visit to, and collaboration, in Kosovo, we asked eight of our participating sociology and anthropology students from BU and UP to engage with Goffman's concept of 'image management', in order to reflect on the situated staging, identity performances and interactions that took place when they had been conducting these set tasks ('quest') into selected themes of post-war national memory. The students cited below provided their explicit consent to the inclusion of their voices. They had the option to be cited anonymously (as 'BU student' or 'UP student') or by name, and are cited according to their expressed preferences. Because of the slightly different nature of their involvement, as explained above, some UP students preferred to be interviewed rather than produce an essay. Responses to the Goffman task were thus not all in writing and, in the case of UP students, elicited partly through individual interviews and cited accordingly. These were the instructions to which our students responded:

> Goffman's concept of 'image management' (similar, also 'face work') has been applied to the ways in which not just individual, but also group presentations of Self are managed in social interactions. Please think about how 'image management' worked out in your group interactions in Kosovo, both during the 'quests' as well as during the field trips across Kosovo. For example, in this collaboration, you might have found yourself identified in ways that you did not foresee and that you sought to confirm or reject or transform; or did you perceive your peers from the other university in ways that your collaboration reified?

As their statements below illustrate, together we discovered some of the reasons for differently situated prioritisations in the excavation and communication of forgotten or silenced pasts. We also came across several unexpected insights about our own national Selves, while learning about everyday nationalism underpinning wider gendered political memorialisation, related to both youth activism and protest art in Kosovo. Our students' reflections, as analysed in the following, further reveal the ways in which external, unequal regimes of governance and representation shaped their shared experiences. They also provide primary evidence for understanding the taken-for-granted ways in which we relate to questions of national identity in concrete transnational, social encounters. Lastly, they reveal the transformation of the students' own, situated assumptions about each other that manifested in their search for the everyday dynamics of reconciliation and nationalism in Kosovo.

‘Onion’ and ‘Branding’: a new-born or an old nation?

The ‘Onion’ and the ‘Branding quest’ team were asked to look for cultural markers of nationhood and the ways in which these were promoted as ‘national heritage’ in Prishtina’s cityscape. While the former explored and ‘unpeeled’ different layers of history at Prishtina’s ‘martyr’s cemetery’ and adjacent monuments, the latter had to trace competing perspectives on branding Kosovo in either ethno-national or extra-national terms. Relating to questions of national history and identity constructions, both ‘quests’ interrogated what Skey termed the cultural, spatial and temporal dimensions of national discourses, that is, the dominant symbolic systems that give meaning to shared everyday practices (2011: 22-25).

Reflecting on a city walk in Pristina that included earlier socialist period landmarks, souvenirs in tourist shops and more recent post-independence memorializations, Laura Grace, a BU-undergraduate student of archaeology and anthropology and a member of the ‘Branding’ team, observed:

> Prior to arrival we believed the ‘NEWBORN’ monument to be a symbol of Kosovo, but it was the much older symbols, taken from ancient history, which [our peers from UP] identified with more strongly. From the ‘Goddess on the Throne’ [Neolithic figurine] as a clay souvenir and on postcards, to the Illyrian spiral patterns in the National Library, it was this history which the students at Pristina wanted us to see. We were told of how throughout time, wars have meant much cultural heritage has been lost, either stolen or destroyed. The items which remain, therefore, take on further meanings, becoming icons for Kosovo as a whole. This history is hidden when examining how Kosovo is portrayed to those outside. … [re. Newborn as a symbol] This makes sense, after all there is a deep, longstanding claim to Kosovo as a country in its own right – it is arguable that the independence gained in 2008 does not make it 'NEWBORN', just 'RECOGNISED'.

The insistence on considering the diminished, destroyed, and vanishing spaces of cultural heritage in Kosovo made visible the politicization of culture and history and their manifestations. As Skey notes, it is necessary ‘to draw a careful distinction between the idea/l of a national culture that is viewed (and valued) as largely self-evident by particular groups, and the ongoing struggles to produce, and indeed, define, that culture’ (2011: 26).The NEWBORN obelisk, specifically built to be unveiled on the day of Kosovo’s declaration of independence, 17 February 2008, is the most visible sign of Kosovo’s

international branding, rendering and treating it as a young (*new-born/infant)* entity and society. The direction UP students gave to their BU peers, to consider the more 'ancient' signifiers, is both evidence of the standard idealization of the 'ancient roots of' Albanian national culture as well as an intervention to cast Kosovo as part of the world of the 'established' and 'settled' nations, rather than questionable 'Others' (cf. Skey 2013: 84). For the UP students, highlighting the Illyrian patterns decorating the façade of the National Library, itself an example of the 1960s and 1970s modernist architecture in the city, but also of urbanization and modernization, is therefore a practice in national Self-identification and the use of historical depth as a legitimising frame for current nation and state-building. As Rita Berisha, a first-year UP sociology student, explained:

> The NEWBORN monument was a way to promote Kosovo on the day of its declaration of independence that made it look contemporary and as something new. It was a sign that looked European and modern. I think we try very hard to appear in all of these ways because there is so much misinformation and lack of knowledge about Kosovo internationally. This was a way to show the world that we are part of the world. But, by doing this we also leave aside the rich history, the culture, and the Albanian identity that is much older than the war in 1999 and the new state. Every country celebrates its history, has its myths, has a cultural heritage they are proud of. In Kosovo this history is being forgotten. The problem is that when it is written, in history, and in other ways, it is written in a very nationalistic way.

UP students expressed that, in encounters with people from outside Kosovo, they are often placed in the position of offering accounts of subjective experiences of Kosovo's recent war that are expected to exemplify the larger community. In such circumstances their national identification is placed 'front-stage' as representatives of Kosovar war survivors, knowledgeable about the pre-war and war memories. Studies and practices of nationalism are a paradigmatic case in point. Part of the elite constructions of nationalism in Kosovo has been the academic, and public intellectual insistence on producing local knowledge for an international audience. Academics in particular have insisted on the necessity of repudiating Serbian nationalist claims to Kosovar history and territory through historical and sociological research (Gashi 2014). This construction is so pervasive and normative that it constitutes an internalized 'vernacular understanding' of nationalism in the 'everyday encounters, practical categories, common-sense knowledge, cult idioms, cognitive schemas, mental maps' (Brubaker et al. 2006: 6-7, 9). As a vernacular it is rooted in overlapping local systems of knowledge and cultural and political practice, and thereby it is neither singular nor entirely essentializing, however it has been strategically utilized, to borrow from Spivak (2008).

Grace felt she was granted insider knowledge about the ways in which the physical changes made to the NEWBORN monument served as stand-in for the symbolic remaking of Kosovo as a state:

> The monument has many meanings to many people, and the efforts to repaint it each year increase its importance as a signifier of the issues which are important within Kosovo. It was not the monument itself which was of much importance to the students from UP, but what the designs signified. This year [2016], the clouds behind barbed wire symbolise the lack of freedom many Kosovars feel due to restrictions on their ability to travel. This meaning is unobtainable to outsiders who view the monument, and it is completely context-driven.

That 'meaning is context driven,' as Grace notes, reaffirmed to all the participants that it was not only the social and political context but also that of the project itself that directed the choices and interpretations assigned to the material and symbolic representations with which they interacted. This 'interaction order', a social production of Self (Goffman 1983) where the students constitute the order of their own interaction, became a moment of discovery. Accounting 'hidden histories' or alternative meanings, for both student groups, was a matter of recognising that meanings are altered and re-assigned to old and new representations but were also being negotiated through their interaction. Designs on the socialist-period Library building emerge as signifiers of national-culture, relevant to the conception of Self-Other in the interaction, whereas deciphering that 'the clouds behind barbed wire' referred to the restrictive EU visa regime for Kosovars relied on 'insider' knowledge.

However, a relevant assumption remained implicit. One of the BU students, who preferred to be cited anonymously in this case, had concluded in relation to the same monument: 'the use of public space we felt was significant as in a country where freedom seems to be so limited in so many ways, this is deliberate and overt freedom of expression.' She further juxtaposed freedom in a country 'where there is so little of it and therefore is something "one fights for"' with 'a country that is free'. The latter, an expression of everyday British nationalism, although not uncontested in relation to minority and migrant groups, remained a powerful albeit silent distinction made between the student groups.

These 'quests', dedicated to metaphorically peeling the layers of identity/history and considering the framing of culture through the politics of heritage, revealed the participants' foregrounding of varied social and political positions, which transcended the narrowing

effects of the insider and outsider dichotomy. For the UP students and staff involved, seeing their surrounding with an outsider's vision made things new, and pointed to their often essentialized insider positions. Their reflections re-emphasized that what is collectively remembered is based on witnessing but not always based on personal experience, and what emerges is the product of a repeated retelling and reiterative performances of a shared social understanding. As Climo and Cattell state, 'memory is tightly connected to emotions, which lead us to create memories of things not actually experienced, [and] reshape existing memories…' (2002: 13). The students identified with some of the events and sites of 'institutionalised historiography', but they also came from social and political backgrounds and viewpoints where these renderings of events and sites were only partially part of their individual or collective identifications and belongings. The above-cited UP student, Berisha, for example, emphasised a 'feminist standpoint'. Her quote, started above, continues critically about what 'nationalistic ways of writing history' might entail:

> From international perspectives, also, women are seen only as victims of nationalism, of men. This is why for me it important to write about women as political prisoners from the 1960s to the 1980s…To use oral history as a way to speak about the experiences of women, because women are missing from the national history. It is a critique of nationalism but it is also about saying how women were part of the national cause.

As the following section elaborates, for the students, tackling the omission of women in the dominant historical narrative was about creating a critical opportunity to raise questions about institutional practices of formalising memory and history, and specifically how those have been made relevant to everyday political agendas of building the nation-state.

'Graffiti' and 'Gender': the personal is national in everyday feminism

The 'Graffiti quest' tasked students to explore whether street art and other non-mainstream art forms can challenge and resist the established canon of commemoration, thereby illustrating Skey's political and other dimensions of everyday nationalism (2011: 10). The involved students set out to walk throughout Pristina and identify the spaces and aesthetics of protest graffiti. Stencilled, sprayed, painted on and painted over, carved out and built in, graffiti in the city is ubiquitous. Graffiti murals are sites of articulating, challenging, and re/affirming diverse political visions of the social and political past and future. In similar fashion to slogans and anti-austerity sentiments in Greece, as captured by Knight's analysis

of ‘wit in economic crisis’ (2015), graffiti and slogans in Pristina are used to question the power relations between state institutions and citizens. As interventions and

> as public images, slogans provoke complex emotional responses, acquiring their own histories of appropriation and commentary…Usually offering provocative perspectives on routine aspects of everyday life, slogans are easily accessible to a mass-mediated sense of collectivity that facilitates personal affiliation with large-scale events… (Knight 2015: 231).

Much of Kosovar political graffiti expresses simultaneously generational and party-political divisions in struggles over propriety and legitimacy of political representation (both as a projected vision for, and leadership of, the nation). Gemma Knights, a third-year student sociology and anthropology at BU, noted:

> What became quickly apparent to us was that generally the graffiti had political overtones and expressed anger, resentment and frustration at the political system in Kosovo. While talking to Loreta and Fjolla [Knights’ Kosovar team members] we learnt that although to us the graffiti seemed aggressive in some cases and definitely provocative, actually the street art was more of a social commentary… Many people are passionate about the injustices carried out and repeated by the political system which they feel constantly fails them and the graffiti is a way of reclaiming the public space around them to express this displeasure. … The level of freedom of expression demonstrated here is facilitated by the anonymity the medium of graffiti offers. Freedom of expression transcends the younger generation away from the graffiti artists and, I believe, has contributed to a climate where frustrated young people are able to express their displeasure with the political system.

Knights, in fact, was outright astounded by the political engagement of her UP counterparts:

> Most of the students we interacted with were proud of their active participation in marches and protests against government decisions and movements which they didn’t feel represented them or they disagreed with, which opposed our group of UK students, as hardly any of us had ever attended a protest, despite being a socially aware and passionate bunch. Throughout our informal chats, we compared the levels of youth engagement in politics in both countries. A few months after the trip, we were reminded of the comparison as between myself and my peers, we couldn’t help but think that if the youth in the UK held the same levels of social and political

engagement as the Kosovar youth do, life-changing decisions such as the Brexit vote might have revealed a different result.

Figures 1 and 2 Photographs of a stencil and the NEWBORN monument (2013 design) in Prishtina, which formed part of the students' 'quest' materials.

In many ways, the 'Graffiti' team identified many points of convergence, in both their analysis and positions towards these urban expressions of dissent. The politics behind graffiti appealed to the students from both UP and BU because they could identify with a language of a common cosmopolitan-urban aesthetics, most evident to them in the Banksy-like stencils seen on some buildings in Prishtina. Following the Brexit vote a few months after the Kosovo trip, BU students such as Knights, now shaken from their previous implicit, everyday liberal confidence about their own nation-state, could imagine themselves engaging even more with, and being drawn to, the political art of expressing displeasure with one's own political system through graffiti. The reflections on this 'quest' thereby foreground the shared everyday experience of distinctiveness as young adults excluded from the hegemonic narratives of their respective nation-states, as well as the potential comparability of such experiences.

For UP students, everyday political engagement against the prevailing nationalist discourse in Kosovo requires a feminist stance. Similar to Berisha, Loreta Domi, a third-year sociology student at UP, also decided to study gendered representations in the public space, the public/private dichotomy that underlay these representations, and the ways in which this relates to hegemonic constructions of the nation in Kosovo. This also came to bear in the 'Gender quest', precisely because of the gendered forms of societal exclusion which still prevail in Kosovo, as explained by Domi:

> During my fieldwork I noticed that men dominate in public space, and much more so in Kosovo's rural areas. Such a clear and apparent division is not so easily noticed between men and women in the city. This is what led me to inquire in more depth into

> the everyday life of women, to explore the perspective of the women who live either in the city or in the village themselves. Based on Sylvia Walby's [1990] theorization, I also look at how greater public engagement is not necessarily a result of overcoming patriarchy as much it is a need of the market for women's labour. This was the case in Britain when women entered the work force, which shows how the move from the private to the public sphere [and the British construction of the nation] was shaped by both capitalism, racism, and patriarchy.

However, aiming to account for singular principles that structure social relations (in this case dichotomising urban and rural and public and private spaces) can easily lead to simplified generalisations of everyday life in society. We noticed that the homogeneity associated with rural, as opposed to urban, life in Kosovo and the greater gender equality noticed and emphasised for city life in Prishtina, served the deliberate identification of points of commonality between the students. However, while asserting a shared, urban middle-class background helped overcome different positionalities among our two student groups, it was premised on constructing an essentialised otherness of the purportedly 'nationalist' research subjects, namely conservative rural men or women in Kosovo. Through the commonalities which the students identified amongst themselves, they asserted shared privilege and simultaneously externalised 'otherness'. It thus became evident that their experiences and identifications were distinctly ethnicized, racialized and gendered within their respective national histories and everyday negotiations of identity. While it has been convincingly argued that gender and race are essential to conceptualizations and enactments of nationhood, these intersections have still to be further explored in scholarship on everyday nationalism (for example Menon 2010; Ohueri: 2016).

As Domi's reflections above reveal, certain structures, such as those premised on gender and race, are made to be invisible within normative, everyday renderings of a national community. Efforts at making such structuring visible in everyday social encounters (as well as in more specialized renderings of social science) might be called everyday feminism. Indeed, Papillon Bond-Williams, a BU student of sociology and anthropology and member of the team exploring memorials to and for women in Kosovo, noticed her UP counterparts' criticism of prevailing stereotypes and stigma and their demands that 'women should be represented to have had more agency, not represented only as victims' in the national struggle. She further noticed:

> They recognised the problem of the patriarchal society they lived in but did not want to be associated with it. They constructed their image to be agents that were active in changing that problem. On reflection, it made me realize that I had taken for granted

> that I am never in a position where I have to prove that I am a modern woman with feminist views to outsider perspectives.

To declared feminist UP student Berisha, as reflected in a later interview, doing feminism was an everyday activist and academic practice requiring making ones' politics visible and heard. However, in relation to the quest she was unsure of how to write down and write-in her experiences and thoughts, on how this activism was not always there, but was made both in alliance and reaction to 'outsider' and 'insider' views of Albanian women and nationalism. This realisation led her to grapple with the gaps and erasures in the historical record regarding women's involvement in national political movements:

> We are used to protesting. We protest about so much. Yes, we are also having to deal with the fact that we leave very little behind us in terms of writing. Our professors tell us that we need to produce more, that this is how we intervene into the unequal systems of knowledge production … I came to realize the gravity of this argument when I began working on my BA thesis on the topic of women political prisoners in Kosovo. It was very difficult to find any research, there are only some articles and books. In general, these women had been forgotten.

In her reading of 'the female hero' in paintings and the emergence of a feminist art canon, Griselda Pollock (1999), referring to Mieke Bal (1991), concludes that 'there is no story, just the telling' (117). They both argue that the viewer, reader or listener is given the *responsibility* of telling the story. Indeed, in the discussion of the social and political status of survivors of wartime sexual violence that was part of the 'Gender quest', UP students found it necessary to explain they were not against the public recognition of the experiences and rights claims of survivors, a matter of an ongoing national debate, but that they had particular ideas how such recognition – telling – might take place. As previously argued (AUTHOR I 2002), the silence of women in the immediate post-war years in Kosovo might be seen as a strategy of resistance, and while it is a reflection of the patriarchal order it is also indicative of a larger system of inequality. UP sociologist Linda Gusia suggests that the complexity and difficulty of recognising survivors of wartime sexual violence lies in the 'entangle[ment] with competing public discourses of nationalism and remembrance... [in a] mnemonic hegemony that has fostered political and social changes which elevate different kinds of patriarchalities' (2016: 140; see also Krasniqi, Sokolić, and Kostovicova in this themed section). The UP students, therefore, remained largely critical of current commemorative practices of women's war time experiences. As participating UP sociology graduate, Jeta Rexha, noted in interview, 'political and intellectual elites rely on romanticized representations of women as

suffering on behalf of the nation, as well as everyday talk that makes war time rape unspeakable'.[8]

For BU-student Bond-Williams, who devoted her subsequent undergraduate dissertation to this topic, these insights helped substantiate a more differentiated understanding of the ways in which international discourses of women's war time role as victims alone, can also contribute to reinforcing nationalised patriarchalities in post-conflict countries under international tutelage. At BU just as at UP, later discussions in class thematicised further how an exclusively victim-centred approach to women in international intervention discourses and practices, tends to overlook the structural problem of patriarchy, both, in international organisations and at home. Simultaneously, such approach affirms the 'global symbolic hierarchies' (Spasić 2017: 39) in the implicit everyday nationalism of those representing the intervening nations (see also Abu-Lughod 2013 and further elaborations by the authors and their colleagues (Gusia, Luci, Pollozhani and Schwandner-Sievers 2019).

Normality denied: conflict, emotions and the production of new nationalisms

Some teams experienced more tensions than others in their collaborations outside the classroom. In the team tasked with preparing the '*Pajtim* (Reconciliation) quest', the critical and politically-aware perspective of one UP postgraduate student became paradigmatically apparent. To the dismay of his team, he actively attempted to invert the observer-observed dynamic embedded in the project methodology by refusing to discuss the set topic. Instead, he inverted the inquiry to raise issues of British colonial responsibilities. Upon interviewing him after the completion of the project, he noted that the group 'was not interested to complicate things. I considered that talking about British colonial history was also important.'[9] Indeed, the mono-directionality of interrogating only Kosovo memory, history and nationalism posed a structural imbalance inherent to the overall project design, which, in this social interaction, the UP student attempted to address.

According to Goffman, '[t]he expressiveness of the individual appears to involve two radically different kinds of sign activity: the expression that he gives, and the expression that he gives off' (1959: 2). The expression, which the UP student aimed to give, was one of 'challenging the assumption that there is something wrong only with Albanian or Kosovar history, that it is nationalistic and dogmatic.' While he gave the expression of diverting and hegemonizing the collaboration, the aim was not, according to him, to make the UK students feel responsible for the British past, but rather 'to talk about history and memory, to look at it from all

perspectives.' Such misunderstanding during impression management exemplifies the involved students' and staffs' negotiations of everyday nationalism on either side, in both their explicit and implicit forms, as evident also from the following, final vignettes of our auto-ethnographic observations. These vignettes demonstrate, in particular, the underpinning emotions that both bound us together and divided us in sometimes unexpected ways, indicative of the ways in which we were institutionally (including in terms of discipline), historically and geopolitically positioned towards each other.

When the entire group of involved staff and students toured Kosovo's wider post-war memoryscapes together, our visit included the Adem Jashari memorial of Prekaz. We have previously traced how from this site and its history of a Serb war massacre, involving a leading commander of Kosovo Albanian guerrillas, his large, extended family and multiple neighbours and relatives, Kosovo's new national founding myth has evolved (Di Lellio and Schwandner-Sievers 2006). UP staff members clearly remember the traumatic impact of this event in 1998 and how it shattered their belief in humanity. A stark difference in emotional involvement of the two groups became apparent at the site, however, when members of the BU team raised international legal questions regarding the presence of fighters and civilians and the post-conflict mythologizing of the event. Although forensically and historically correct, this caused consternation – which was not openly expressed as a matter of politeness – among UP students and staff present. To them, such commentary at a memorial to an event where an entire family, including women and children, had been massacred for being Albanian, just like they were, appeared insensitive and lacking in empathy and understanding.

In contrast, following a visit to Ferdonije Qerkezi's similarly emotionally highly charged House Museum in Gjakova, one BU student was seen as over-identifying with Albanian national suffering. This museum, its material exhibits and Ferdonije's narrative, which she shared with the entire group of students, were dedicated to the cruel abduction of her husband and four sons at the height of the war in 1999. Her story tells of the irrecuperable loss of everyday, social normalcy (Schwandner-Sievers and Klinkner 2019), which lends irrefutable legitimacy to her message 'never to trust the Serbs [*shkijet*] again' (using a derogatory Albanian ethnonym for 'Serbs). Most generally, the museum signifies Kosovo's incomplete transitional justice process with particular disregard to the fate of missing persons and their surviving family members in Kosovo. On the way back, on the bus, one of the UP student assured Schwandner-Sievers that in her home place (a village in Western Kosovo), people did not nurture such intransigent attitudes and that social contact with local Serbs had always persisted. Yet, during a debriefing session back in the hotel in Prishtina,

the BU student introduced earlier expressed how she now hated the Serbs. It took considerable discussion with the student group, then and there, to contextualise Ferdonije's mission and re-establish non-partisan distance without rejecting sympathy for, or empathy with, this war survivor's (and memory entrepreneur's) experience of a horrendous war crime.

BU students and staff also experienced explicit moments of shame for being 'international' and for international responsibility in keeping Kosovo in a protracted state of emergency (Pandolfi 2010), both spatially and politically (Skey 2011), when defining Kosovo as a problem nation, even during periods of calm. Indeed, upon our visit to the bridge of Mitrovica over the river Ibar, signifying Kosovo's Serb-Albanian divisions that were entrenched by the 1999 war, BU student Josie Beytell-Heron noted the militarised surroundings and ubiquitous international police presence. Our hosts suggested that we pass across to the other side, following a stream of ordinary people, busy walking the bridge in either direction. However, Schwandner-Sievers, responsible to uphold BU's formally required, pre-travel 'risk assessment' for insurance purposes, forbade her students from venturing to the northern side to the astonishment of everybody present. The university's risk assessment relies on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's travel advise. At the time, it advised 'against all but essential travel … to the northern part of the city of Mitrovica due to occasional violence and security incidents there' (FCO 2016). In the face of buzzing foot traffic back and forth, this prohibition from crossing felt offensive and ridiculous. Beytell-Heron describes how appalled she and her peers felt about the FCO - EU narrative of a 'security problem', which enhances division and obstructs everyday encounters, while replicating the 'security problem' which it pretends to combat. She felt that with the instructions not to cross, she and the others from the UK were inadvertently becoming part of 'the West' as an imposing regime of control which artificially segregates foreigners from locals and obstructs the routines of everyday normality. The BU students really did not want to be seen as representatives of this hegemonic West. They felt uncomfortable in being subjected to exclusive, administrative security precautions, while their UP peers were not. Meanwhile, the UP colleagues and students patiently complied with the restrictions imposed on their BU friends. However, aware that not being able to cross the border had been a matter of residents not being able to access their homes in the past, the irony was not lost on them.

Conclusions: everyday nationalism and epistemic justice in educational interactions

The international framing of post-conflict Kosovo as a persistent 'problem' in terms, and because, of nationalism, reflects the geopolitical assymetries of power within which transnational projects, such as our's, typically are situated. Such structural assymetries

inform not just the localisation of 'the problem', but also justify and direct funding flows and people's mobilities, accordingly. They also inform the usually implicit epistemologies that shape the collaborating social and institutional partners' understanding of Self and Other. How the exclusionary effects of labelling a country as a 'problem' can become a self-fulfilling prophecy has previously been shown for the 'failed state' paradigm applied to some African countries (Verhoeven 2009). Such hegemonic accounts cherish nationalist, yet hidden, self-superiorising assumptions situated in 'the West' that are seldom made explicit and veil power asymmetries in the international political economy' (2009: 405, abstract). Together with our students, we reflected on our project as an ethnographic microcosm which allowed describing, revealing and reflecting on the epistemological underpinnings of our transnational social encounters.

Our reflections revealed everyday nationalism in all its complexity to be prevalent on both sides of the involved groups of young adults, often in hidden ways that go beyond observations of the pride in Kosovo's international pop stars overheard in the cafés of Prishtina. Through our co-creative, auto-and para-ethnographic, retrospective exploration of the project's social encounters, we identified several epistemological perspectives through which we, mostly unexpectedly, reified or undercut the predestined 'insider'/'outsider' dichotomy. Our constructions of national Self and Other diverged or converged along the following three lines of inquiry, occasionally affirming and at other times rendering irrelevant, our different national belongings. First, was it deemed necessary to emphasise the historical depths of the nation to underline its legitimacy? Second, to what extent did questions of modernity, freedom, patriarchy, privilege, the claiming of public/private spaces and political activism matter (particularly when intersecting identities of class, gender, generation or rural/urban background were considered)? Third, to what extent did the participants feel emotionally attached and part of a community of grief, or, conversely, ashamed (e.g. as outsiders that lacked empathy or were symbolically marked as different, such as at the bridge of Mitrovica)?

While positioned in unequal ways towards each other through the pre-set parameters of the project and its global situatedness, our students effectively challenged any potential hierarchisation that arose (cf. Goffman 1959: 104; Spasić' 2017: 39). Both sides managed to 'equalise' the given structural imbalances and, in effect, challenge the 'insider'/'outsider' dichotomy assigned to their groups in what, in hindsight, appears as an indication of methodological nationalism. For example, BU's students were worried of being identified as 'internationals' in a neo-colonialist identification, while UP students de-emphasized their proxy status as 'stand-ins' for war victims and war experts. UP students rejected association

with nationalist standpoints, but claimed respect for their own critical attitudes and political citizenship. One student effectively 'disrupted' the project's certainties when demanding international introspection for wider colonialist responsibilities and recognition of prevailing nationalism in countries that shaped his own nation's predicament, including the UK. It is to the credit of all participants that, overall, both groups succeeded in establishing equitable social relations.

The participants' attempts of counteracting the pre-set inequalities suggest that epistemic justice in such collaborative, educational projects must include consistent self-reflection and mutuality in knowledge production from the early stages of project design onwards. Furthermore, any effort to counteract the pre-existing structural asymmetries must also consider bias in the content chosen as subject for scrutiny (for example, when exploring contested post-war statues, why not discussing and juxtaposing both, those in the UK and Kosovo?). Otherwise we run the risk of (re-)producing what we aim to study: nationalism and exclusion in its various everyday forms and by all sides involved.

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[1] The boundary between 'cold' or 'banal' and 'hot' nationalism has always been blurred, according to Billig (1995: 46-7), and seemingly 'apolitical', 'banal nationalism' can become the precursor for political mobilisation (Calhoun 2017: 19). This is evident when ethno-nationalist symbols are used in

emotionally and politically highly charged football encounters. Related examples include the Albania-Serbia game in Belgrade in October 2014 or the game between Switzerland (with its transnational stars of Kosovo-Albanian descent) and Serbia during the World Cup in 2018. How such occasions are qualitatively similar or different from football encounters, which sometimes include offensive symbolic communications (e.g. the Nazi salute) between nations such as England and Germany, must remain the subject for another study.

[2] We define 'the West' here as a symbolic geographical space characterised by an aggregation of power and capital (cf. Herzfeld 2001: 83). Such a definition also requires, as Coronil has argued, 'a move beyond a predominantly epistemological critique of Western knowledge cast in its own terms toward a political understanding of the constitution of the "West" that encompasses an examination of its categorical system' (1996: 56).

[3] On 'Balkanism' as the 'mental mapping' of the region as different and prone to violent nationalism in extension of Said's (1978) earlier Orientalism debate, and the cultural history of such mapping in Western Europe and the US, see Todorova (1997).

[4] Para-ethnography indicates ethnographic research collaboration with interlocutors highly capable of scholarly scrutiny and self-reflection, as is often the case in contemporary social anthropological research practice (Holmes and Marcus 2008).

[5] Auto-ethnography refers to the ethnography of the researcher's own, or of their own social group's experience. It is self-reflective and interpretivist in connecting personal experience to wider cultural systems of meaning. (Ellis 2004).

[6] ANONYMISED

[7] 'Quests' discussed were developed by AUTHOR II, with input by all staff involved.

[8] AUTHOR I, interview with student, Prishtina, 1 September 2017.

[9] AUTHOR I, interview with student, Prishtina, 10 September 2017.