2017

"Knocking on Doors that Never Open": Examining Discourses of Rejected Asylum Seekers from Kosova

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Kusari, K. (2017). "Knocking on Doors that Never Open": Examining Discourses of Rejected Asylum Seekers from Kosova (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Calgary, Calgary, AB. doi:10.11575/PRISM/2
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“Knocking on Doors that Never Open”: Examining Discourses of Rejected Asylum Seekers from
Kosova

by

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN SOCIAL WORK

CALGARY, ALBERTA

JUNE, 2017

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Abstract

This qualitative study examined the experiences of rejected asylum seekers from Kosova in order to contribute to the paucity of literature on rejected asylum seekers. Grounded in postcolonial theory and through a Critical Discourse Analysis of interviews with rejected asylum seekers and Kosova's Repatriation Strategy, the study examined dominant discourses which shape the repatriation process in Kosova. The main findings illustrate the European Union (EU)-Kosova power imbalance and the pervasiveness of the EU as 'exclusive' discourse is crucial in shaping experiences of repatriation and the identities of rejected asylum seekers. These findings add to the body of existing repatriation literature and provide important implications for repatriation policies as well as social work theory, practice, and education.

Keywords: asylum seekers, global north, global south, Kosova, repatriation, postcolonialism

Acknowledgement

I am beholden to the study participants for their willingness to participate and for finding the strength to share emotionally charged experiences. Your stories are the essence of this study and make valuable contributions to social work practice with marginalized groups. Thank you for welcoming me into your lives and helping me grow both as a person, and as a researcher.

This study would not have been possible without the support and guidance of my thesis supervisor, Christine Walsh. Your patience as I chose a research topic and decided on my methodology were constant reinforcements of your trust in my potential as a researcher. Throughout the entire research and writing process you created a space where I could be independent, yet questioned my approach when necessary and steered me in the right direction. I am grateful for your straightforward manner of communication and your attention to detail, both of which helped me engage with aspects of my research that I would not have noticed otherwise.

Christine, many professors, and the staff at the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary reinforced my belief that choosing an MSW was an important step towards my future career aspirations. Their words of encouragement, support, and guidance – especially as I roamed the halls of the Faculty during my study breaks – made the faculty feel like a home and provided me with the necessary fuel to keep going.

In particular, I am thankful to Lorne Jaques for meeting with me before I even applied to the MSW program, encouraging me to conduct research in my country, Kosova, and writing recommendation letters without which I would have missed many of the opportunities that enriched my graduate education.

I am also extremely grateful to Yahya El-Lahib whose interest in critical theory and the willingness to engage in critical dialogue provided me with a platform to analyze and reflect upon my research experience. Yahya, thank you for being a sounding board for many of the ideas that are now crucial components of my thesis. Your commitment to my research and your reflective presence in contemplating the best anti-oppressive approach to international research were truly transformative for me.

My graduate experience would not have been as positive if I were not surrounded by the wonderful students of my cohort. Thank you to all of you for great classroom discussions and for expressing genuine interest in my thesis research. Brooklyn, thank you for your consistent support and for a sense of humor that made me smile when I needed to the most.

I am overwhelmed by the support and guidance that I received from my best friend, Whitney Balog. Our conversations did not only help me better articulate my research findings, but also provided a space where I could navigate my transnational identity. Your insights on various identity categories and the many intersections of power, privilege, and love were a constant source of inspiration. Your attentiveness to my needs, even when we had an entire ocean between us, offered me a sense of belonging especially when I struggled to understand whether I belong in Kosova or Canada.

I would also like to recognize people who supported me throughout my entire graduate experience. To Chris, for supporting me as I applied for my MSW. To Kiersten, for sending me inspirational quotes and videos for two weeks in a row as I finalized my thesis. To Lorraine and Kevin, for being my Canadian parents and offering me a home filled with warmth and love.

I am also grateful for the love and care of my partner, Nëntor. Your support while I conducted the interviews helped me process the emotionally laden stories that participants shared. Our hiking trips were a much-needed break from long days in front of the computer screen, and I am glad that we share our passion for nature.

I am grateful for the financial contributions of the Queen Elizabeth II Graduate Scholarship, The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Health Professional Student Research Award, the Alberta Graduate Student Scholarship, the Faculty of Graduate Studies Travel Award, and the Faculty of Social Work Graduate Scholarship, that eased my financial burden and enabled me to truly immerse myself in my research.

I am most indebted to the six people to whom I dedicate this thesis – my family. My parents, Xaja and Nado, for always supporting my educational aspirations no matter how unattainable they seemed at first. My siblings Ermal, Ermira and Dren, for their unwavering faith in my academic abilities, and for helping me explore various aspects of my identity. Your sense of humor, the delicious treats to help me pull all-nighters, and your love made everything seem easy. Lastly, to my uncle, Dushi, whom I never had the pleasure of meeting, but who dedicated his entire life to resisting an oppressive regime, all the while challenging othering discourses. Even though he no longer lives, stories of his ability to survive some of the cruelest prisons in former Yugoslavia are testament that his dignity and personal integrity make him immortal. Thank you for being an example of what it means to be committed to social justice.

Abbreviations

CDA – Critical Discourse Analysis

CFREB - University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board

CPI - Corruption Perception Index

DHA - Discourse–Historical Approach

DI - Democratization Index

DRC - Danish Refugee Council

ECRE - European Council for Refugees and Exiles

EEAS - European External Action Service

EU – European Union

EULEX - European Union Rule of Law in Kosova

EU MS – European Union Member State

FRY - Former Republic of Yugoslavia

IDPs – Internally Displaced Peoples

IOM - International Organization of Migration

LDK - Democratic League of Kosova

MIA – Ministry of Internal Affairs

MOCR - Municipality Office for Communities and Return

MSW – Master of Social Work

MWGR - Municipal Working Groups on Return

NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NGO - Non-governmental organization

OSCE - Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe

PTSD - Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

UN – United Nations

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees

UNICEF – United Nations Children's Fund

UNMIK - United Nations Mission in Kosova

VARP - Voluntary Assistance Return Programme

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Chapter One: Introduction

In 2014, for the first time since World War II, nearly 60 million people were forced to flee their homes due to conflict or harsh economic conditions (United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees [UNHCR], 2015c). The European Union [EU] experienced the largest increase (51%) in the number of asylum requests (UNHCR, 2015b); the majority of which were lodged by Syrians ($n = 295,755$), followed by Iraqis ($n = 155,260$), Afghanis ($n = 106,365$) and Kosovars ($n = 73,215$) (Eurostat, 2017). Unlike the high rates of acceptance for Syrians (96%), Iraqis (87%), and Afghanis (69.3%), only 3.9% of Kosovars were granted asylum (Eurostat, 2016). As a result, EU asylum countries are forcefully returning thousands of Kosovars to Kosova where recent figures estimate that 29.7% of the population lives below the national poverty line (The World Bank, 2011).

The majority of Kosovar asylum seekers are forced to return partly because the EU, as well as the UNHCR, have adopted repatriation, or the right to return to one's country of origin, as the preferred solution to migration crisis, such as the one currently occurring in Europe (UNHCR, 1996; UNHCR, 2015b). With its intentions to eventually join the EU, the Kosovar government has aligned its migration strategies with those of the EU, and it therefore endorses repatriation as a viable solution (Ministry of Internal Affairs [MIA], 2013c). This is despite a significant body of research which substantiates that repatriation is neither a durable solution, nor the end of the migration cycle (Chimni, 2004; Ighodaro, 2002; Kibreab, 2008; Long, 2012; Poggiali, 2006; Toft, 2007; Zieck, 2004). Repatriation, researchers argue, is rarely successful and sustainable, and merely part of the migration continuum (Lietaert, Derluyn, & Broekaert, 2013; Ruben, van Houte, & Davids, 2009). This is especially the case for forcefully returned migrants, such as the recent Kosovar asylum seekers, who although 'volunteered', were forcefully returned to Kosova and, upon return, consider re-emigrating (Ruben et al., 2009). In fact, as many as 76% of forced returnees consider re-emigrating, thus further perpetuating migration crises (Ruben et al., 2009).

These findings highlight a discrepancy between the adoption of repatriation as a sustainable solution, and the reintegration experiences of returnees. This discrepancy is a social justice issue because it contributes to the marginalization of displaced peoples. As such, repatriation and the lived experiences of returnees should be of concern for social workers,

especially considering the increased attention that migration has gained within the social work field (El-Lahib, 2016; Sewpaul, 2006). Yet, precisely because repatriation is considered as the best outcome to migration crisis, returnee experiences are rarely a focus of social work research, in particular, and social science research, in general (Chimni, 2003; Humphries, 2004; Masocha & Simpson, 2007). Castles, de Haas and Millar (2009), for example, suggest that we need to understand migration better by exploring how emigration and return migration change the countries of origin. What might be a more salient question, given the plight of unsuccessful Kosovar asylum seekers, is, “How do emigration and return migration impact rejected asylum seekers?” To more fully inform our understanding on the impact of migration for returned Kosovar asylum seekers, this thesis focuses on the repatriation experiences of Kosovar-Albanians who sought asylum during 2015 and were subsequently denied asylum and returned to Kosova.

Definition of Terms

It is important to define how certain terms will be used in the context of this thesis. An asylum seeker is an individual who has left his/her country of origin because of war, persecution, or natural disaster, but “whose claim in the country of asylum has not yet been definitively evaluated” (UNHCR, 2015a, n. p.). Country of asylum is also known as the host country. Asylum seekers awaiting a decision are designated as ‘in exile’. Successful asylum seekers are granted refugee status and can resettle into the host country, whereas rejected asylum seekers are not given refugee status and have to return to their country of origin (or country of citizenship). Within migration discourse, the return to one’s country of origin is known as repatriation. The UNHCR (1996) identifies three durable solutions to migration crisis: repatriation, resettlement and local reintegration. Repatriation can be voluntary, as is the case for refugees who decide to return to their country of origin after resettling in a host country for a period of time; or involuntary, as is the case with rejected asylum seekers who are forced to return to their country of origin. However, as will become obvious in the literature review chapter, distinguishing between these two forms of repatriation is often difficult. Both those who return voluntarily and involuntarily are referred to as returnees (Chu, Stec, Dunnwald, & Loran, 2008; Kibreab, 2004).

Lastly, it is important to define the term Kosovar for the purposes of this thesis as well as explain why I use Kosova instead of Kosovo when referring to the country. Prior to the 1999 war, all those who lived in Kosova identified themselves by their ethnicity – Albanian, Serbian,

Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian, Turk etc., although they were often referred to as Yugoslav by those who did not live in Kosova. After Kosova declared its independence in 2008, the term Kosovar, was adopted to represent the citizenship of all those who live in Kosova, in an attempt to create a common identity. Nonetheless, most people in Kosova continue to place primacy on their ethnic identity, and rarely, if ever, identify as a Kosovar. The trivial nature of the term Kosovar becomes apparent in reports published by international organizations, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2014) and the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OSCE, 2014), which discuss Kosovar-Albanians and Kosovar-Serbs, but never just Kosovars.

A thorough discussion of the term Kosovar, its origin and the intention behind its use is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, it is important to recognize two different interpretations of the term Kosovar. Some local analysts believe that Kosovar signifies citizenship and recognize that Kosova's citizens continue to identify with their ethnicity as their national identity (Bislimi, 2016; Krasniqi, 2012). Others believe that Kosovar also refers to one's nationality and are grounded in the belief that with Kosova's independence, a new nation was also created (Ibrahimi, 2016; Kajtazi, 2016). Unfortunately, these current debates do not appear in academic literature, but can only be found in opinion and analysis columns in newspapers and magazines. Nevertheless, the important element to keep in mind is that my study focused on the experiences of Kosovar-Albanians who sought asylum in EU countries and were rejected.

In fact, because I am Kosovar-Albanian, I decided to use the term Kosova and not Kosovo throughout the thesis. While this might seem like an insignificant difference, it is important to this study, which focuses on the link between discourse and power. First, Kosova is the name of the country in Albanian language, which is spoken by 92% of the population in Kosova (Central Intelligence Agency, 2017). Although the majority population, Albanians in Kosova have been largely marginalized by the international community. As such, using the name Kosova is an attempt to reflect and give importance to the voices of the local population. Second, in Serbian language, the country is called Kosovo, a term Serbians have used in the past to emphasize that Kosova is Serbian land (Phillips, 2012). For example, statements such as "Kosovo is the heart of Serbia" (Phillips, 2012, p. 65) were used by Slobodan Milosevic, whose regime carried out the ethnic cleansing of Albanians in Kosova during the 1999 war. In fact, the international community, including the media, adopted the Serbian form of the name since the

country came into focus of the West during the war, at which time Kosova was still part of Yugoslavia and was known as Kosovo. Therefore, my second reason for deciding to use the name Kosova is an attempt to make apparent the power of language while also resisting the use of a word which has been used as the basis for oppressing Kosova-Albanians.

Conclusion

The terms defined above and the information about current global trends and Kosova's recent asylum seeking trends presented at the beginning of this chapter, give an overview of repatriation, and its adoption as a durable solution to migration crisis. In what follows, each chapter of this thesis will give insight into various aspects of the repatriation of rejected asylum seekers. The second chapter, the literature review chapter, will first provide an overview of the Kosovar context and then examine literature which focuses specifically on rejected asylum seekers. To compliment this limited body of research, other studies which focus on repatriation in general, and the repatriation of Kosovar returnees, in particular, will also be reviewed. I will conclude the chapter by identify existing literature gaps and discuss which of these gaps the current study sought to address.

The third chapter, lays out key components of the study methodology. First, I will discuss the importance of qualitative research when working with rejected asylum seekers, including the concept of researcher reflexivity. Second, I will explain why I chose to use a postcolonial framework to guide my study, and how this framework gives insight into important aspects of the repatriation process. Third, I will discuss my choice of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as my analysis tool. Fourth, I will give an overview of my research methods, including data collection procedures, participant engagement, and analysis procedures.

The culmination of my analysis will be presented in the findings chapter. Throughout the chapter, I will use quotes extracted from interview transcripts and the analyzed document in order to illustrate main findings. These findings will then be integrated and contextualized in the final chapter of the thesis, the discussion chapter. I will also use the discussion chapter to connect my findings to existing research as well as discuss their implications for repatriation policies as well as social work theory, practice, education and research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

A significant body of literature focused on the reintegration of immigrants and refugees into a host country is available to inform social work practice within the migration sector (i.e., Humphries, 2004b; Lacroix, 2006; Nash, Wong, & Trlin, 2006). While this focus has been important for developing effective social work practice with this marginalized population, it is limited in several important ways. Specifically, a recent systematic review of repatriation research found that the experiences of return migrants rarely appear in social work literature (Carr, 2014). Instead, the majority of available research has focused on the repatriation of former refugees. Thus, there is an absence of research examining the repatriation experiences of rejected asylum seekers, specifically (Chu et al., 2008; Siriwardhana et al., 2015). Scholars suggest that the politicized status of asylum seekers, and the logistical difficulties in reaching this population are among the factors leading to their exclusion from research (Humphries, 2004; Siriwardhana et al., 2015).

Moreover, research focusing on the experiences of certain populations of rejected asylum seekers is extremely scarce (Toscani et al., 2007; von Lersner, Weins, Elberta, & Neuner, 2008). Specifically, despite the considerable history of migration between Kosova and Europe, few studies have examined the plight of rejected Kosovar asylum seekers, Chu and colleagues (2008) being an exception. In order to gain a better understanding of this population's experiences, this literature review will first provide an overview of the Kosovar context and then examine studies which focus on rejected asylum seekers. To compliment this limited body of research, other studies which focus on repatriation in general, and the repatriation of Kosovar returnees, in particular, will also be reviewed.

Contextualizing Kosova

Kosova was a UN protectorate under the administration of the United Nations Mission in Kosova (UNMIK) until it declared independence on February 17th 2008 (Uberti, 2015), becoming the newest country in Europe. The independence came nine years after the 1999 war which resulted from the break-up of former Yugoslavia. UNMIK consisted of the UN, the European Union (EU), and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) (Papadimitriou, Petrov, & Greicevci, 2007). In 2008, the EU Rule of Law in Kosova (European Union Rule of Law [EULEX], 2017) took over the responsibility of strengthening the rule of law

in an independent Kosova. EULEX (2017) aims to assure Kosova's alignment with EU policies. In an attempt to ensure the respect of human rights in Kosova, UN and EU interventions have promoted democracy and guided the state building process (UN General Assembly, 2005). Unfortunately, however, the engagement of the international community in Kosova's state-building process has been largely ineffective (Blumi, 2003; Uberti, 2015). For example, despite receiving the second largest amount of development aid in Europe, Kosova continues to suffer from high rates of poverty, political instability, and migration crisis (Blumi, 2003; Mulaj, 2008; Uberti, 2015; World Bank, 2011). This situation is, in part, a consequence of the fact that as much as 80% of the aid that entered Kosova is returned to donor countries through salaries for international staff and capacity building efforts of organizations involved in the post-war intervention (Lemay-Hebert, 2011). Also, the forces of globalization have impacted the transition of Kosova from a socialist country to a capitalist one and exerted extra pressure on Kosova's political, economic and social structures.

In fact, Fairclough's (2003) discussion of globalization offers a succinct explanation of Kosova's continued struggle:

It is not the impetus to increasing international economic integration that is the problem, but the particular form in which this is being imposed, and the particular consequences (e.g. in terms of unequal distribution and wealth) which inevitably follow. All this has resulted in the disorientation and disarming economic, political, social forces committed to radical alternatives, and has contributed to a closure of public debate and a weakening of democracy. (p. 5)

Indeed, the Democratization Index (DI), which measures citizen satisfactions with the extent of the election process, the performance of government institutions, the independence of the judiciary system, and freedom of expression, among other factors, reveals that democracy is not strong in Kosova (Hetemi, Duri, & Kusari, 2016). Kosova has a low DI score; 1.12 out of 3 and only 23% of Kosovars report being satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the performance of Kosova's main government institutions (Hetemi et al., 2016).

Low satisfaction with Kosova's institutions might be attributed, in part, to the difficult socioeconomic conditions. Specifically, Kosovar citizens report that poverty (57.1%), unemployment (21.4%) and corruption (5.6%) are the three most paramount problems that

negatively impact their social well-being (Hetemi et al., 2016). In 2017 the poverty rate in Kosova was 29.7%, while the unemployment rate was 32.9% (UNDP, 2017).

A recent survey found that Kosovars report that their hopes to gain employment in the next six months are low because they remain skeptical of merit-based employment; 81% of Kosovars believe that nepotism, bribes and party-alliances are among the main factors needed to gain employment (Hetemi et al., 2016). Indeed, the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) reveals that Kosova scores 36 out of a possible 100, where 0 indicates a highly corrupt society (Transparency International, 2016). Kosova's CPI is the worst in the region, in comparison with Macedonia (37), Albania (39), Bosnia and Herzegovina (39), Serbia (42), Montenegro (45), and Croatia (49) (Transparency International, 2016). Further, Kosova's score on the Control of Corruption Index, which indicates the extent to which public power is used for private gains, is -0.5 on a scale of -2.5 to 2.5. These findings suggest that Kosova has a low governance outcome (The World Bank, 2015). These figures support Kosova's continued struggle with corruption despite the presence of EULEX, whose main mission is to establish rule of law and decrease the prevalence of corruption. In fact, a March 2015 report concluded that corruption is highly prevalent in Kosova, concluding that EULEX has failed to lay anti-corruption foundations (Harris, 2015). Further, EULEX personnel have been accused of corruption and bribery (Borger, 2014). The high rate of corruption, in particular, and the lack of economic and social development, in general, have led to a disillusioned population in Kosova (UNDP, 2017).

Kosova is a multiethnic country, comprised of 92.9% Albanians, 1.6% Bosniaks, 1.5% Serbs, and 4% other minorities (CIA, 2017). It has the youngest population in Europe, with an average age of 28.2 years; about 45% of the population is under the age of 25 and another 42% are between the ages of 25 and 54 (CIA, 2017). Such a large proportion of youth, combined with a slow growing economy, means that many young people, including university graduates, struggle to find employment. In fact, youth, women, and those with lower levels of education are most likely to be unemployed (Kotorri et al., 2013; Hetemi et al., 2016). This situation has led many university graduates and families with young children to look for work and education opportunities abroad. Consequently, many young families consider migration to Western European countries as a solution to their socioeconomic problems (UNDP, 2014).

Kosova's Migration History

Kosova's history is characterized by waves of mass migrations, most of which were either spurred by violence that has historically overwhelmed the Balkan region, or the harsh socioeconomic conditions that continue to plague this area of the world. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine the entire migration history of Kosova; instead the focus here is on the migration history since the 1950s, as this population is impacted by the repatriation programs discussed in this thesis.

The first wave of migrants from Kosova to Western Europe occurred in the 1950s and 1960s as a result of the guest worker programs which encouraged workers to emigrate and work in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland on a contractual basis (Kotorri et al., 2013; Zimmerman, 1995 as cited in Hoti, 2009). In this first wave, males comprised the majority of those who migrated as a consequence of the higher wages offered in other countries (Kotorri et al., 2013). Exact estimates of the number of migrants during this time do not exist, but it is accepted that Kosova's migration resembled that of Yugoslavia at large, which sent 12% of its population to Western European countries (Hoti, 2009). Additionally, during this time, many Kosovar-Albanians immigrated to Turkey in order to escape the oppressive Serbian regime (King, Desmarais, Lindsay, Piérart, & Tétreault, 2014).

The second wave of migration from Kosova began in 1989, after the abolition of Kosova's autonomy within Yugoslavia, which led to the suspension of ethnic Albanians from work places (Kotorri et al., 2013). An estimated 350,000 Kosovar-Albanians left to escape the prevailing poor economic conditions that ensued (Hoti, 2009; King et al., 2014). Families and individuals left to either escape political prosecution or flee from serving in the Yugoslav army (Kotorri et al., 2013). As such, emigration in this wave occurred due to both political and economic reasons.

The third wave of migration occurred in 1998 and 1999 as a consequence of the war waged on Kosova by Serbia (Kotorri et al., 2013). During the war Serbia carried out an ethnic cleansing of Albanians in Kosova (Bock & Phan, 2006; King et al., 2014). Consequently, around 850,000 Albanians sought refugee status in neighbouring countries (Albania, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina) while others were sent to Western European countries (King et al., 2014). In fact, Macedonia refused to admit Kosovar refugees without the guarantee that other European countries would share the burden – a

situation which resembles that of the most recent migration crisis (Bulley, 2010). After the war, a considerable number of those who had left returned to Kosova to help with its reconstruction (UNHCR, 1999). Although Kosovar-Albanians returned voluntarily, the UNHCR and other UN agencies could not guarantee their safety (UNHCR, 1999). Unfortunately, Kosova did not experience the economic growth that was expected to occur after the war and consequently the third wave of emigration was sustained primarily due to economic factors (Kotorri et al., 2013).

As a result of these three mass migrations, recent estimates of Kosova's diaspora are of at least 800,000 people (International Organization of Migration [IOM], 2012). Since Kosova's population is only 1.8 million, the significant number of those living abroad makes them relevant players in Kosova's economy, politics, and culture. For example, during the 1999 war, "the Albanian diaspora—especially in the United States—lobbied strongly for the independence of Kosovo [sic] and the restoration of Albanian rights" (Mulaj, 2008, p. 1107). Currently, the diaspora is important to Kosova's development. For example, remittances account for 15% of Kosova's GDP (CIA, 2015). In fact, the establishment of the Ministry of Diaspora in Kosova is a testament to the importance that migrants have for Kosova's economy and history.

Even though Kosova's history is heavily influenced by migration episodes and circular migration to European countries (King et al., 2014), Kosova remains the only country in Europe that has not been granted visa liberalization (European Stability Initiative, 2012). Consequently, Kosovars can only travel to five countries in Europe without needing a visa (Albania, Turkey, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia), making Kosovars the most isolated population in Europe (Ministry of External Affairs, 2015). This isolation, and the slow economic development rate, lead 50% of Kosova's youth to consider emigration as a solution to their problems (Haxhikadrija & Dahinden, 2009). The main reasons for emigration among this population include the pursuit of better economic opportunities and a higher quality of life in general (Haxhikadrija & Dahinden, 2009; UNDP, 2014). The pre-existing desire to emigrate among Kosovars increases in the face of political unwillingness to improve the socioeconomic situation in Kosova. Seemingly, that is exactly what happened during the first months of 2015.

The 2015 mass exodus. Between January and March of 2015, approximately 52,000 Kosovars (the majority of whom were Kosova-Albanians) left Kosova (Alexander, 2015; Eurostat, 2017). They took dangerous, and often fatal illegal roads, in order to seek asylum in other European countries. Even though studies or reports which explain this particular mass

exodus are not yet available, literature on previous migration waves suggests that the main reasons behind migration are unemployment and a lack of improvement in one's socioeconomic status within the previous year (Haxhikadrija & Dahinden, 2009; Kotorri et al., 2013).

Additionally, the Friedrich Stiftung Foundation reported that the latest exodus was also a result of the belief that Western European countries offer a better standard of living (Henkel & Hoppe, 2015). That is, as Kosovars experience a low standard of living, they are likely to believe that life in other countries is necessarily better (Henkel & Hoppe, 2015). Kosova is the poorest country in Europe, making it easy for Kosovars to believe that life in any other country would be more comfortable and fulfilling. However, considering that Europe is currently dealing with a refugee crisis due to wars in Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq, among others, Kosovar asylum seekers are not prioritized, and are most frequently denied the opportunity of accessing the standard of living they are seeking.

Even though the Kosovar and the EU government have issued statements requesting Kosovars to not pursue asylum, emigration continues, though it has slowed down considerably since the end of 2015 (Eurostat, 2017). Between January and December of 2015, 73,215 Kosovars applied for asylum in Western European countries (Eurostat, 2017); of these, 50.7% applied in Germany, 33.4% in Hungary, and 5.84% in France (Eurostat, 2017). Germany is a preferred destination because it already has a large population of Kosovar-Albanians. Hungary, the second most popular country for asylum seekers, is the route through which asylum seekers travel to reach other European destinations.

Of the 73,215 Kosovar asylum seekers who reached their destinations and applied for asylum in Western European countries, only 2275 were granted asylum (Eurostat, 2016). Asylum countries are thus forcefully returning the 96% of Kosovar asylum seekers to Kosova. As stated in the National Strategy for Reintegration of Repatriation Persons (hereafter referred to as the Strategy) in Kosova, not all returnees have access to assistance which aids their reintegration (MIA, 2013c). The Strategy regulates the return of rejected asylum seekers and will, therefore, be examined later in this thesis. Before analyzing this Strategy, however, it is necessary to look at repatriation literature, in general, and repatriation literature within social work, in particular. Such literature provides a background which is helpful in understanding the process of repatriation, as well as the role of social workers within this process.

Research on the Repatriation Process

Despite the adoption of repatriation as a durable solution to global migration crisis, research exploring the repatriation process is scarce (Kibreab, 2003; Lietaert et al., 2013; Ruben et al., 2009). Gillespie, Peltzer, and Maclachlan (2009) outline the three main reasons for the dearth of research on repatriation:

First, returnees tend to disperse once they get home and often deliberately seek not to be identified. Secondly, there is a heated debate about the point at which the UNHCR's mandate and responsibility for refugees ends; on, or how long after, repatriation? Finally, repatriation is perceived as the optimum solution, and as such relatively problem-free. (p. 166)

The main themes emerging from a review of the limited number of studies exploring repatriation are: 1) repatriation is not a problem-free process; 2) returnees lack access to health, employment, and social services; 3) social support networks are crucial for reintegration; and 4) the Global North-South power imbalance guides the adoption of repatriation as a durable solution to global migration crisis. Each of these are described more fully in the following section.

Contrary to the UNHCR (1996) assumption that repatriation is a durable solution, the limited investigations on the repatriation process and the experiences of returnees suggests otherwise. Repatriation has been noted as a process during which return migrants face unique and difficult challenges. Further, instead of being the end of migration, repatriation is merely a part of the migration cycle (Ruben et al., 2009). In addition, returnees fare much worse in health and integration measures as compared to those who never left or those who resettled in host countries (Davies, Borland, Blake, & West, 2011; Zhang, Liu, Zhang, & Wu, 2015). Also, forced return has adverse effects on returnees who are often discriminated against while in the host country and live within the constraints of restrictive migration policies, which can negatively impact their ability to reintegrate upon return (Ruben et al., 2009).

Institutional support, often provided by governments of host countries, the IOM and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), facilitates reintegration upon return (Davies et al., 2011; De Bree, Davids & De Haas, 2010; White, 2014). Research suggests that programs which offer assistance immediately upon return are more likely to benefit returnees because they reinforce a sense of safety and belonging (Ruben et al., 2009). Although many different kinds of assistance programs exist, return migrants report feeling let down by their institutions and

highlight the lack of services to assist with resettlement and reintegration (Fu & Vanlandingham, 2010; Gillespie et al., 2009). Of specific concern, many repatriation programs provide limited information about living conditions in the country of origin. Further, most programs focus on financial assistance, paying little attention to the psychosocial needs of returnees (Lietaert et al., 2013; Ruben et al., 2013). This narrow definition of what returnees need means that NGOs and public agencies can only “play a modest role in facilitating social cohesion upon return” (Ruben et al., 2009, p. 929).

Access to health services impacts the ability of returnees to reintegrate (Lietart et al., 2013; Ruben et al., 2013; von Lersner, 2008). Migration often exposes returnees to particular health risks, while limiting the resources needed to address these risks (Collinson, 2010). For example, living conditions while awaiting asylum, length of stay in a host country, access to health services upon return, as well as the migration journey itself can impact health (Fu & Vanlandingham, 2010; Hasanovic, Sinanovic, & Pavlovic, 2005; von Lersner et al., 2008). Indeed, Fu and Vanlandingham (2010), compared mental and physical health outcomes for returnees to Vietnam ($n = 135$) to those who never left ($n = 447$) and those resettled in a major USA city ($n = 127$). They concluded that returnees show an “additional disadvantage on social functioning relative to never-leavers”, and fared “worse on general health and role limitations due to emotional problems relative to immigrants” (p. 171). Other authors report similar results, emphasizing a higher prevalence of depression, anxiety and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among returnees to Bosnia and Herzegovina, China, Ethiopia, Georgia, Ghana, and South Africa when compared to those who never left or resettled in host countries (Carr, 2014; Davies et al., 2011; Hasanovic et al., 2005; Setrana & Tonah, 2014; Siriwardhana et al., 2015; Yonas & Kumie, 2013).

Siriwardhana and colleagues (2015) used a cross-sectional survey to track health trajectories of returnees in Sri Lanka. Of the initially interviewed internally displaced people ($N = 450$), 338 were re-interviewed a year later. Results show that the prevalence of common mental disorders (PTSD, depression, anxiety) among Sri Lankan returnees (18.8%) immediately after return was higher than the national average (11.7%). Further, a longitudinal analysis of census data of South African migrants ($N = 70,527$) investigated the risk of dying for returnees compared with those who never left or those who returned more than five years before the study

was conducted (Collinson, 2010). Recent returnees had a significantly higher risk of dying than permanent residents and those who returned in the preceding five years (Collinson, 2010).

These unique health needs and challenges faced by returnees often go unnoticed as most do not undergo health assessments upon return, especially if the country of origin is dealing with a sudden mass return (Carr, 2014; Davies et al., 2011). In addition, returnees typically do not have proper health insurance upon return (Hasanovic et al., 2005) and cannot access adequate health services or receive treatment, which is often available to them in the host country (Davies et al., 2011; Ruben et al., 2009; Setrana & Tonah, 2014). In Ghana, for example, poor infrastructure, erratic water supply, and electricity disruptions contribute to exacerbate their already poor state of health facilities (Setrana & Tonah, 2014). These conditions are especially threatening for returnees who come back with health conditions that are uncommon to their country of origin (Davies et al., 2011), the treatment of which can be prolonged and expensive (Hasanovic et al., 2005). In light of these findings, Fu and Vanlandingham (2010) conclude that “the stresses and hardships associated with repatriation have significant health consequences” for returnees (p. 177).

Harsh economic conditions are among the factors leading to stress; and pose continuing threats to the well-being of returnees (Carr, 2014; Fu & Vanlandingham, 2010). Lack of access to employment is of particular concern for returnees because employment facilitates reintegration. Specifically, employment often provides protection from political instability, as well as contributes to an increased sense of self-efficacy (Carr, 2014; White, 2014). Problems within the labour market, including corruption, low wages, and short-term contracts, among other factors, impact the economic well-being of returnees (Ruben et al., 2009; Setrana & Tonah, 2014; White, 2014). For instance, Ruben et al. (2009) found that due to faulty labour policies in Afghanistan, Armenia, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Sierra Leone, Togo, and Vietnam, only half of the 178 forced returnees, who participated in the study, had access to temporary or permanent employment; the remainder depended on inconsistent sources of income such as loans, remittances, public relief, humanitarian assistance, or allowances received from family members. Further, adolescents who returned to Bosnia ($N = 120$) were likely to have unemployed parents (58%) and live in extreme poverty (10%) (Hasanovic et al., 2005).

Access to employment for returnees is further hindered by discrimination from government officials (Carr, 2014). This is especially the case for involuntary returnees who face

“large difficulties in establishing their economic position” (Ruben et al., 2009, p. 927). A systematic literature review of eight repatriation studies reveals that corruption and nepotism are implicated in preventing returnees from accessing employment and social services (Carr, 2014). In addition, qualitative studies support the notion that returnees face corruption and bribery in the public sector and this makes it more difficult for them to find employment. For instance, returnees are frustrated with frequent delays in obtaining land permits and the barriers they face starting their own businesses (Lietart et al., 2014; Setrana & Tonah, 2014). Such government practices are associated with long-lasting effects in the mental health of returnees (Fu & Vanlandingham, 2010).

In absence of institutional support and in the presence of discrimination, returnees turn to their social support networks for help with finding employment (Carr, 2014; Setrana & Tonah, 2014; White, 2014). Returnees who have pre-existing strong social networks are in a better position to start their own businesses and/or gain access to job recruitment agencies (Carr, 2014; Setrana & Tonah, 2014). Access to employment is crucial for reintegration because it enables returnees to create more social contacts which boosts their sense of self-efficacy and improves their chances of re-integration (Ruben et al., 2009; White, 2014).

Social support networks are not only important when finding employment, but are also an integral part of the returnees’ reintegration experiences in general (Fu & Vanlandingham, 2010; Lieraert et al. 2013; Setrana & Tonah, 2014). Davies and colleagues (2011) conclude that “returning to a supportive social network, language, and social norms and a health system that the returnee understands often contributes to improve the returnees’ physical, mental, and social well-being” (p. 3). For example, among Ghanaian returnees ($N = 30$), 90% rely on family members for help with building their houses or finding a place to live, and gaining access to other services (Setrana & Tonah, 2014). Similarly, returnees ($N = 178$) interviewed by Ruben and colleagues (2009) indicate that social networks assist in creating a stable position in the society through facilitating access to information, goods, and services. Consequently, returnees consider social support networks to be an important kind of insurance.

Due to the importance of social networks, maintaining contact with friends and family while abroad is crucial for reintegration upon return. This contact also shapes the attitudes of the local community towards returnees. A negative attitude of the local community towards returnees is detrimental to reintegration, resulting in feelings of estrangement among returnees,

who report being discriminated against (Carr, 2014; Lietaert, 2013; Setrana & Tonah, 2014; Stefansson, 2004). Returnees report feeling judged for leaving and are often accused of betraying those who stayed behind. This is especially the case for those whose home country was going through a war at the time of their departure (Stefansson, 2004). For example, Stefansson (2004) notes the situation for returnees to Bosnia and Hercegovina:

...accusations of betrayal and cowardice in reality mask a feeling of envy on the part of the stayees who nurture distorted images of luxurious life these refugees lived in Germany and other Western host countries from where they apparently return with 'suitcases full of Deutchmarks and three Mercedes each'. (p. 179)

This literature reflects the disruptive role of social cleavages between returnees and those who never leave in the reintegration process.

Social divisions are further increased when returnees are expected to come back from exile with wealth that can be distributed to relatives (Carr, 2014; Lietaert et al., 2013; Setrana & Tonah, 2014). In fact, returnees report feeling overwhelmed when expected to make unrealistic financial contributions towards social gatherings, community projects, as well as helping any relatives experiencing economic hardship (Setrana & Tonha, 2014). When combined with the socioeconomic fragility that characterizes return, such expectations are a source of stress and often are a source of dissatisfaction among returnees (Car, 2014; Lieraert et al., 2013; Setrana & Tonah, 2014). In response to these stressful situation, returnees often desire to return to the host country.

Living conditions while in the host country also play a critical role on returnee's levels of dissatisfaction with conditions in their country of origin. That is, returnees' evaluations of the country of origin are "not based on absolute, but relative demands, as the possibilities of creating sustainable livelihoods" in the country of origin are compared to living conditions while in exile (Stefansson, 2004, p. 176). For example, for returnees who live in poor conditions in the host country, repatriation may be an attractive solution (Stefansson, 2004). On the contrary, if returnees enjoyed a high standard of living while in exile, returning to their country of origin poses additional challenges (Lietaert et al., 2013). Returnees to Nepal and Poland, for instance, indicated being able to identify existing problems more easily because they compared conditions in their home countries with those in Western countries (Lietaert et al., 2013; White, 2014). In the words of one returnee: "It's only now that I can see the bad sides of Poland" (White, 2014, p.

38). Such comparisons also reflect the creation of transnational identities for return migrants. When these identities do not fit with the home culture, the resultant loss of cultural values and self-identity often manifests in the form of psychological disorders or distress (Ruben et al., 2009).

Transnational identities of returnees point to another major theme in repatriation literature – the role of globalization and the Global North-South power imbalance in the adoption of repatriation as a durable goal. According to some scholars, the UNHCR preference for repatriation is dictated by the powerful Global North countries (Chimni, 2004; Long, 2012; Newman, 2003; Toft, 2007). These countries dominate the international system and “decide from time to time, in light of their interests, which solution to the global refugee problem should be promoted as the preferred solution” (Chimni, 2004, p. 73).

Between the end of World War II and the Cold War, Global North countries preferred resettlement as opposed to repatriation as a durable solution; asylum seekers and refugees could fill the labour shortage created by World War II. However, this preference began to shift once Global North countries had established a stable work force. Additionally, the composition of migrants changed after WWII because more individuals from Africa sought asylum in Global North countries. Ighodaro (2002), guided by an anti-racist framework, argues that as the composition of migrants changed, Global North countries started to emphasize the cost of resettlement in terms of resources and cultural adaptation. Others support the idea that these factors redefined the durable solutions towards a preference for repatriation (Bessa, 2009; Chimni, 2004; Newman, 2003; Poggiali, 2006; Toft, 2007; Zieck, 2004).

Those who support repatriation heavily rely on the concept of home to justify their preference. However, many authors challenge the notion that home is a physically-bound place and conclude that home is a “highly fictitious character” (Zieck, 2004, p. 49), idealized in order to encourage repatriation (Chimni, 1998; Chimni, 2004; Long, 2012; Poggiali, 2006; Stefansson, 2004; Zieck, 2004). The glorification of home is also used to justify repatriation and hide the fact that living conditions in the country of asylum impact the decisions of refugees to “voluntarily” return (Chimni, 2004; Ighodaro, 2012; Pottier, 1996). For example, Rwandan refugees interviewed by Pottier (1996) state that UNHCR promotes repatriation when it cannot manage inadequate camp conditions. Therefore, camp conditions, not the political stability in the home

country, determine whether the UNHCR adopts repatriation as a durable solution to refugee crisis (Pottier, 1996).

The UNHCR claim to neutrality when adopting durable solutions to migration is challenged by the fact that its policies and practices reflect the best interests of Global North countries who finance projects run by the UNHCR (Toft, 2007). Among the top 20 donor countries who contribute to refugee agencies, developed countries contributed most of the aid (Toft, 2007), suggesting that wealthier countries of the Global North powerfully influence the life chances of refugees and asylum seekers (Hathaway, 1997; Ighodaro, 2002; Pottier, 1996).

As a consequence of this influence, rather than “solving *refugees’ problems*...repatriation today serves to solve the *problem of refugees*” (Poggiali, 2006, p. 51, emphasis in original). The power divide between the North and South becomes apparent when Global North countries encourage repatriation, but do not provide economic help for countries of origin, most of which belong to the Global South. This practice increases the wealth gap between the Global North and South, making Northern countries seem more desirable and encouraging both legal and illegal migration (Bessa, 2009; Chimni, 2004). In failing to recognize these macro pull factors, the UNHCR considers the return home as satisfying all of the conditions for the cessation of refugee status, regardless of the degree to which individuals are able to reintegrate upon return (Chimni, 2004; Ighodaro, 2002; Poggiali, 2006; Pottier, 1996; Zieck, 2004).

This preference for forced repatriation is becoming more acceptable as the UNHCR and the world’s wealthy countries emphasize repatriation *in general* as the solution to refugees (Chimni 2004; Ighodaro, 2007; Lietaert et al., 2013; Toft, 2007; Zieck, 2004). Unlike the guidelines concerning resettlement of refugees in a country of asylum, the distinct character of each form of repatriation is not clear and host countries have the freedom to decide how to implement such strategies (Chimni, 2004; Ighodaro, 2002; Zieck, 2004). Although the UNHCR principles of return in safety and dignity are still in place, the ideal of voluntary repatriation is much less clear (Chimni, 2004; Gerver, 2015; Ighodaro, 2002; Stefansson, 2004). Specifically, “the objectivism that characterizes the concept of ‘safe return’ disenfranchises refugees by eliminating their voice in the process leading to the decision to deny or terminate protection” (Chimni, 2003, p. 203). Gerver (2015) for example, cautions that simply signing a voluntary repatriation form does not mean that refugees enjoy free will. Coercion, she suggests, can manifest itself in many forms, including government promotion of voluntary return and the threat

by host countries to cut necessary services. In addition, personal circumstances, such as mental health, might impact an individual's ability to make a voluntary decision (Gerver, 2015; Ighodaro, 2002).

Limited attention has been paid in the literature as to how returnees manage to re-create their lives upon return. This calls into question the evidence basis of political discourse which endorses repatriation as a problem-free process (Lieraert et al., 2014; Ruben et al., 2009; Setrana & Tonah, 2014). Numerous authors suggest that more attention needs to be paid to sociopolitical factors which shape the global preference towards repatriation, and consequently the experiences of returnees (Carr, 2014; Black et al., 2004; Chimni, 2004; Fu & Vanlandingham, 2010; Lietaert et al., 2013; Setrana & Tonah, 2014; Siriwardha, 2014).

In comparing the perspectives of Senegal's government, the EU, and return migrants, Sinatti (2015) concludes:

Against global discourses suggesting the triple-win nature of return, a multi-vocal scenario reveals actors' dissimilar understanding of the meaning of return. The policies of origin and host countries are driven by conflicting aims and serve the interests of states before addressing those of migrants. A mismatch between the conceptualization of return 'from above' and from below' means that policies fail to fully reflect the experiences of migration as it is lived and practised by migrants themselves. (p. 285)

Sinatti (2015), the first author to investigate these three different perspectives, suggests that while her study "contributed to revealing some of the politics of meaning behind global discourses on return migration, unanswered questions remain that might be explored through further research" (p. 287).

In line with Sinatti's (2015) suggestion, others including De Bree et al. (2010) and Lietaert et al. (2014) highlight the lack of research focusing on the perspective of countries of origin. Existing repatriation literature has been critical of the Northern dominance in policy development and implementation, yet the perspectives of countries of origin remain largely missing from literature (De Bree et al., 2010). These perspectives are important to understand because mass returns to a country which already suffers from poverty and instability can lead to further crisis, contribute to bigger migration waves and perpetuate the unsustainability of repatriation (Ruben et al., 2009). Further, this favouritism towards research conducted in the Global North is problematic; "while policies of return migration are already applied on a large

scale throughout Western Europe, surprisingly little is known about how these returnees manage to build up their lives again after return” (Ruben et al., 2009, p. 909).

The unique perspectives of returnees are limited in current repatriation studies (De Bree et al., 2010; Lietaert, 2014). In addition, most studies analyze development-focused policies and lack a wider health and social well-being orientation (Siriwardhana, 2015). Further, considerations of identity and belonging for returnees “are seen as luxury issues which are only deemed relevant to reflect on by those returnees who have solved its livelihood situation in a satisfactory manner” (Stefansson, 2004, p. 176). Hence, future research which highlights the voices of returnees themselves, as well as their issues of identity and belonging, is crucial to inform the development of a sustainable approach to migration crisis (Black et al., 2004; Lietart et al., 2013; Ruben et al., 2009). Indeed, the large number of rejected asylum seeker who have recently returned to Kosova provides an opportunity to address this gap in literature through learning more about their experiences of reintegration and the impact these experiences have in their identity formation – and this thesis sought to do that.

Research on the Repatriation of Kosovar Returnees

The majority of research examining the experiences of Kosovar returnees focuses on those who left during the 1999 war and repatriated either voluntarily or involuntarily between 2000 and 2008 (Black et al., 2004; Chu et al., 2008; Dahinden, 2005; Toscani et al., 2007; von Lersner et al., 2008). In the first of such studies, Black and colleagues (2004) sought to develop a framework for assessing the sustainability of return for refugees and asylum seekers who voluntarily returned to their countries of origin. They conducted semi-structured interviews with Kosovar ($n = 34$) and Bosnian ($n = 30$) returnees, as well as with international organizations and local governments in Kosova ($n = 22$) and Bosnia ($n = 24$) who had direct involvement with the process of return. Their interviews explored the physical, socioeconomic and political-security sustainability of return.

Physical sustainability of return, defined as “the level of, or desire for re-emigration amongst returnees and/or the home country population as a whole” (Black et al., 2004, p. 28), was low among Kosovars, with 21 out of 34 respondents expressing a desire to re-emigrate; representatives from various institutions and organizations also voiced concerns about returnees’ living conditions (Black et al., 2004). In addition, 12 respondents said that they would consider

emigration if legal channels were available to them. One respondent highlighted the emotionally charged nature of repatriation and re-emigration decisions:

I try not to think about Germany, because when I compare this and that life, it is incomparable. Thinking about Germany will only destroy me, so I'd rather not think about it. I am unemployed here, while everything was catered for there. Thinking about it will drive me crazy. I have three children to support, yet I have no means of supporting them. (Black et al., 2004, p. 30)

The socioeconomic sustainability of return, defined as the "levels of well-being, with a particular emphasis on employment, income, assets, and housing, as well as the extent to which individuals were reliant on others to satisfy their needs" was negatively impacted by unemployment (Black et al., 2004, p. 30). Kosovar participants reported low levels of socioeconomic sustainability of return, with 15 out of 34 living in households which fell below the extreme poverty line. While those who were employed ($n = 22$) were less likely to be living in poverty, their relatively small incomes were used to support large families and presented a barrier to meeting their basic needs. This was especially the case for those whose houses sustained considerable damage or were completely destroyed during the 1999 war. Only 19 Kosovar interviewees returned to their previous houses, or to houses in the land they had formerly owned, and all of them reported damage to their property.

Furthermore, two-thirds of the respondents considered their current living conditions much worse than the living conditions while in exile (Black et al., 2004). For example, six returnees reported not feeling safe in Kosova, and a further 11 expressed uncertainty about their safety. Although the political-security sustainability of return was not determined, the authors concluded that, in general, repatriation of Kosovars was not sustainable. Specifically, harsh economic conditions and political instability which characterized Kosova at the time hindered returnees' ability to integrate.

A study conducted by the European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE, 2005) included consultations with refugee groups and NGOs working with refugees, as well as interviews with returnees to Bosnia ($n = 5$), Kosova, ($n = 9$) and Afghanistan ($n = 5$). The participatory approach of the study aimed to challenge the tendency of EU countries to ignore the voices of refugees and asylum seekers when drafting policies directly impacting this population.

Although all interviewees from Kosova had signed Voluntary Assistance Return Programme [VARP] forms, they stated that they were forced to return from Austria between 1999 and 2004. Forced repatriation had political and security implications, as evidenced by two returnees who joined the Kosova Liberation Army; others reported feeling threatened by the high rate of crime in Kosova and the perceived self-interest of the police and the international protection forces. These worries were exacerbated among the youth who could not envision a better future in Kosova and complained of poverty, unemployment and lack of access to medical services. Youth and adults reported feeling overwhelmed when trying to re-start their lives in Kosova and expressed disappointed with the lack of repatriation assistance. Similar to findings by Black and colleagues (2004), the ECRE (2005) report concludes that many returnees faced challenges in reconstructing their houses. Consequently, returnees favored re-emigration to western European countries.

Using social network analysis, Dahinden (2005) conducted semi-structured interviews with Albanian migrants ($N = 40$) from former Yugoslavia (34 from Kosova) residing in Switzerland, and Albanian returnees to Kosova ($n = 11$). In addition, Dahinden (2005) collected information about people referenced to during the interviews. This was done in order to determine the significance of transnational ties in relation to reintegration experiences. She found that returnees with transnational ties had better chances of reintegration primarily due to their access to remittances which offered temporary financial support. Transnational ties also impacted the identity-formation of both those who left as well as the household to which they belonged (Dahinden, 2005). For example, if an individual focused on the new ties created in the country of asylum and allowed his/her ties to kin in Kosova to dissolve, his/her reintegration upon return was more difficult.

Toscani and colleagues (2007) surveyed ethnic Albanian families in Kosova ($N = 319$) and interviewed all members above the age of 16 ($N = 580$) who returned from Switzerland between 1999 and 2001. Interview questions explored living conditions during asylum, current socioeconomic conditions, subjective physical and mental health, the occurrence of traumatic events, as well as PTSD symptoms. The aim of these questions was to assess the relationship between living conditions during asylum in Switzerland and the health of returnees.

Stay in Switzerland for longer than 26 weeks was associated with lower mental health scores, particularly among returnees with PTSD (25.5%). Compared to individuals without

PTSD, those with PTSD scored significantly lower in all mental health measures, with 40.2% of them reporting a decline in their health over the past year. Further, a decline in health measures was affected by conditions of extreme poverty in Kosova, which impacted 65% of the participants. Drawing from these findings, Toscani and colleagues (2007) conclude that living conditions during asylum and the process of repatriation may increase the rate of mental illness in asylum seekers affected by war.

Von Lersner and colleagues (2008) also examined the mental health of refugees while in exile ($N = 47$) in Germany, and nine months after returning to their country of origin ($n = 33$). Five of the participants were from Kosova. Study findings revealed an increase in the prevalence of psychiatric disorders (88%) after return, as compared to the prevalence while in exile (53%). This was attributed, in part, to lack of access to mental health services. While 13 participants (52%) reported receiving psychological or psychiatric treatment during their stay in Germany, only 4 (16%) had access to such services after return. Further, in addition to those who were diagnosed with depression ($n = 7$) and PTSD ($n = 9$) during the pre-return assessment, an additional nine participants developed depressive symptoms, and five others developed PTSD upon return. An increase in these diagnoses was negatively correlated with the returnee's sense of belonging in the home country.

Half of the returnees stated that Germany, rather than their country of origin, felt like home, and 16 participants (62%) did not feel integrated into their country of origin upon return (von Lersner et al., 2008). This was especially true for returnees who had spent a longer time in Germany and those who experienced discrimination (36%) upon return. Discrimination was reported as particularly difficult to cope with for those participants who were forced to return and therefore did not have enough preparation to face the unique challenges of reintegration. That is, even though all of the participants signed VARP forms, only those who were elderly and/or terminally ill truly desired to return to their home country. Additionally, others reported signing VARP forms in order to avoid deportation (von Lersner et al., 2008). Most (68%) expressed a desire to re-emigrate, highlighting the fact that VARPs do not necessarily increase voluntary returns or the ability of returnees to reintegrate (von Lersner et al., 2008).

European countries also endorse forced repatriation, which is usually applied to rejected asylum seekers who do not have access to VARPs (Chu et al., 2008; Ighodaro, 2002; Kibreab, 2004). A Danish Refugee Council (DRC) report, the only study to investigate the mandatory

return of rejected Kosovar asylum seekers, established a set of best-practices for NGO-assisted mandatory return (Chu et al., 2008). The report concludes that the sustainability of return depends on the type of, and the motivation behind the return:

- 1) those who were motivated to return are clearly doing better than most other returnees;
- 2) those who had no choice but to return and did not receive much support are finding it extremely difficult to be back, and only stay because they have no means to re-migrate;
- while 3) those who had to return and have received comprehensive return and reintegration support either choose to stay in the country of origin or choose to re-migrate. (p. 77)

In response to these findings, recommendations from this report include: the development of campaigns to raise awareness about conditions in Kosova prior to return; better return assistance and counseling; sufficient time to prepare for the return; access to housing, health, social and employment services upon return; and programs which address reconciliation between returnees and local communities (Chu et al., 2008). Until these recommendations are implemented, authors suggest that “readapting to life in the country of origin is extremely difficult both for adults and for children who have spent several years abroad. Many [participants] stated that they would rather be somewhere other than Kosovo [sic]” (Chu et al., 2008, p. 36).

Partly due to the high percentage of Kosovar returnees who express a desire to leave, the available literature suggests that repatriation of Kosovar asylum seekers and refugees is highly problematic and not sustainable (Black et al., 2004; Chu et al., 2008; Toscani et al., 2007; von Lersner, 2008). Studies to date have examined the experiences of those who left Kosova as a consequence of the 1999 war. This is insufficient to understand the repatriation of recent rejected asylum seekers who were influenced by other push factors, including the high rate of unemployment and poverty (Alexander, 2015; Henckel & Hoppe, 2015). They have been the focus of limited research. Furthermore, there is a general consensus in the literature that “while there are similarities in all return processes, such as the importance of economic reintegration in the place of origin, there are also unique issues related to each type of return” (Chu et al., 2008, p. 21). For instance, there are “certain dilemmas when working with the return of rejected asylum seekers that do not apply to refugees and IDPs [internally displaced people], especially the issue of voluntariness and possibilities for preparation” (Chu et al., 2008, p. 20). In light of

these dilemmas, the majority of existing studies, which focus on voluntary repatriation, provide limited insight into the recent mass return of Kosovars to Kosova. Moreover, of the six studies which focus on return to Kosova, three are reports and three are peer-reviewed studies, thus pointing to a need for additional research, in general, and that which meets the rigour and credibility of the peer-review process, specifically.

To sum up, in addition to the gaps which exist in repatriation literature in general, there are particular gaps within repatriation literature focusing on Kosova. The current study sought to address some of these gaps, with a particular emphasis on the voices of rejected asylum seekers themselves.

Rationale for the Current Study

The forced mass return of rejected asylum seekers to Kosova subsequent to the 2015 mass exodus provided an opportunity to address several of the gaps identified in repatriation literature in general, and repatriation of Kosovars in particular. First, the large number of rejected asylum seekers demands attention to the need for increased knowledge about the largely unacknowledged needs of this population. Second, past research identified the need for studies focusing on the perspectives of countries of origin, in general (De Bree et al., 2010), and countries in the Balkans, in particular (King et al., 2014). Investigating rejected asylum seekers in Kosova, a country of origin located in the Balkans, complements previous studies which have focused on the perspectives of various countries of asylum. Third and finally, previous research suggests that more attention needs to be paid to how the social and political context of repatriation is affected by the Global North-South power imbalance (Ighodaro, 2002; Kibreab, 2004; Sinatti, 2015; Toft, 2007). Research focusing on Kosova is well-suited to address this gap because Kosova's post-war development, and its migration policies, have been highly influenced by the UN and the EU (Blumi, 2003; Pula, 2003) both of which are led by Global North representatives. Furthermore, including Kosova in the Global North-South debates is important because existing migration literature has thus far largely excluded the Balkan region outside of such debates. Recognizing this, Castles and colleagues (2009) state:

...the rapid growth of inequality between the 'advanced countries' and 'the rest of the world' is often referred to as *North-South inequality*. However, such general terms hide some important differences. First, many countries or areas do not fit this dichotomy: both the 'transitional economies' of former Soviet bloc countries [and those of former

Yugoslavia] and the ‘new industrial economies’ of Asian and Latin America have an intermediate position. Second, growing inequality is also to be found within the main regions, with new elites in the South gaining from their role in the transnational circuits of capital accumulation, while workers in former northern industrial centers lose their livelihoods. (p. 55, emphasis in the original)

This description has a two-fold application to Kosova. First, it recognizes Kosova’s absence from the global North-South debate. Second, it highlights the increased disparity between the political elite and the rest of the population; an undeniable reality within the Kosovar society.

The international community in Kosova has implemented post-war development mostly from a top-down approach, with little regard for the voices and needs of Kosovar citizens (Blumi, 2003; Pula, 2003). Specifically, the UNMIK “was established with the agreement of NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization], Russia and FRY [Former Republic of Yugoslavia], but not of the Kosovars—who, after all, were to become UNMIK’s ‘subjects’” (Pula, 2003, p. 199). EU, first as part of UNMIK and now as EULEX, has written Kosova’s basic legislation and laws, including its migration policies. The EU is able to exert this kind of unquestioned power because Kosova aims to join the EU, and its politicians are interested in aligning Kosova’s policies with those of the EU (Howard, 2014).

While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to analyze the work of UNMIK (2017) and EULEX (2017) in Kosova, it is important to point out that while the official goals of these institutions are to assist with Kosova’s post-war development. However, many authors have questioned their presumed neutrality in facilitating the state building process (Blumi, 2003; Bosignore, 2003; Papadimitriou et al., 2007). Further, others have highlighted the lack of preparedness these institutions show when dealing with the unique type of mission assigned to them in Kosova (Blumi, 2003; Papadimitriou et al., 2007; Pula, 2003).

Migration policies, among others, reflect tensions which exist between Kosovar’s needs and the interests of Global North countries. As such, these policies are important to analyze and understand. For instance, findings by Toscani et al. (2007) and von Lersner et al. (2008) suggest that Kosova’s adoption of repatriation as a durable goal for Kosovar refugees and asylum seekers was not based on evidence, but guided by EU’s preference for repatriation. As such, while this strategy satisfies the interest of the EU, whose preference for repatriation enables it to avoid its

responsibility to care for displaced peoples, it is disputable whether it reflects the needs of the local population (Chimni, 2004; Ighodaro, 2002; Kibreab, 2004).

The influence of the EU in Kosova's migration policies is particularly important when examining the experiences of recent rejected asylum seekers. A UNDP (2016) press release states:

The re-integration of repatriated persons is a top priority on the agenda of Kosovo [sic] institutions. Indeed, one of the prerequisites for the recent positive developments in the visa liberalisation process for Kosovo [sic] was that institutions work directly with repatriated persons to improve their socioeconomic status. A set of measures to facilitate the process of such re-inclusion embraces provision of urgency benefits and measures upon arrival, provision of transportation, accommodation or housing, education services, social assistance and, ultimately, sustainable economic integration, employed mostly in the service sector. (n. p.)

This quote hints at how the Kosova–EU power dynamic manifests itself in the individual level.

While EU's power over Kosovar institutions is obvious in its ability to influence Kosova's legislature, the impact that this power relation has on the Kosovar population, particularly rejected asylum seekers, is not as obvious. Past studies suggest that in order to understand the macrostructures which create and maintain power relations within a society and often lead to marginalization, more attention needs to be paid to dominant discourses (Wodak, Cillia, Reisigl, & Liebhart, 2009). Building on such recommendations, the current study explored the question "How does EU migration discourse, which reflects itself in Kosovar migration policies, influence the repatriation experiences of rejected asylum seekers?"

Conclusion

The overview of Kosova's migration history and its current migration trends illustrate that Kosova is experiencing a mass return of rejected asylum seekers. Even though Kosova needs to prepare for such a return, repatriation studies which focus specifically on the needs of this population in Kosova, and elsewhere are scarce. Further, the limited literature which exists suggests that repatriation has been adopted as a durable solution by the UNHCR (1996), even though returnees face various challenges, thus calling into question the sustainability of return. Such discrepancies have lead past authors to call for more research which focuses on the experiences of rejected asylum seekers and which are grounded in an analysis of the Global

North-South power relations. Indeed, in presenting my rationale for the current study, I explained how the current study aims to address these gaps. As such, in the following chapter I will discuss the methodology which I used when conducting this study. I will discuss the tenants of qualitative research, provide the rationale for my choice of postcolonialism as a theoretical framework, and the specifics of CDA methodology. I will also provide details on the research methods such as participant engagement and analysis procedures.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The forced mass return of rejected asylum seekers to Kosova provided an opportunity to address several of the gaps identified in repatriation literature, in general, and repatriation of Kosovars, in particular. First, developing a knowledge-based underscoring the experiences of the large number of rejected asylum seekers could be used to enhance our understanding of the largely unacknowledged needs of this population. Second, past research identified the need for studies focusing on the perspectives of countries of origin in general (De Bree et al., 2010), and countries in the Balkans specifically (King et al., 2014). Investigating rejected asylum seekers in Kosova, a country of origin located in the Balkans, complements previous studies which have focused on the perspectives of countries of asylum. Fourth and finally, previous research suggests that more attention needs to be paid to how the social and political context of repatriation is affected by the Global North-South power imbalance (Ighodaro, 2002; Kibreab, 2004; Sinatti, 2015; Toft, 2007). Research focusing on Kosova is well-suited to address this gap because Kosova's post-war development, and its migration policies, have been highly influenced by Global North representatives, the UN and the EU (Blumi, 2003; Pula, 2003). As such, this study involved the use of qualitative methods, was informed by a postcolonial framework and used a CDA methodology in order to examine the experiences of rejected asylum seekers from Kosova.

Postcolonial Framework

A postcolonial framework, as articulated by Loomba (2015) is suitable for this study because it: 1) signifies opposition to imperializing practices and discourses that are present in Kosova; 2) contextualizes the mobility of displaced peoples, such as rejected asylum seekers, in terms of globalization; and 3) addresses how the dichotomy between "self" and "other" often obscures the power divide between the Global North and South. These three elements are important to understand the Kosovar context. However, the scope of postcoloniality reaches beyond these three points, and needs to be "articulated alongside other economic, social, cultural and historical factors, and therefore, in practice, it works quite differently in various parts of the world" (Loomba, 1998, p. 19). In order to ground a postcolonial framework in Kosova's context, the following section explains how this framework is helpful when deconstructing and understanding the discourses of rejected asylum seekers; which have been largely influenced by

the presence of both the UN and EU in Kosova (Blumi, 2003; Pula, 2003; Papadimitriou et al., 2007; Savran, 1999)

The role of the UN and EU in Kosova has been characterized as a new form of colonialism (Blumi, 2003; Pula, 2003; Papadimitriou et al., 2007). For example, in addressing the changing nature of international interventions in war-torn areas, Savran (1999) states:

That this kind of multilateral (or global) colonialism was the rising trend of the day was demonstrated more convincingly by what happened in Kosovo [sic] in the aftermath of the war. In fact, even at the beginning of the war, Kosovo's [sic] future was characterized as a UN "protectorate," a status just short of full colonization but one that nonetheless has nothing to do with an independent state. (p. 121)

Similarly, although the armed intervention in Kosova was justified on humanitarian grounds, several authors suggests that Global North countries propelled it forward because they wanted to gain access to a formerly socialist country, and, in doing so, continue the spread of capitalism (Blumi, 2003; Bosignore, 2011; Loomba, 2015). However, this objective was disguised by justifying the NATO bombing campaign in Kosova as a humanitarian intervention (Wood, 1999). In a critical analysis of international armed interventions, such as the one in Kosova, Bosignore (2011) asserted:

Concealing one's own objectives of strategic dominance and economic exploitation behind the fig leaf of an alleged "moral imperative" to "rescue" foreign populations from a perceived or even only feared plight, and in the process "freeing" them from rulers and forms of government whose behaviour we disapprove to, has traditionally always been a very convenient way to try and justify the most blatant forms of imperialism, colonialism and armed aggression. (p. 14)

Although Kosova has not been colonized in the traditional meaning of the word, its post-war development has been impacted by neo-colonialism and imperialism, which center on capitalism and the spread of Western ideologies to Global South countries (Blumi, 2003; Bosignore, 2011).

The UN and the EU have been able to progress a neo-liberal agenda in Kosova, while disregarding the local culture and/or the needs of Kosovars (Blumi, 2003; Papadimitriou et al., 2007). The so-called modernization of the economy lead to a brief economic boom immediately after the war (1999 – 2001), but since then economic development has been slow and the “population’s economic hardship has worsened” (Papadimitriou et al., 2007, p. 233). Kosovar

citizens attribute this lack of development to EU's preference for the privatization of state-owned enterprises and its inability to help Kosova integrate into the regional market (Papadimitriou et al., 2007). Nonetheless, despite the populations' dislike for this kind of economic restructuring, the EU continues to implement programs deemed necessary for Kosova to reach sustainable development and progress towards its goal for EU integration (Papadimitriou et al., 2007).

This disregard for the local culture and needs, authors argue, reflects the colonial objectives of the UN and the EU (Blumi, 2003; Papadimitriou et al., 2007). Blumi (2003) points to the seriousness of this issue:

... the international community has attempted to assert mastery over Kosova's population. It has adopted essentialist media policies, often racist in nature, which have effectively marginalized Kosova's population from effective self-responsibility while, at the same time, asserting collective guilt for criminal acts conducted by individuals. (p. 226)

More precisely, Blumi (2003) and others (i. e., Papadimitriou et al., 2007; Pula, 2003) give examples of Albanian communities which were ready to help in the rebuilding of their homes and the social fabric immediately after the war, but who were kept out of this process by the international community. He further argues that UNMIK felt threatened by the emergence of local leaders, seeing that local leaders might not have had the same vision for Kosova. Finally, he notes, that initially UNMIK, and more recently the EU, exert power over Kosova's institutions because Westerners are seen as the heroes who saved Kosova. This heroic status, and the domination of these organization in Kosova's political and social life, is most obvious in the debates of the main political parties in Kosova. Pula (2003) attests to political power accrued by aligning with Western interventions:

Among the contentions between the LDK [Democratic League of Kosova] and the former UÇK [Kosova Liberation Army] camp is the debate over which camp deserves the credit for 'bringing NATO', illustrating how important international intervention has become for local political groups attempting to legitimize themselves as bearers of national interest. UNMIK was able to benefit from this environment by mobilizing a discourse of democracy and Westernization— being an organization led by west Europeans and Americans, it is seen by many Kosovars as an organization that is capable of Westernizing Kosova. (p. 202)

Westernization in Kosova is taken at face-value, meaning that the consequences of this process are rarely questioned (Bosignore, 2011; Subotic, 2011). The adoption of this idea as common sense, as well as the exclusion of local communities in the governance of the country, resemble colonialist practices (Savran, 1999), and therefore need to be understood and deconstructed using a postcolonial framework (Loomba, 2015).

A postcolonial framework is also important for the current study because it suggests that sociopolitical issues, such as the recent migration trends in Kosova, need to necessarily be understood in the context of globalization and other historical events (Loomba, 2015; Savran, 1999). In Kosova, the impacts of globalization can be especially noticed in the work that Kosova's government has done towards joining the EU. Working towards EU membership has been coined as Europeanization in the literature. Although various definitions exist, Papadimitriou et al. (2007) referenced Lippert et al. (2001), in defining Europeanization as "the resources in time, personnel and money directed by current and future Member States towards the EU level" (p. 226).

Authors identify the effects that the anticipation of joining the EU can have on the country's governance and the populations' self-image (Wodak et al., 2009). Of foremost concern, the preference for Europeanization among Kosova's political elite is tied to the notion that in its current form Kosova is 'not European enough' (Blumi, 2003; Uberti, 2013). This dichotomy between the governance forms of the EU and Kosova is another important element that can be addressed using a postcolonial framework. For example, the EU has emphasized the difference between the 'archaic' traditional forms of governance which existed in Kosova and the modern forms of governance that are needed to replace these traditions (Blumi, 2003). Blumi (2003) asserts that UNMIK delegitimized all structures which existed in Kosova prior to June, 1999 and which held a different vision for Kosova's future than the EU, specifically:

In order to 'bring peace to Kosovo' [sic] everything that existed in Kosova structurally, culturally and spiritually had to be either eliminated or put under firm surveillance. It is the added imposition of administrative structures that adopt criteria based on a collective identity, here ethnicity, that further simplified a far more fluid and hybrid population in the post-war period. In the course of applying these simplifications, individuals and communities that did not adapt to these alien criterion [sic] emerged as a threat and were

identified as such in highly charged messages relayed to the international media corps. (p. 223)

These differences between the EU and Kosova can, therefore, be understood by what Loomba (2015) calls modern colonialization, which he defines as any “difference between capitalist and non-capitalist societies” (p. 23). Loomba (1998) adds:

European discourses about ‘the other’ are accordingly variable. But because they produced comparable (and sometimes uncannily similar) relations of inequity and domination the world over, it is sometimes overlooked that colonial methods and images varied hugely over time and place. (p. 16)

From the findings presented by Taleski and Hoppe (2015), who explored the motives pushing Kosovars to seek asylum in 2015, it becomes obvious that Europe is often exalted as the *desirable other* which Kosova is trying to emulate. This othering process, which creates a hierarchy with EU at the top, can be best analyzed through a postcolonial framework. A postcolonial framework directs attention to how power imbalances influence issues of identity, representation and marginalization (Loomba, 2015) faced by rejected asylum seekers. Currently, the emphasis on difference allows the EU to progress its agenda in Kosova, and, in the process, create a sense of inferiority among Kosovars who have internalized the EU’s tendency to “render indigenous structures as ‘archaic and traditional’, [and thus] in need of reform and an infusion of Western democratic values” (Blumi, 2003, p. 223).

Postcolonial theory holds that power is often operationalized through knowledge and discourse, which shape relationships within society (Creswell, 2013). However, an analysis of how these factors contribute to the experiences of rejected asylum seekers is missing in current theorizations. Most of the current knowledge of asylum seekers is limited to statistics which are devoid of crucial elements of their lived experiences (i.e. Kotorri et al., 2013). Therefore, revealing how discourse shapes the reintegration experiences of asylum seekers has the potential to at least start a discussion that critically challenges the positioning of Kosovars in relation to Europeans.

Critical Discourse Analysis

A postcolonial framework holds that power is operationalized partly through language. In writing about the nature of language, Loomba (2015) states:

Perhaps the most radical result of these interconnecting but diverse ways of thinking about language was that no human utterance could be seen as innocent. Any set of words could be analysed to reveal not just an individual but a historical consciousness at work. Words and images thus become fundamental for an analysis of historical processes such as colonialism. (p. 37)

Similarly, recent repatriation literature hints at the role of language in creating and maintaining the Global North-South power dynamics (Ighodaro, 2002; Sinatti, 2015). This literature recommends that language, in general, and dominant discourses in particular need to be further deconstructed in an attempt to better understand the experiences of returnees (Sinatti, 2015).

CDA is an especially appropriate method to employ when exploring a social issue in Kosova because “what can be learned ultimately from Kosova is that its discursive place in a larger narrative framework has greatly determined the fate of the population’s relationship with their patrons” (Blumi, 2003, p. 228). Specifically, the EU directly influences the so-called political elite in Kosova through imposing on them policies without which Kosova’s EU membership would be threatened (Blumi, 2003). The adoption of such policies also means the appropriation of EU discourses by Kosova’s political elite (Subotic, 2011). Politicians, in turn, through speeches and the use of media, have contributed to the legitimization of a discourse which maintains a hierarchy with EU at the top, and, in doing so, ties Kosova’s future with integration into the EU.

For instance, in interviews conducted by Blumi (2003), Kosovars stated “thank God that these foreigners came to rule us. If any of the local guys were in power we’d be at each other’s throats” (Blumi, 2003, p. 210). Such statements reveal that discourses help in the creation of an identity and beliefs about one’s nation. In explaining the role of discourses, Wodak and colleagues (2009) assert:

Through discourses, social actors constitute objects of knowledge, situations and social roles as well as identities and interpersonal relations between different social groups and those who interact with them. Furthermore, discursive acts are socially constitutive in a variety of ways. Firstly, they are largely responsible for the genesis, production and construction of particular social conditions. Secondly, they can contribute to the restoration, legitimation or revitalisation of a social status quo. Thirdly, discursive acts

are employed to maintain and reproduce the status quo. Fourthly, discursive practice may be an effective way in transforming, dismantling or even destroying the status quo. (p. 8)

The interplay between the EU, the Kosovar political elite, and the Kosovar population highlights the cyclical nature of discourse. Discourses create social practices, and are at the same time, shaped by these very practices (Wodak et al., 2009). Therefore, CDA, which “centers on authentic everyday communication in institutional, media, political and other locations rather than on sample sentences or sample texts constructed in linguistics’ minds” (Wodak et al., 2009, p. 8) can be used to address important elements that impact the experiences of rejected asylum seekers.

There are many approaches used within CDA studies, including the Socio-Cognitive Approach, the Dialectical-Relational Approach, and the Discourse–Historical Approach (DHA) (Fairclough, 2003). DHA is most suitable for this study because it: 1) examines the relationship between structures of power and discourse; 2) emphasizes the importance of social, political, and historical contexts for social issues and 3) requires the researcher to engage in reflexive practice and not assume a neutral role when studying a chosen topic (Martinez, 2007; van Dijk, 2008; Wodak & Meyer, 2002). These three aspects of DHA will be further elaborated on below.

Power. CDA is a research methodology that is concerned with examining the relationship between power, language, and discourses and the roles they play in shaping social processes as well as relationships of dominance and control (Fairclough, 2010; Martinez, 2007; van Dijk, 2008; Wodak & Meyer, 2002). Discourses are institutionally established concepts of speech which determine and influence action, and, in doing so exert power by transporting knowledge on which the collective and individual consciousness feed (Wodak & Meyer, 2002). Specifically, discourses exert power in the following three ways: 1) shaping dominant ideologies; 2) reproducing social power abuse and dominance; and 3) constructing future possible worlds (Fairclough, 2010; Wodak & Meyer, 2002; Wodak et al., 2009).

An ideology “includes all our ‘mental frameworks’, our beliefs, concepts, and ways of expressing our relationship to the world” (Loomba, 1998, p. 25). This broad definition of ideology is not always problematic within postcolonial thought because the “crucial question about ideology is not whether it is ‘real’ or ‘false’ but how it comes to be believed in...?” (Loomba, 1998, p. 29). To this end, discourses are among the ways in which ideologies are lived out (Wodak et al., 2009). In a given society, dominant discourses perpetuate ideologies which

maintain social cohesion by preserving dominant interests to the cost of marginalized groups (Loomba, 2015).

In Kosova's case, the current dominant ideology centers on the belief that integration into the EU will solve many of the current sociopolitical problems (Henkel & Hoppe, 2015). This ideology is reflected in Kosova's alignment with EU policies, and the desire of the most recent asylum seekers to leave Kosova. In fact, previous studies suggest that most Kosovars see emigration to the EU as a solution to their problems (Henkel & Hoppe, 2015; Kotorri et al., 2013). The discourse that emphasizes the benefits of joining the EU, without questioning the requirements that Kosova has to fulfill in order to reach integration, is therefore part of "ideological apparatuses [which] assist in the reproduction of the dominant system by creating subjects who are ideologically conditioned to accept the values of the system" (Loomba, 1998, p. 33). CDA recognizes the powerful ways in which discourses impact society and aims to "unmask ideologically permeated and often obscured structures of power, political control, and dominance, as well as strategies of discriminatory inclusion and exclusion in language use" (Wodak et al., 2009, p. 8).

Specifically, the current system in Kosova is hierarchical, with EU exerting power over the political elite, which, in turn, exerts power over the rest of the population, with often little regard for the needs of marginalized groups (Blumi, 2003; Pula, 2003), such as rejected asylum seekers. Considering that CDA attempts to deconstruct "the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context" (van Dijk, 2008, p. 85) it provides guidance when exploring how discourse shapes the experiences of rejected asylum seekers, who are a politicized population. For example, when addressing the latest exodus, Kosova's Prime Minister Isa Mustafa referred to Kosova as the "European ghetto" (The Office of the Prime Minister, 2015, n. p.). The fact that both the Kosovar media and population, in general, accepted Mustafa's characterization of Kosova at face value suggests that the power dynamics between the EU and Kosova are internalized and legitimize inroads for EU dominance in Kosova's institutions.

The power dynamics between Kosova and the EU are also reflected in migration studies, which suggest that Kosovars would like a more European future (Henkel & Hoppe, 2015). Discourses, therefore, are important when discussing the experiences of rejected asylum seekers because they "represent the world as it is (or rather is seen to be), [and] they are also projective,

imaginaries, representing possible worlds which are different from the actual world, and tied in to projects to change the world in particular directions” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 124). This aspect of discourse readily applies to Kosovar asylum seekers because the political discourse used in Kosova constructs Europe as a different, and better, world. In doing so, such discourses make it seem that the only way forward for Kosova is to implement changes which facilitate its progression towards EU membership. This limits the way Kosovars conceptualize their future. Thus, through using CDA, this study aims to point out how “discursive practices make it difficult for individuals to think outside them— hence they are also exercises in power and control” (Loomba, 1998, p. 39).

Context. Savran (1999), who explored developments immediately after the war in Kosova, states:

The Kosovo [sic] War cannot be understood in isolation from, first, the decade of wars that shook and dismantled former Yugoslavia, secondly, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the bureaucratic workers' states of Eastern Europe (which itself is the background to the break-up of Yugoslavia), and, last but not least, the new political orientation that imperialism has adopted since the early '90s, encapsulated in the concepts "globalisation" and the New World Order. (p. 114)

Other authors, who have explored post-war development in Kosova, agree on the importance of context when studying matters related to the country (Blumi, 2003; Wenderoth & VanBalkom, 2007; Wood, 1999). Further, context is especially important to consider as part of this study because “historians, anthropologists, sociologists and geographers have shown that migrants’ behaviour is strongly influenced by historical experiences as well as by family and community dynamics” (Castles & Miller, 2009, p. 23). For this reason, DHA, whose key aim is to link discourse structures to the local and global context (Wodak & Meyer, 2002), is a suitable method for the current study.

Previous CDA studies, which have explored the EU integration process for other countries, highlight the shifts that happen in a country’s discourse throughout this process (i.e. Wodak et al., 2009). For example, Wodak and colleagues (2009), who studied the role of discourses in constructing a common political present and future for Austria, concluded that “two topics which are particularly important for the construction and transformation of this political present and future are Austria’s entry into the EU, and Austria’s ‘permanent neutrality’” (Wodak

et al., 2009, p. 31). Seeing that Kosova has already started the Europeanization process, it is likely to also experience such transformations. Therefore, the experiences of rejected asylum seekers can only be understood with reference to the current and historical Kosovar context. The DHA approach within CDA helps towards this understanding by postulating an interdisciplinary process for politicized topics such as asylum (Fairclough, 2003; Wodak & Mayer, 2002)

Contributions to social change. In addition to emphasizing the importance of context, DHA assumes an activist role for me as the researcher and requires that I “take [an] explicit position and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality” (van Dijk, 2003, p. 352). Further, CDA does not assume neutrality or objectivity and therefore encourages the researcher to make his/her views explicit (Wodak & Meyer, 2002). Wodak and colleagues (2009) explain:

CDA does not pretend to be able to assume an objective, socially neutral analytical stance. Indeed, practitioners of CDA believe that such ostensible political indifference ultimately assists in maintaining an unjust status quo. CDA, which is committed to an emancipatory, socially critical approach, allies itself with those who suffer political and social injustice. Its aim is therefore to intervene discursively in given social and political practices. (p. 8)

Researchers using CDA are interested in developing alternative narratives in order to reveal structures of domination and provoke changes in the power dynamics exercised in a given society (Martinez, 2007). The current study, therefore, does not only analyze dominant ideologies, but also enables marginalized groups to construct their experiences, showcase their narratives of the asylum process, and challenge dominant discourses which undermine the experiences of this population (van Dijk, 2008). In doing so, CDA research often crosses the line between social scientific research and political argumentation (Wodak & Meyer, 2002). Considering the political nature of rejected asylum seekers, it is necessary to politicize social scientific research, and explore this topic from the perspective of rejected asylum seekers themselves.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research was the most appropriate method for the current study because it encourages the detailed understanding of a topic in its natural setting (Creswell, 2013; Dasgupta, 2015) and is more likely to capture the nuances of the population involved in the study (White,

2014) than other methods. Focusing on the natural setting means that researchers do not manipulate the conditions impacting study participants (Creswell, 2013). This is of particular importance for rejected asylum seekers from Kosova who constitute a marginalized group that has often been manipulated or taken advantage off by human smugglers who control illegal roads taken by many of the recent rejected asylum seekers (Alexander, 2015).

Instead of manipulating a situation, qualitative research emphasizes capturing stories which help study participants give meaning to their experiences (Creswell, 2013; White, 2004). Through recognizing the importance of the voices of rejected asylum seekers, qualitative research can be an empowering process for this population (Creswell, 2013). Precisely, qualitative interviews will give rejected asylum seekers a chance to speak about their experiences, and, in doing so, reveal the kind of discourse which impacts their reintegration experiences. Gaining this in-depth understanding of rejected asylum seeker experiences will also add an important layer or counter story to quantitative data (White, 2004) that is already collected by the Kosovar government.

Qualitative research is also suitable for this study because it focuses on understanding “the conditions that serve to disadvantage and exclude individuals or cultures” (Creswell, 2013, p. 24). Qualitative methods link personal experiences to the social, political, and historical influences, and are more likely to remove the blame from the victim, thus facilitating empowerment (Creswell, 2013). As my literature review suggests, more attention needs to be paid to the context in which the reintegration of rejected asylum seekers happens, instead of solely focusing on the individual coping abilities utilized by rejected asylum seekers (De Bree et al., 2010; Sinatti, 2015; Toft, 2007). To this end, qualitative research encourages the use of multiple forms of data (Creswell, 2013), which can better represent the multi-layered experiences of rejected asylum seekers; experiences which cannot be captured by solely interviewing individuals or analyzing documents (Black et al., 2004). Data collection for this study includes individual interviews with rejected asylum seekers, as well as analysis of political speeches and official documents pertaining to repatriation.

Lastly, qualitative research is characterized by the axiological assumption which recognizes that all researchers bring their own values to a study (Creswell, 2013), and requires researchers to make these values explicit. Reflexivity is a process that assist researchers in sharing and analyzing their values.

Researcher reflexivity. Neuman and Blundo (2000) note that how research students “view the world has significant consequences for their work and those with whom they will be working” (p. 27). Qualitative research recognizes the effects that researcher’s social location can have on the study, and encourages the use of reflexivity as a strategy for quality control (Berger, 2015). Berger (2015) states that “reflexivity is commonly viewed as the process of a continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of researcher’s positionality as well as active acknowledgement and explicit recognition that this position may affect the research process and outcome” (p. 220).

The use of reflexivity is important for this study because I, as the researcher, have strong ties to Kosova and am emotionally impacted by the experiences of rejected asylum seekers and the factors which shape these experiences. Much like recent asylum seekers, I left Kosova shortly after the 1999 war because I internalized the idea that an education abroad would be better than an education in Kosova. The process of deconstructing this internalization has resulted in my interest to work with rejected asylum seekers, and impacts the current research project in the various ways. First, I choose to both interview rejected asylum seekers and analyze Kosova’s repatriation strategy because this Strategy’s development and implementation was guided by the EU with little input from rejected asylum seekers or other categories or returnees. My choice is heavily influenced by my personal journey, which made me aware that certain policies which affected me (i.e., educational policies in Kosova) were implemented by the international community, with little regard to whether these policies were culturally appropriate for Kosovar students and educational staff. Due to this awareness, the interpretation of my research results will be guided by a critical theory lens that will assist me in deconstructing my own experiences.

Specifically, my definition of “better” was shaped by the presence of the international community in post-war Kosova, consisting of peace keeping troops, as well as UNMIK staff. Those who came to help with the peacebuilding process often assumed position of superiority and considered that Kosovars were not well equipped to rebuild our own society (Blumi, 2003; Pula, 2003; Wenderoth & VanBalkom, 2007). I remember going to get my first passport after the war and not being able to communicate with the person who provided it. He only spoke English, and I felt excluded in my own country. Most of the institutions with which I interacted were led

by foreigners (Wenderoth & VanBalkom, 2007) and I began to create the idea that in order to create change, I had to be more like them.

During my undergraduate studies I began to notice and deconstruct the inferiority that I felt when interacting with Westerners. At first, I struggled to understand how I could be so proud of my nationality, yet feel inferior because of it. Delving into the influence that post-war events had on the way I see the world and myself continues to be both a challenging and empowering process. However, the awareness I have gained through this process makes it increasingly more uncomfortable for me to go back to Kosova and observe the inferiority that my friends who continue to reside there still feel.

Kosovars, regardless of their level of education, are not considered to be ‘experts’ unless they have studied abroad. I enjoy the privilege of having studied abroad, and I notice how people treat me differently because they think I am more knowledgeable. Therefore, the fact that I am a 25-year old female who has studied abroad will necessarily impact the way study participants view me and their involvement in this research. In a way, I reached a destination which they desire, yet decided to return to Kosova. This positioning will have implications for our interactions and will be explored more fully in the findings section.

This study aims to challenge the discourse which posits me as an expert solely based on the fact that I have studied abroad. I have been influenced by this discourse myself, and know the disempowering effects that it can have. I also believe that it contributes to the marginalization experienced by rejected asylum seekers, and hope that deconstructing the discourse which shapes the lives of rejected asylum seekers might help them experience a similar process of empowerment that I have experienced over the last few years.

Credibility and trustworthiness. Qualitative research has received much criticism for not being able to adhere to reliability and validity standards. However, such criticism has come from those who apply quantitative language and tenants to qualitative research. I align with Ely and colleagues (1991) who “assert that using quantitative terms tends to be a defensive measure that muddies the waters and that ‘the language of positivistic research is not congruent with or adequate to qualitative work’” (as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 246). In qualitative research, credibility and trustworthiness are used as measures of rigour. Trustworthiness, is concerned with the overall study and the ability to produce findings a researcher set out to capture (Creswell, 2013).

Creswell (2013) prefers to use the word validity instead of trustworthiness and sees:

...validation as a distinct strength of qualitative research in that the account made through extensive time spent in the field, the detailed thick description, and the closeness of the researcher to participants in the study all add to the value or accuracy of a study. (p. 250)

Creswell (2013) recommends using multiple trustworthiness strategies in order to accurately represent the event and/or population being studied. I will be using the following trustworthiness strategies: clarifying researcher bias, triangulation, and member checking.

First, Creswell (2013) suggests that “clarifying researcher bias from the outset is important so that the reader understands the researcher’s position and any biases or assumptions that impact the inquiry” (p. 251). As mentioned earlier, asylum seekers are a politicized population and my understanding of their situation is shaped by my own displacement experiences and my critical perspective of international intervention in Kosova. As such, I do not assume neutrality when investigating this topic.

Second, triangulation is a trustworthiness strategy which requires the researcher to use multiple forms of data in order to provide corroborating evidence (Creswell, 2013). This research examines an official document and interviews with rejected asylum seekers in order to shed light on the discourse which is present at each of these levels. In addition, both forms of data are contextualized by providing background information about the factors which impact their content.

Lastly, I used member checking, through which the researcher solicits participants’ views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations (Creswell, 2013). Once I wrote my findings and discussion chapter, I contacted each participant by telephone, as agreed during the consent process, to share my interpretations of findings. Participants indicated their preference that I relay my finding to them through a phone conversation, rather than a written report. During this conversation, I told participants about the main findings as well as the connections that I had made between these findings and the current Kosovar context. I then asked whether these findings reflected their experiences, and if they wanted to share any additional information to clarify the content of my thesis.

These three trustworthiness methods assure that participant experiences are represented accurately, and the reader is aware of the biases which shape the research itself. First, using reflexivity allowed me to critically engage with the data and realize that the power dynamic

between myself, as the researcher, and participants, as rejected asylum seekers is often a microcosm of the power dynamics which exist in society and shape their marginalization experiences. In doing so, it gave me insight into a layer of data that I would not have noticed otherwise. Second, triangulation of the Strategy and interview findings, as I will describe in my discussion chapter, did not only enable me to identify and examine dominant discourses, but also allowed for comparisons between the two. In doing so, I create a space where rejected asylum seekers could create their narratives of repatriation. Third, when I called participants to share my findings, they all agreed with my interpretation of findings. The additional comments which they made supported these findings and reinforced the idea that their return has not been sustainable. Indeed, five months after the interviews were conducted, participants continue to face similar barriers to reintegration.

Research Methods

A qualitative research design grounded in postcolonial theory was used in order to analyze various qualitative data and integrate the themes emerging from them to provide a comprehensive exploration of the research question and a holistic understanding of the repatriation of rejected asylum seekers in Kosova.

Data collection. The process of data collection lasted from June to December, 2016 and included selecting the Strategy for analysis and conducting six interviews with rejected asylum seekers. The first step of data collection consisted of identifying Kosova's strategies and regulations which pertain to the process of repatriation. I read these strategies and regulations in order to determine which one of them gave the best overview of how the Government of the Republic of Kosova approaches repatriation. Subsequently, I decided to examine the Strategy (MIA, 2013c) because it provided this overview, while, also including a brief history of Kosova and the measures taken to assure that the Strategy is implemented successfully. The 30-page Strategy included information on Kosova's migration history, a review of repatriation alternatives, the implementation of the strategic, legal and institutional framework for repatriation, as well as the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms which exist in order to assure that the strategy is impactful. In line with CDA methodology, analyzing the Strategy provided a backdrop of the discourse and practices through which the experiences of rejected Kosovar asylum seekers are constructed.

The second method of data collection included episodic, semi-structured interviews with seven rejected asylum seekers who currently reside in the municipalities of Prishtina and Fushë Kosovë. On June, 2016, the study received ethics clearance by the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board (CFREB) to be conducted in Kosova. The call for participants was open to anyone who was Albanian, a parent, between the ages of 19 and 40, and who was rejected asylum in 2015 or 2016 (Appendices B and C). This age group was selected because they represented the largest percentage (66.1%) of the Kosovar population (Country Meters, 2016), as well as the largest percentage (56%) of those who sought asylum in 2015 (Eurostat, 2017). Parents were selected because having children often means that individuals will spend a longer time deciding whether it is worth taking the risk of illegal roads to reach Europe (ECRE, 2005; Haxhikadrija & Dahinden, 2009). In addition, parents who decided to leave Kosova, pass on the idea that Europe has something better to offer, and therefore influences how the next generation will think of Europe.

Interviews were chosen as a data collection method because CDA holds that in order to understand the impact of the discourses used by the political elite, we need to investigate the recontextualization of these discourses in other domains of society (Wodak et al., 2009). Further, “topic-oriented interviews are excellent tools in CDA, which allow, for example, to observe the process through which important concepts like ‘nation’ are being ‘co-constructing’ during an ongoing discussion” (Wodak et al., 2009, p. 3). As such, interviews were a useful tool for this research.

Episodic interviews, developed by Flick (1997), are used to collect people’s narratives about a particular experience in their lives. This method has been used in qualitative social work research in the past (i.e., El-Lahib, 2015; Wehbi, 2011) and was well-suited for the current study because these interviews aim to understand the social representation of specific processes (Flick, 1997). Precisely, episodic interviewing allowed for data collection to be centred on the reintegration process that recent rejected asylum seekers are going through.

Episodic interviews rely on narratives to collect social science data (Flight, 1997). This method posits that narrative thinking allows participants to construct and represent their own stories, therefore revealing the “subjective and social relevance” of the issue being studied (Flick, 2000, p. 86). Since it allows people to use narratives to assign meaning to their realities, this method allowed rejected asylum seekers, who are a marginalized social group, to re-define

their own experiences, and create counter discourses, thus contributing to social change and transformation (Wodak & Meyer, 2002).

Episodic interviews also rely on episodic knowledge. Unlike semantic knowledge, which is usually abstract, episodic knowledge is linked to concrete circumstances (Flick, 1997). In this case, the content of the interview focused on the repatriation circumstances which affect the lives of rejected asylum seekers. These experiences are bound by time and place, therefore revealing particular details about the social representations that participants give to their repatriation. The process used during these interviews assisted participants in recalling and sharing their experiences.

An interview guide (Appendix C) was developed in order to respond to identified gaps in repatriation research as well as abide by episodic interview rules. Precisely, the interview questions focused on the repatriation process only. This was done in order to avoid talking to participants about their journeys towards seeking asylum, seeing that these rejected asylum seekers took illegal roads to reach their preferred countries of asylum in the EU (Alexander 2015; Bytyci & Than, 2015). Participants were made aware of my responsibility to report anything that I am required to by law. However, both the government of Kosova and governments of EU countries, as well as the population at large, are aware of the illegal behaviour in terms of asylum-seeking of most asylum seekers (Bytyci & Than, 2015). Considering that the illegal roads which these individuals took are openly acknowledged, participants do not have to conceal their stories. Further, the interviews focus on the reintegration of rejected asylum seekers since returning, meaning that participants do not have to necessarily talk about how they reached EU countries.

The initial interview guide was separated into three phases. First, participants were asked to recall their first two weeks after the return, also known as the “episode” (Flick, 1997). Second, the interviewees focused on “repisodes”, meaning that participants shared their experiences after the first few weeks, since returning. Finally, attention was paid to historical situations, which are particular situations or events that participants use as reference points while creating their narrative (Flick, 1997). In this case, participants kept referring to the process of applying for asylum, as well as the socioeconomic conditions which forced them to leave in the first place. These three elements generated different accounts of the repatriation process, therefore allowing me, as the researcher, to derive different forms of data, such as “situation narratives, repisodes,

examples, definitions, and argumentative and theoretical statements” (Flick, 1997, p. 89). Furthermore, by highlighting the historical aspect of the narratives shared by participants, episodic interviews align with the CDA aim to link micro and macro elements, and fit the political nature of Kosovar asylum seekers.

Prior to beginning each interview, I gave each participant a sheet with information about agencies which serve rejected asylum seekers (Appendix D). Afterwards, interview session took place once participants recalled the aim of the study and gave oral informed consent (Appendix E) as required by the CFREB, and lasted between 50 and 90 minutes. While written consent is typically required by the CFREB, I decided to use oral informed consent because, as Krogstad et al. (2010) argue, the type of informed consent used for any study has to be appropriate for the culture in which the research participants are embedded. In many developing countries “signatures (thumbprints or an X) on written documents are generally reserved for important business decisions. Thus, a request for a signature on a consent form may produce concern and distrust” (Krogstad et al., 2010, p. 744). Distrust can be a particular issue when working with rejected asylum seekers, seeing that many of them took illegal roads to reach western Europe (Alexander, 2015) and might be reluctant to sign any written forms. Considering that within the Kosovar culture signatures, as pointed to by Krogstad et al. (2010), are used mainly for business, as well as in order to minimize the potential discomfort with signing documents, I have decided to use oral informed consent. Oral consent as well as the entire interview with each participant were audio-recorded in two different devices.

To assure that participants were as comfortable as possible, they choose the location, date, and time during which these interviews were conducted. Four of the interviews were conducted in the participants’ homes, while the other two were conducted in private settings at local coffee shops. Furthermore, when direct quotes from participants were used to illustrate findings, each was able to chose if s/he wanted to remain completely anonymous, be referred to by a pseudonym or be referred to by his/her own name. All participants decided to have their own names used. In order to respect their wish, but also preserve confidentiality, I used only their first names. Seeing that all of them have name which are common in Kosova, it would be difficult for a third party to identify them.

Even though the call for participants was open to rejected asylum seekers in all municipalities in Kosova, those who responded to the call were from Prishtina (Kosova’s capital)

and Fushë Kosovë (the city closest to Prishtina). As with any research data collection was not without certain challenges. For this research, there were two instances where I had to reflect on the interviews and decide whether I would include them. First, one of the participants was over 40 years old, but I did not find this out until the interview was completed. It was the participant's wife who called to schedule the interview, and when asked about the participant's age, she said 39. However, during the interview, it was her husband who answered the questions; his wife was not feeling well and could not partake in the interview. He was 45. I decided to include this interview into my data analysis because I did not see the age difference as a factor that lead to a vastly different repatriation experience for this participant. Second, one of the participants scheduled the interview by himself, but then showed up for the interview with his wife. They both answered interview questions, meaning that the interview was not an individual interview. However, seeing that their answers complimented each other and gave me a better understanding of their family's journey towards the asylum country, as well as during the repatriation process, I decided to include the interview in my data.

Engaging participants. In order to engage and recruit participants, I used convenience and snowball sampling. Convenience sampling is used to “study a politically important individual who attracts attention or is marginalized” (Creswell, 2013, p. 155) and whose story about a lived experience can help to answer the research question. For this study, I used a layered approach to recruit potential participants. First, in June, 2016, I contacted the Municipality Offices for Communities and Return (MOCR) in three cities - Prishtina, Gjakova, and Ferizaj - to ask whether they could post my recruitment notice in their offices. I contacted these specific municipalities because I had existing working relationships with their representatives. I also e-mailed four agencies which work with rejected asylum seekers and asked their staff to pass on my recruitment notice to their clients. These are the only agencies which work specifically with repatriated persons in Kosova.

My plan was to eventually contact all MOCRs. However, all MOCR representatives who responded to my request made me aware that the best way to reach participants was through the MIA. That is, MOCRs could not post recruitment material without approval from MIA and the agencies which I contacted were not willing to post the recruitment notice. Further, I realized that MOCRs do not have databases of their rejected asylum seekers, seeing that these databases are maintained by MIA.

Subsequently, I decided to establish contact with the Department for Reintegration of Repatriated Persons at the MIA. Unfortunately, none of my e-mails or telephone calls were returned. I then used my connections at the UNDP office in Prishtina, where I completed my MSW practicum, to get in touch with someone at the MIA. One of my colleagues had worked on a joint project with the MIA and was willing to introduce me to his contacts through e-mail. At the end of July, 2016, my colleague introduced me to his MIA contacts, one of whom responded soon afterwards and promised to pass on my recruitment notice to rejected asylum seekers who were registered in the Ministry's database. However, it was another month before I received any news from the Ministry. In September, 2016, I received an e-mail from the Ministry saying that 20 people had expressed interest in being interviewed. Of these, I received phone calls from eight; four of whom were eligible to participate in the study. The other four were not parents.

Potential participants contacted me through phone to express an interest in participating. During our conversation, I shared with them detailed information about the study, the nature of their involvement in the study and the risks and benefits of participating, as well as their ability to withdraw their participation at any time. This information was shared in Albanian, which is my native language as well as that of the participants. After explaining the study, I asked participants whether they have any questions. Further, to ensure that everyone understands the study, as well as the voluntariness of their participation, all participants were asked to recall the main elements of the study before the beginning of the approximately one-hour interview. Their explanations and their oral consent to participate were audio-recorded.

From October, 2016 until December, 2016, I conducted six interviews. While the first four participants had contacted me after hearing about the study through MIA, the last two were recruited through snowball sampling. Snowball sampling was chosen because, as stated by studies conducted in Kosova (Chu et al., 2008; Kotorri et al., 2013) many rejected asylum seekers do not access social services. Therefore, snowball sampling, which relies on the assumption that study participants are likely to know others who are willing to participate was helpful in recruiting participants (Daniel, 2012). Specifically, at the end of each interview, I asked participants to pass the study's information to any other individuals who they thought could be potential participants for the study. In order to preserve anonymity and confidentiality, participants who referred someone did not learn from me whether the person they referred participated in the study.

Analysis procedures. Although Wodak and Meyer (2001) assert that in CDA, there is no one prescribed data analysis method, they identify the following three main steps which reflect the process of thematic analyses: finding particular concepts, grouping concepts into categories, and returning to the data for further examination. The thematic analysis steps are slightly different in CDA because of the emphasis on discourse, and how discourses utilize language in the operation of power, dominance, and control (Wodak & Meyer, 2002).

In addition to Wodak and Meyer (2002), Fairclough (2010) also provides guidelines for CDA research. He argues that for research analysis to align with CDA aims, it has to meet three criteria:

- 1- It is not just analysis of discourse (or more concretely texts), it is part of some form of systematic transdisciplinary analysis of relations between discourses and other forms of social process.
- 2- It is not just general commentary on discourse; it includes some form of systemic analysis of text.
- 3- It is not descriptive, it is also normative. It addresses social wrongs in their aspects and possible ways of righting or maintaining them. (p. 10-11)

In order to meet these three criteria, CDA researchers must pay attention to background knowledge which shapes the social interactions of research participants and facilitates the ideological representation within the research data.

These types of knowledges include: “Knowledge of language codes; knowledge of principles and norms of language use; knowledge of situations and; knowledge of the world” (Fairclough, 2010, p. 36). While keeping this in mind, it is important to point out that the main concern of CDA in general and DHA in particular is:

. . . not to study the linguistic system and its functional and semantic potential in all its dimensions *per se*, but rather to establish the linguistic relations between specific linguistic sub-systems and social structures (Wodak, 1997), in order to explore the specific social significance and function of a concrete linguistic or grammatical option. (Wodak et al., 2009, p. 9)

The above criteria were used when analysing the Strategy and interview transcripts.

The first step included a thorough read of the Strategy, during which I identified keywords and concepts which gave insight into the ideology which shapes the Strategy. I paid

attention to mentions of the EU and how the strategy abides by EU regulations. Once I had completed an initial read of the Strategy, I focused on transcribing the interviews, which was the second step of analysis. I purposefully decided to transcribe the interviews myself seeing that CDA requires the research to pay close attention not just to what is said, but also to how things are said. The third step included a thorough read of each interview as soon as it was transcribed. After all interviews were transcribed, I then read each of them again. The fourth step included a re-read of the interviews during which I started to code the interviews. I did not have predetermined codes because I wanted them to emerge as I read the interviews so they could reflect the words used by participants. I then read the Strategy again in order to see how the key findings from interviews compared to the material presented in the strategy. Afterwards, I sorted the codes into categories and sub-categories and began to identify emerging themes. These themes are the ones that will be elaborated in the results chapter.

In summary, this chapter explains my use of qualitative methods, adoption of a postcolonial framework and the use of CDA methodology. Each of these methodological aspects helped to examine the experiences of rejected asylum seekers from Kosova. First, qualitative research allowed me to gain an in-depth understanding of the Strategy as well as create space where rejected asylum seekers could share their stories and their experiences of marginalization. Second, CDA tools gave me insight into the dominant discourses which shape participant stories and the Strategy, while also directing my attention to how these discourses are used to maintain an oppressive status quo in Kosova. Lastly, a postcolonial framework helped to contextualize the discourses of rejected asylum seekers within Kosova's post war history and its place in the Global North-South power structures. My analysis of the interview transcripts and the Strategy will be presented in the following chapter. In the findings chapter I will use quotes from both forms of data in order to illustrate the main findings.

Chapter Four: Findings

The findings chapter presents the culmination of my analysis of the Strategy and the interviews I conducted with seven repatriated individuals. This study used CDA methodology to identify and examine dominant discourses which maintain power dynamics that serve to marginalize rejected asylum seekers (Fairclough, 2003; Martinez, 2007; van Dijk, 2008; Wodak & Meyer, 2002; Wodak et al., 2009). The analysis was grounded in postcolonial theories (Blumi, 2003; Loomba, 2015; Pula, 2003; Savran, 1999) which helped me contextualize the realities of Kosovar rejected asylum seekers in terms of globalization and the power that Global North countries exert over Global South countries.

Following an analysis of the Strategy, I argue that the Strategy is an institutionally established concept of speech used by Kosova's government to show its commitment to the EU, while concomitantly neglecting to address the needs of rejected asylum seekers. Moreover, the Strategy illustrates that Kosova's government is motivated by and perpetuates discourses which construct the EU as superior to Kosova. Kosova's government lacks critical engagement with the impact that the EU-Kosova power imbalance has on the repatriation process and the experiences of rejected asylum seekers. Instead, EU recommendations as well as the Strategy's alignment with EU standards is simply assumed, and the costs of this alignment are not discussed. I argue that the lack of this critical lens is a manifestation of the unquestioned power that the EU exerts over Kosova, both in actuality and in Kosova's government perception. Further, the lack of challenge of this power dynamic has been, and continues to be, detrimental to the experiences of rejected asylum seekers. That is, the focus on meeting EU standards has hindered the development of local repatriation programs which could be more responsive to the needs of rejected asylum seekers.

Moreover, based on interview findings, I argue that rejected asylum seekers themselves are motivated through a discourse which constructs EU countries as superior to Kosova and migration to EU countries as an opportunity for a better life than can be found in Kosova. I argue that constructing migration as an opportunity is a process shaped by social relations – such as family ties, connections with the diaspora, interactions with the government of Kosova and those of EU countries– and this construction influences the realities and identities of rejected asylum seekers. Throughout, I demonstrate how participants use these discourses to construct their own identity, and the Albanian identity in general, as primitive when compared to their European

counterparts. Discourses of comparison which depict Westerners as more modern than Albanians are internalized by participants to such an extent that they justify the injustices and the discrimination which they faced while they were in EU countries and even consider remigration as a future option.

An important point to emphasize is that migration through asylum seeking does not appear to be the participants' ultimate goal. Instead, asylum seeking is a means towards accessing the privileges that participants believe come with migration to EU countries. Specifically, findings suggest that participants distinguish between the opportunities that migration makes possible for them and the possibilities for a better life for their children. While participants desired migration in order to secure employment in EU countries, work there for a while, and then return to Kosova, they hope that their children could settle there and enjoy the opportunities that EU countries offer. The internationalization of these discourses – that EU countries are somehow inherently better than Kosova and that migration to EU countries affords asylum seekers and their children a better life and future – highlights the operationalization of power through language. Discourses which uphold the EU as superior lead rejected asylum seekers to hold a negative image of Kosova and themselves. Further, such discourses reinforce a colonial mindset which constructs Westerners and Western countries as better than Albanians and Kosova, respectively.

I will present the main findings of my study in three stages. In the first stage, I will present my analysis of the Strategy and abstract material drawn from this document to illustrate key findings. In the second stage, I will provide the reader with brief profiles of each of the study participants, whose own words will then be used to exemplify key interview findings, which constitutes the third stage. Importantly, interview findings also include participant recommendations. Although presented as discrete stages, as per CDA guidelines, the analysis of the Strategy and the interviews occurred simultaneously. While this chapter presents findings in these separate stages, the discussion chapter will integrate the findings from each of these two stages, while also grounding them in existing literature.

Reparation Strategy Findings

The Strategy was drafted in 2013 for the 2013-2018 period and is separated into several sections, including: background information, the strategic and institutional frameworks which guide the repatriation process, a review of repatriation alternatives, as well as monitoring and

evaluation measures. In my analysis, I focused on what kind of information was prioritized in the Strategy and how this information was presented. In doing so, I identified the Strategy's key ideological underpinnings and main discourses which guided its creation. The Strategy was available in Albanian, English and Serbian. I read both the Albanian and English versions, and, seeing that there were no meaningful differences, I decided to analyze the English version. Analysing the English version also allowed me to gain further insight into the Kosova-EU relationship because the two communicate in English. As such, instead of analysing the Albanian version and then translating the quotes I extracted, I used the original document which Kosova's government provides for the EU to comment on. The following section presents what I found to be the dominant discourses which appeared throughout the Strategy. Namely, the dominant discourses used in the Strategy suggests that this document is just another instrument used by Kosova's government to show its commitment and subordination to the EU.

The dominant discourse used in the Strategy is one which construct an *exclusive* EU and *exalts* the EU both as an institutional aspiration and a physical destination that Kosova is actively striving to reach. Alignment of the Strategy with EU policies has a central place in the Strategy and is discussed 13 times in the 30-page document. In fact, the Strategy (MIA, 2013c) begins by referring to the relationship between Kosova and the EU in the field of migration.

The policies of the Government of Kosovo [sic] in the field of migration and reintegration of repatriated persons represent an important aspect in the relationship of the Republic of Kosovo [sic] with EU Member States¹ within the commitment of the Government of the Republic of Kosovo [sic] (hereinafter Government) for visa liberalization and accession to the European Union. (p. 1)

The subscript which appears in the quote above, states that "MS were the destination of the majority of emigrants from Republic of Kosovo [sic]", thereby recognizing the emphasis placed on the relationship between Kosova and the EU in the opening sentence of the document (MIA, 2013c, p. 1).

All major sections of the Strategy either begin and/or end by highlighting Kosova's commitment to a European future both physically through the migration of its people, and governmentally, by emulation and modeling. First, EU reports on Kosova and agreements between the two entities received special attention while Kosova's government drafted the Strategy:

All requirements from the Roadmap for Visa Liberalization, recommendations derived from the progress report of the European Commission of 8th February 2013 on the progress of Kosovo [sic] in fulfilment of the requirements deriving from the Roadmap on Visa Liberalization, and the Action Plan for negotiation of the Agreement on Stabilization Association were taken into consideration in drafting the Reintegration Strategy. (p. 6)

Second, EU requirements were not only the basis of the development of the Strategy, but also shaped its objectives.

The Government of the Republic of Kosovo [sic] is committed to create and establish all relevant conditions for a successful and sustainable reintegration of repatriated persons and implementing necessary reforms *in order to fulfil all criteria for the integration into the European Union*. (p. 5, emphasis added)

The italicized section of this excerpt articulates the central importance that Kosova's government places on its commitment to an EU future. Nowhere in this objective is mentioned that the repatriation process is important *because* Kosova is committed to the wellbeing of its citizens who are also returnees. That is, while the effort to align with EU policies is not problematic in itself, prioritizing EU alignment over the well-being of repatriated persons is. In using EU requirements as the guiding principles for the development and implementation of the Strategy, the MIA in Kosova, perpetuates hegemonic practices which maintain EU's power and control over Kosova. I will elaborate on these practices in the next chapter.

Third, Kosova's appreciation for the EU is expressed through its praise of numerous Western-based organizations for their involvement in drafting the strategy. The Strategy states that "the Government of the Republic of Kosovo [sic] appreciates the contribution of European Commission, UNDP, UNHCR, OSCE, IOM, UNICEF and other local and international actors for the support provided in drafting of this Strategy" (p. 6). While specific Western-based organizations are recognized for establishing the basis of the repatriation process in Kosova, the contribution of local organizations is barely mentioned, but their involvement in implementing the goals of the Strategy were noted: "in order to provide services in an effective and efficient manner, a mutual coordination and cooperation is necessary between all actors involved in the reintegration process, including international organizations and the civil society" (p. 10).

Lastly, international organizations continue to be considered key stakeholders in the Strategy even though they transferred their competences to the Kosovar government in 2008, when Kosova declared its independence. The Strategy specifies that “the practices transferred by International Institutions, which have managed the repatriation process for a long time, have facilitated the establishment of operational mechanisms and procedures by local institutions” (p. 10). Attributing the establishment and development of the Strategy to Western-based organizations as well as continuing to identify them as key stakeholders in the repatriation process portrays Kosova as a country that needs help – specifically Western help – because it faces challenges “due to the lack of capacities at the local level” (MIA, 2013c, p. 12).

Indeed, the Strategy characterizes Kosova as an impoverished and underdeveloped country through statements such as “Kosova is still facing many challenges, with an unemployment rate of 35.1%, inflation over 2.5%, low export level, steel [sic] weak private sector and limited foreign investments” (p. 10). The Strategy provides concrete examples of the struggles that Kosova faces within the repatriation process. For example, when discussing the medical needs of returnees, the Strategy states that the “Kosovo [sic] Health system represents a challenge for a number of tertiary services...Repatriated persons suffering from serious illnesses, who were treated at sending countries, do not get the same treatment after arrival” (p. 11). The Strategy then concludes by depicting Kosova as incapable of effectively assisting returnees:

the large number of repatriated persons to be reintegrated into the society presents a huge challenge for Kosovo [sic] institutions and therefore existing capacities shall be strengthened in all aspects. Health, education and social systems require significant capacity building in order to increase quality standards related to areas of health, enrolment of children in schools and providing [sic]. (MIA, 2013c, p. 10)

Even though the situational analysis presented in the Strategy states that “strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats during the reintegration treatment were analysed and identified” (p. 10), the Strategy focuses on weaknesses and does not emphasize any of Kosova’s strengths. Instead, the Strategy simply states that “the Government of Kosovo [sic] is committed in [sic] building of a democratic, safe and modern state with prosperity, towards achieving of western standards and progress” (p. 12). This implies that, in its current form, Kosova is not Western enough and therefore not *good enough*. In fact, Kosova’s willingness to meet EU standards shapes the objective of the Strategy itself, as suggested by the statement that “all

objectives contain in itself the legal framework in the field of migration, readmission, repatriation and sustainable reintegration in line with bilateral agreements for readmission, international conventions and the EU acquis” (MIA, 2013b, p. 13).

As explained earlier, and then illustrated, the description of objectives points to an ideological underpinning which constructs the EU as an appropriate example for Kosova to follow and identifies migration to EU countries as the desirable goal:

Key objectives of the initiative are to provide comprehensive and timely information to all Kosovo [sic] citizens in order to build awareness of the risks and threats and potential legal consequences related to irregular migration and at the same time providing assistance towards legal procedures and ways for regular migration. (MIA, 2013c, p. 25)

While documenting the potential consequences of illegal migration is intended to discourage people from doing so, citing the importance of regular migration channels constructs migration and migration to the EU specifically as *exclusive*. So, although a key objective of the Strategy is to ensure that there is sustainable repatriation in Kosova, the document’s recognition of possible channels of migration actually highlights the opposite of repatriation:

The Government of the Republic of Kosovo [sic] promotes legal migration with the intention of facilitating of travelling to EU MS and benefiting from programs of circular migration, that facilitates circulation of citizens between Republic of Kosovo [sic] and EU MS legally, by including migration with purposes of studies, seasonal employment, exchange of experiences and different training courses. (MIA, 2013b, p. 8)

The Strategy, with its focus on the opportunities that migration to EU countries offers, constructs Western countries as ready and capable of providing a life that citizens are unlikely to find in Kosova. In doing so, the Strategy negatively impacts people’s effort to repatriate, because it explicitly directs the citizens’ energies and desires towards a European future.

The language used in the Strategy, while stating that its goal is to facilitate repatriation, also discourages people from returning by constructing repatriated persons as a burden for Kosova’s budget. The strategy explains that “repatriated persons face difficulties to generate revenues in short-term period, what results in an increase of the number of persons dependent on social schemes, which even burdens more the budget of Kosovo [sic]” (MIA, 2013b, p. 10). Through constructing repatriated people as a burden on the State, the Strategy avoids addressing the factors which pushed people to leave in the first place. For example, the contribution of

current socioeconomic conditions to migration is not discussed at all. Although unnamed, the Strategy alludes to these push factors, identifying that “the migration trend has continued and it is still continuing for different reasons” (MIA, 2013c, p. 8).

Lack of such vital information about the nature of migration push factors in the document makes the situational analysis read like a justification to the EU as to why Kosova has not been able to meet EU standards for repatriation. Instead of discussing push and pull migration factors, which point to the international nature of asylum, the challenges of the repatriation process are emphasized:

The reintegration process of repatriated persons also requires huge financial costs and is an additional challenge for the Government of Republic of Kosovo [sic]. Assistance and support provided for repatriated persons, in addition to basic services, includes also housing, reconstruction/renovation of destroyed/demolished houses, funding of projects for generating own revenues, and other types of assistance and support. (p. 10)

Constructing repatriated persons as a burden, whose needs a small country like Kosova cannot meet, further advances the concept that staying accountable to the EU is more important to Kosova’s government than the well-being of its citizens.

Demonstrating its lack of attention to repatriated people, the Strategy adopts a generic definition of this population:

The persons of concern of the readmission process are persons who do not fulfil or do not anymore fulfill the conditions for entry or stay in the territory of the requesting/returning country and as a result of this are repatriated in Kosovo [sic]. (MIA, 2013c, p. 20)

While the definition herein reflects those provided by the UNHCR and EU migration documents (UNHCR, 1996), it is not contextualized within the Kosovar context. Importantly, it neglects to address the diverse groups of repatriated people and the unique needs of each group. In contrast, the document mostly focuses on those who left during the latest war in Kosova and have returned after spending a few years in EU countries:

Repatriated persons may bring with them skills and resources they have gained during the time of their stay in developed countries and they can apply/invest them. It is necessary to build these capacities in order to preserve any benefit from them and transfer them into a driving factor for the overall development of Kosovo [sic]. (MIA, 2013b, p. 11)

Recent rejected asylum seekers for example, whose time in EU countries was spent in asylum camps, are not mentioned as a sub-category of repatriated people. Nor are they likely to have acquired the skills and capacities alluded to in the previous quote. In fact, while completely ignoring the largest number of asylum seekers who chose to use illegal roads to arrive at asylum countries, the Strategy states that “the phenomena of irregular migration are predominantly related to trafficking of human beings and people smuggling and is among other transnational crimes a serious threat towards the perception of Kosovo [sic] and the entire region” (MIA, 2013c, p. 25).

The Strategy’s obsession with upholding Kosova’s image in the region negates identifying asylum seekers who choose to use illegal channels to reach EU countries as a sub-group of illegal migrants. Indeed, the only statement where rejected asylum seekers are implied is that which states that “migrants without legal status of stay in Western countries must be repatriated, whether voluntarily or involuntarily” (MIA, 2013c, p. 8). Again, the consequences of each type of return are not discussed. In contrast, Kosova’s accountability to the EU is prioritized by agreeing that all those who are illegal must be returned to Kosova, regardless of Kosova’s ability to facilitate the repatriation process.

Even though the voluntariness of repatriation affects sustainability of return, this is not discussed in the Strategy. The document highlights that “all activities planned guarantee a sustainable reintegration in the long run in financial and environmental terms” (MIA, 2013c, p. 7). Nonetheless, sustainability is never qualified, but simply portrayed as a process that is “in compliance with international development standards and planed in the mid-term expenditure framework” (MIA, 2013c, p. 7). This focus on compliance with international standards diminishes a discussion of the local needs of repatriated persons. For example, when discussing the housing needs of repatriated persons, the Strategy refers to Western housing standards:

Housing is a social right of citizens in most of the developed countries because this is crucial for health and qualitative living. The right on [sic] housing is more and more present in global policies and for human rights, also sanctioned with international conventions. (MIA, 2013c, p. 10)

Such a generic statement does not speak to the housing needs of repatriated persons specifically, but only refers to this need as a social right that citizens of developed countries enjoy. This somewhat superficial listing of returnee needs might meet EU integration requirements that the

Strategy seeks to meet. It fails, however, to contextualize these needs for those who return to Kosova. Failure to ground the Strategy on local needs suggests that the document is just another indicator in the EU integration checklist.

To resemble the Repatriation process passed down to Kosova's institutions by international organizations, the Strategy recognizes that repatriation is a multi-sector endeavour. However, the responsibilities of each ministry outlined within the Strategy are vague and do not always specify how they can assist repatriated persons:

The intention of the Ministry of health [sic] is to provide the legal basis for protecting and improving the health of citizens of Republic of Kosovo [sic] through promotion of health, preventive activities and provision of comprehensive and qualitative [sic] health care services. Ministry of health drafts policies and implements laws of a non-discriminative and accountable health care system. (MIA, 2013c, p. 17)

The intention of the Ministry is stated, but its responsibilities towards repatriated people are not identified. Furthermore, the mechanisms which facilitate this cooperation are not clearly stated, but it is explained that since international organizations such as UNDP, IOM etc. highlight the nature of repatriation as a multi-stakeholder process, so does this Strategy. Similarly, due to the EU preference for a decentralized government in Kosova, the Strategy places particular emphasis on the decentralization process:

In order to trace the vision of the Reintegration Strategy and to vivify the reintegration program the Government has decided to decentralize power and resources to the local level and to give communities access and influence over issues that affect the daily lives. It represents an administrative transfer of the power and resources and empowering the municipal level in facing the reintegration competences. (p. 20)

Recommendations from Western-based organizations are given permanence over all others, thereby constructing Western countries as experts. The cost of adopting such recommendations are not taken into consideration by Kosova's government, but they are discussed in the following chapter.

The dominant discourse which shapes the Strategy, therefore, emphasizes the importance of EU integration, the help received by Western-based organizations as well as the inability of Kosova to reach EU standards thus far. Placing emphasis on EU integration, depicting returnees as a burden, as well as portraying Kosova as inferior to EU countries suggests that while drafting

the Strategy, Kosova's government has remained accountable to the EU governing bodies, thus constructing the EU as an entity which can judge whether Kosova is meeting the "right" standards. The relationship between the two, then, is one between unequal partners and highlights the power dynamics which shape the Strategy and the experiences of rejected asylum seekers.

Participant Profiles

In total, I analyzed six interview transcripts conducted with seven participants. All participants had sought asylum in at least one EU member state. All participants were: Kosova Albanians, parents, had been rejected asylum and returned to Kosova within three to fifteen months at the time of the interview. Interview findings focus on the main discourses that participants used to create meaning of their experiences. Considering that CDA seeks to give voice to alternative discourses which are used by marginalized groups such as asylum seekers, I will first present a brief profile of each participant. When participants provided exact dates of their travel, those are included in their profiles.

I interviewed 39-year-old Minire at a local coffee shop in Prishtina. She lives with her husband and her 11-year-old son. She has an elementary school education, but wants her son to obtain a higher level of education. During the interview, she was six-months pregnant with her second child and had given birth by the time I contacted her to share my findings. Minire and her husband decided to seek asylum in December 2014 mainly because they did not own a house and have had a hard time securing shelter since 2003. She explains that "the main reason we left was shelter. We did not have any support here, either from the municipality, or from the central government". They first applied for asylum in France on December 15th, 2014. French asylum authorities placed them in a hotel, where they stayed for two months. Minire and her husband were given a €350 monthly stipend each to cover their living expenses, but these funds were insufficient for them to meet their basic needs. After two months of living in France, they received a letter in the mail saying that their asylum application had been rejected and they had to return to Kosova. Before authorities sent them back to Kosova, Minire and her family escaped to Germany, where they applied for asylum again. She recalled arriving in Germany along with thousands of Syrian refugees and being placed in a refugee camp. Minire and her husband received €129 each per month, while their son received €93. This assistance continued until June 3rd, 2015 when their asylum application was rejected. Upon being rejected, Minire and her

husband signed voluntary repatriation forms. They did this because they were told that they would lose their rights in Kosova if they refused to do so. On June 25th, 2015, Minire and her family were flown to Kosova, and have been living in Prishtina since. Minire and her husband are still unemployed and she expressed worry for her family's future. Since coming back, she has not received any support from the government or any of the organizations that work with repatriated people. She did, however, praise Kosova's Ministry of Education for allowing her son to return to school without having to complete the semester he missed. She noted that both her son's and the family's reintegration was facilitated because he could return to his former classmates. Nonetheless, Minire continues to be worried about her son's future and considers alternative migration channels as a future option.

Drita is a 36-year-old woman who sought asylum with her husband to escape poor shelter conditions and secure a better future for herself and her son. She came to our meeting carrying her infant son. I was surprised she could carry him as she appears underweight. I speculated that she cared more for her infant son than her own well-being. Before her marriage and moving into her husband's family home, Drita worked as a cleaning woman in Prishtina. Her husband's family home is in a remote village without access to running water and limited access to electricity. Such living conditions were difficult for Drita as her family of origin was wealthier than her husband's and she had enjoyed better living conditions. Getting pregnant was the last push factor that led to their decision to seek asylum. Also, Drita had previously visited her brothers, who live in Switzerland and Germany, respectively. She hoped that moving to an EU country would allow her to provide a better future for her son. In order to cover the trip expenses to reach Germany, Drita and her husband sold their only asset – a cow that had been passed down to them by her husband's family. Drita explains that they were not prepared for the difficulties they faced during their asylum journeys. She describes her experience in Hungary as particularly difficult. During that time she was separated from her husband, placed in a prison cell along with other women, and not given food or water for 42 hours. During the interview Drita shared vivid memories of the very difficult experiences she had in Hungary. The interview was extremely emotionally laden and the most difficult one for me to conduct. Fortunately, they escaped the camp in Hungary and eventually reached Germany, where they applied for asylum.

As soon as they arrived in Germany, Drita was taken to the hospital because of her poor health and then they were relocated to a small village near Dresden. Even though Drita and her

husband had their own apartment, she felt extremely isolated because locals were not supportive of asylum seekers and frequently chastised them; they always told her “please keep it down. They started to close their doors when we went there. They used to tell us, please do not hang your clothes to dry outside”. Additionally, a German family which offered employment for her husband and promised to assist with their asylum applications disappeared after six months without paying Drita’s husband for his work. During this time, Drita sought emergency medical treatment on three occasions due to complications with her pregnancy. She kept hoping that once she gave birth her son would be given German citizenship. Nonetheless, after she gave birth, and seven months after their arrival in Germany, Drita and her family were rejected asylum and returned to Kosova. She now lives in Prishtina in a basement suite. The rent is currently covered by her father, but only for three more months. I interviewed her in her home. She cannot return to work because she must take care of her son. Her husband remains unemployed. Drita expresses hope that someone from Germany will call to say that her son has been granted citizenship because he was born there.

Merita appeared to be an optimistic person when I first saw her at the bus stop where we agreed to meet. However, the tone changed significantly, as she shared stories with me during the interview. Merita is a 37-year-old woman with some university education. She has two children, ages seven and 12 who were doing their homework in the same room where I interviewed her. Merita and her husband decided to seek asylum on January 12th, 2015. She explains that they made a quick decision to leave and when they headed for the bus station she felt “as if I was going to see my mother’s family”. She later reinforced that she “never imaged that seeking asylum would be what it turned out to be”. Additionally, her in-laws told her and her husband that if they left, they could not return to the house that they had provided again. The house belonged to the in-laws and was located in their yard. Despite this, Merita and her family left and sought asylum in Germany where they stayed for eight months. Merita was satisfied with the living conditions in Germany, especially the health care provided to her son. She expressed feeling very sad when they were denied asylum and were returned to Kosova in August, 2015. Although, Merita and her family received notice from the German authorities that their asylum stay had been extended for five months, they were forced to return to Kosova the day after they received the extension. Initially, she and her children stayed with her family because her in-laws had torn down the house where Merita and her family had lived prior to leaving, and her in-laws

refused to accept them in their own house. They have since returned to the home of their in-laws and live on the first floor of the house; they share one room, a kitchenette and a bathroom. Merita is unemployed, though she cleans houses occasionally. Her husband sells produce at the market, but this does not provide a stable income for the family. She describes their reintegration as difficult and reports that she would try migrating again if given the chance.

Xhafer is 45 years-old, and I interviewed him at his house, while his wife cooked and his two children (ages six and eight) completed their homework. At first, he was reluctant to share his experiences, but as the interview proceeded he became more comfortable with my presence and shared some of the details of his asylum journey. He and his family left Kosova on January 31st, 2015 and took the same illegal migration channels that study participants had taken. He gave a detailed description of the route and all those who helped them cross borders illegally. Once they reached Germany, they applied for asylum and were relocated to three different asylum camps over a 12-month period. Xhafer recounted being asked if he wanted to move into an apartment and agreeing to do so only to find out that he would have to fix up the apartment in order to make it habitable. Consequently, he felt cheated by the German asylum authorities. He refused to fix the apartment and returned to live in an asylum camp. After a year of living in asylum camps, he and his family received notice of the rejection of their asylum application and were returned to Kosova. Since coming back, Xhafer's family has received assistance from the municipality and agencies which work specifically with returnees. The municipality provided him with flour, sugar, and oil. Ura 2, a German-funded project which works with returnees, gave him some furniture and kitchen utensils. Even though he is grateful for this assistance, the fact that he is unemployed hinders his reintegration process. Xhafer explained that instead of relying on anyone else for assistance, he prefers to have a job. He has mostly been unemployed since returning to Kosova on February, 2016, although he is occasionally employed as a security guard. He recognizes that his employment opportunities are limited in Kosova because he has only completed elementary education. He considers remigration as a solution to his current challenges.

Kadri and Samire are married and the only people that I interviewed together. Both Kadri (aged 34) and Samire (aged 32) have completed high school education and live in Fushë Kosovë with their three children ages seven, 11 and 13. They sought asylum in Germany on February, 2015 because they were unemployed in Kosova and could not provide for their children. Upon

reaching Germany, they were surprised to find out that asylum seekers are discriminated against, despite this they still hoped to be granted asylum. However, only three months after they applied for asylum, they were denied and asked to return to Kosova. Even though they signed voluntary repatriation forms, they escaped to Italy before being forced to return to Kosova. They applied for asylum in Italy where they spent another three months. However, they decided to leave Italy without receiving a notice of their asylum application because they realized that it would be difficult to settle in Italy due to the discrimination they experienced and because Italy is an expensive country. Both agree that, if Kosova were able to provide better employment opportunities, they would never leave because there is no place like home. Since their return they have not been given any assistance. Kadri is trying to secure a work visa so he can find employment in one of the EU member states.

Sadije is 39 years old, has completed elementary education, and lives with her husband and their four children (ages 12, 15, 18 and 22). She and her family decided to seek asylum after her husband's car, which he used as a taxi, was confiscated by Albanian border police. Consequently, Sadije and her family no longer had a stable source of income and decided to leave with the intention of applying for asylum in Germany. She was also encouraged to leave by their children, with whom she lived with in Germany as refugees during the 1999 Kosova war. They blamed their parents for deciding to return to Kosova in 2000. The family followed the same illegal roads to Germany as other participants. The most difficult part of their journey, she stated was in Hungary, where they were left without food or water for 42 hours. Fortunately, Sadije had packed enough food and was able to feed her children. Once they reached Germany, they applied for asylum and were placed in an apartment where they stayed for 14 months. During that time, Sadije asserts that she had a great living standard while in Germany. She described the locals whom she met as very helpful to her and her children. In fact, her children could attend school and learn the language while in Germany and have had a hard time being back in Kosova. Sadije blames Kosova's current government leaders for not offering youth the proper conditions for a quality education and employment opportunities. After 14 months they were denied asylum and subsequently returned to Kosova. Since returning, she has not received any repatriation assistance. Sadije has started to create custom-made cakes which people can order during holidays. Her husband is currently employed by a local taxi company and is trying to get his car back.

These profiles do not capture all aspects of the participants' identities. I decided to provide a brief description of the participants and their journeys to contextualize the quotes that I will use to illustrate key interview findings. It is important to emphasize that since all participants are Kosova Albanians, any discussion of national identity presented in the findings refers to their Albanian national identity, not to them as Kosovars – a term which refers to their citizenship. Importantly, all participants consented to having their real names used when presenting the findings. As the researcher in this study, I recognized that more than myself, or anyone else who studies repatriation, they are experts in this process because they live it on a daily basis. As such, I too agreed to have their names associated with their expertise and any knowledge that may be gained through this study.

As a novice researcher, I was deeply impacted by each participants' stories and insights. I highly valued the trust they placed on me, as well as their willingness to recall difficult memories and share with me how they made life-altering decisions. I noted the very difficult choices they made and how they did everything within their power to provide the best possible future for their children. I was particularly struck by the fact that some participants became parents when they were my age, or younger, and have had to worry about their children's futures ever since. In fact, thinking about their daily struggles helped me overcome the stress that I often felt when this research did not go the way that I wanted it to. Every time I felt stuck, I reminded myself that if participants could overcome the difficulties of illegal migration while caring for their children, I could not complain about sitting in a warm room and merely writing about those experiences, while my parents brought me food. In contrast to my living conditions, three of the four participants, whom I interviewed in their homes, lived in overcrowded conditions and/or in basement suites and did not have the necessary means to heat their homes. The winter of 2016-2017 when I began writing this thesis was the coldest winter Kosova has experienced in the previous 50 years. As I was writing my thesis, I often thought about participants and how they were fairing. While I appreciated the fact that participants welcomed me into their homes, being exposed to their living conditions often made it difficult for me to conduct the interviews and attend carefully to their asylum stories. I was constantly reminded of the injustices which exist in Kosova and the privileges that I enjoy.

Participants' stories, especially those which highlighted the tensions between leaving home and pursuing a better future abroad, were especially hard-hitting for me. They reminded

me of my own migration dilemmas. I chose to emigrate when I was 14 in order to pursue a *better* education abroad, and only recently returned to Kosova permanently. I returned to Kosova in 2016, 11 years later in order to conduct these interviews and complete my thesis. Among the reasons I chose to use CDA was the fact that it did not assume a neutral role for the researcher, but encouraged me to understand how I was implicated in the research itself. Indeed, much like the participants, I am impacted by the same migration discourses that shape participants' repatriation experiences. I also equate migration with increased opportunities and have spent almost half of my life in Western countries. Indeed, in briefly relating to my story, participants recognized our shared experiences. For example, when recalling the living standard in EU member states, participants reported that they did not need to go into details because I knew what it is like to live in a Western country. Despite the differences in our migration stories, we were able to relate to each other and the tensions that we had to navigate as we created and imagined our life in two different places. Additionally, the similarities in our stories made it possible for me to bridge the difference in sex and parenting status.

At the same time, I recognize that unlike study participants, I used legal migration channels to reach North America and can now travel to Canada without needing a visa: something that all participants desire. The different outcomes to our migration journeys added an interesting power dynamic to the interviews. While participants were rejected asylum and returned to Kosova involuntarily, I was granted Canadian permanent residence and returned to live in Kosova voluntarily. Participants inquired about my immigration status in Canada and expressed surprise when I told them that I could live there, but had decided to return to and live in Kosova instead. They cautioned that unless I was related to one of the powerful people in Kosova, I would not be able to find employment. When I explained that I returned because my family lives in Kosova, however, participants were quick to say that being away from their families was the most difficult part of their asylum journeys, so they could understand my decision.

In addition to my Canadian permanent residence, my Canadian education, and the fact that I would defend my thesis at a Canadian institution of higher education made me appear as a 'legitimate' researcher in the eyes of participants. They placed trust in me partly because they believed that completing a master's degree abroad signified that I was skilled enough to protect their data and represent their stories in an appropriate manner. Participants focused on the fact

that I had studied abroad and identified me as a Westerner. As such, I was not a passive recipient of participants' stories, but an active player in how the interviews were conducted and what participants were willing to share with me

The power and promise of the West was manifested in my often having to explain that just because I had lived in Canada, I did not have connections which would lead to more repatriation assistance for them. As such, the very power dynamics which I was seeking to challenge through this research – those between locals and Westerners – were helpful for me as a novice researcher.

Also, participants pointed to another power disparity between myself and them by inquiring about my last name. A conversation with Samire highlights how people with the same last name are associated with each other.

Samire: You said you are Kaltrina Kusari, right?

Kaltrina: Yes

Samire: Are you related to Mimoza?

Kaltrina: Yes, she is a distant cousin. The first question that I am asked when I arrive at the airport is whether I am related to her.

Mimoza Kusari-Lila is the current mayor of the city where I live and the first woman in Kosova to win local elections. Although we are related, I had not met her until the beginning of 2017. Yet, participants asked about our relationship because, as it will become clear in the presentation of the interview findings, they believe that people with the *right* last name are those who will be able to gain employment. Such questions made me feel uncomfortable because I did not want to be thought of as someone who secures employment only because I have the right connections.

Indeed, right after that short conversation with Samire, I moved on to ask the next interview question and did not give the necessary attention to her inquiry. It was only when I transcribed the interview that I noticed my tendency to move away from talking about myself and my family. In retrospect, I realized that because the purpose of this study is to challenge the status quo which marginalizes certain groups, I was uncomfortable when identified as one of the individuals who belongs to those who are in power and often act as oppressive agents. My inability to overcome a sense of guilt for enjoying certain privileges might have silenced participants' voices and my exploration of how I, as the researcher and someone with a well-

known last name, differ from them. This is just one illustration of the participants' attentiveness to details which I avoided because of my discomfort with privilege.

Encountering such instances in interview transcripts allowed me to critically engage with the data. Specifically, reflexivity gave me insight into my own struggle to balance two contradictory aspects of myself. Initially, my self-image as someone who is committed to social justice and an ally of those who are marginalized was challenged by the participants' perception of me as someone who is privileged and can use my social position to further my personal interests. As I confronted this discomfort, however, I learned that even though the way I construct myself is different from the way that participants construct me, neither of these constructions is the right or the wrong one. As Smith (1992) writes when contemplating her Maori identity, "there is no either/or position we can take, the reality is we have many identities, multiple and contradictory personae" (p. 59). Gaining this insight was important for me – especially my researcher identity – because it set the stage for an analysis of interviews which did not limit participants to one identity category, but incorporated their many identities and multiplicity of voices in the main findings. That is, acknowledging my privileged position in the Kosovar society allowed me to understand that, despite my interest in working with marginalized groups, I often miss critical information about elements which impact their experiences. However, critical and reflexive qualitative research facilitated my contemplation of my own identity and, in doing so, directed my attention to a layer of data that I would have missed otherwise.

Reflexivity. While I began the interviews with the intention of giving a voice to participants and to learn more about the repatriation process itself, study participants made me aware that they do not see repatriation as separate from their entire asylum seeking journeys. Instead of an isolated process, participants presented repatriation as part of a migration continuum. They talked about push factors, how they returned to Kosova, as well as how they plan to remigrate. Beyond their individual journeys, the migration continuum that participants' stories refer to includes the salience of migration for Kosova throughout its history and its future.

Indeed, as I analyzed the interviews I realized that, despite being critical of the Global North-South dichotomous way of thinking, I continue to see migration as a social process which allows me to experience *the other*, which in my case is Canada. Though I have come to re-appreciate local Albanian values that I once constructed as primitive, I am still limited into

imagining future academic pursuits as only taking place in Western countries. This is because I hold onto the belief that education in Western institutions gives me access to more opportunities than an education in Kosova because degrees and diplomas earned in Kosova are not recognized outside the country. Much like the participants in this study, I am also influenced by and perpetuate dominant discourses which appeared throughout the interviews and which portray permanent or circular migration as an undeniable aspect of the lives of Kosova Albanians. I acknowledge these influences throughout my discussion of findings in an effort to remain transparent about my own ideological direction and the choice of my theoretical framework. I recognize that I am implicated in the findings that I will present below - both as a researcher and as someone with a transnational identity – and highlight how I impacted the information that participants decided to share with me.

Interview Findings

Interview findings identify a major, overarching discourse which constructs an *exclusive* EU, that is *superior* to Kosova and although desirable, an almost impossible destination for Kosova Albanians to reach. Participants manifest this discourse through three sub-discourses. First, participants equate migration with a *better life* for themselves and a *better future* for their children, and, for this reason consider *remigration*, not reintegration as a solution to their current repatriation challenges. Second, participants use *discourses of comparison* which set Kosova and the EU in diametrically opposite ends. This construction formulates the EU as more *advanced* than Kosova and Westerners as more *modern* than Albanians. The third discourse, termed *discourses of deception*, is used by participants to illustrate their disappointment with Kosova's incapability to handle the repatriation process. This then contributes to Kosova's depiction as inferior to the EU. Participants used these three sub-discourses to construct the EU as exclusive and superior in terms of economic opportunities, development and national identity, and the way they approach the repatriation process, respectively. These three sub-discourses will be used as the framework for the presentation of findings.

Before I present these findings, it is important to emphasize that a key element which shaped the discourses used by participants was their role as parents. Participants' decision to leave, their return and reintegration, as well as their expectations for the future are tightly connected to the vision they have for their children. As will become clear in the findings, participants constantly refer to the importance they give to their parental role and the source of

hope that their children provide for them in the migration process. Since parenthood is so deeply embedded in participants' stories, I have chosen to integrate it throughout the presentation of the findings of the three sub-discourses, rather than as a separate sub-theme.

Migration as an opportunity for a *better life*. All participants stated that they sought asylum in order to have access to a better life. As Kadri shared, "I left for a better life". This desire for a better life, they identified, was common among asylum seekers; "Everyone left for a better life" (Minire) and "I left for a better life, like everyone else" (Samire). For participants, a better life usually meant escaping poverty in Kosova, as well as having access to adequate shelter and opportunities for employment. Minire asserts that she "did not leave for a luxurious life. I left to lead a normal life. At least to have a house" while Merita stated that she left "because of poverty. My husband is unemployed. I am unemployed." Others left "in search of something better. A better salary" and also because "there is nothing to do in Kosova. No employment, while children want food" (Xhafer).

These statements imply that participants believe that EU member states have something better to offer, although five out of seven of them had never been to an EU country prior to applying for asylum. Characterizing EU countries as better, without having direct experience, illustrates that a dominant discourse in Kosova constructs EU member states as superior. For example, Minire expected that "within three to four years, maybe five, I would earn enough and then return [to Kosova]". The assumption that she can come back with enough funds after a few years of living in EU countries points to global power dynamics which depict the Global North as more developed and able to offer economic opportunities. In fact, Drita illustrates the link that Kosova Albanians draw between migration and economic opportunities:

My husband's family are backwards and do not know what *gurbet* [migration] is like. My family would not say anything because we have people abroad and we know what it is like. But my husband's family told us "you made money. You made money there. How much money did you bring back?" People here have a very primitive mentality. Very primitive. "What did you bring us? What did you do there?"

Drita depicts her husband's family as primitive for believing that migration is a means to a better standard of living, even though she herself left precisely because she holds the same belief. This illustrates that they are both impacted by the same discourse which links migration with financial assets, but that social cleavages between the two exist.

Diaspora members play a crucial role in creating discourses of opportunity which link migration with a better life, as Sadije noted:

Yes, they told us to try again. My brother, who lives in Switzerland told us to try. He was here for New Years and told me Sadi, at least try. He brought me home one day and before dropping me off told me to try again. I told him I could not take that road with all of my kids.

In addition to encouraging participants to seek asylum, diaspora members also construct life in Western countries as better than life in Kosova. Kadri explains that he thought EU countries would lead to more opportunities because diaspora members told him “we have a lot of money. We have a lot of things”. Similarly, Samire felt disappointed because while diaspora members had told her “‘we have money. We have money. We have money’...the reality is different”.

While the diaspora played a key role in creating these discourses of opportunity, study participants actively maintain such discourses while describing their own asylum journeys. Notably, when their asylum journeys did not match their positive image of EU countries, participants justified harsh camp conditions and hoped that after the initial challenges things would get better.

It was good, not bad. Germany is a very powerful country. They welcomed us. Well, we Kosovars did not have many rights. We were kept in camps and our kids could not go to school. But, they still welcomed us. (Samire)

Samire’s juxtaposition of discrimination and denial of rights with being welcomed hints at the efforts that participants make to affirm their belief that migration necessarily leads to a better life. Similarly, Minire explains that her family faced difficulties while in asylum, but their belief that migration leads to opportunities enabled them to hope for a better future. This again was contrasted with the lack of hope in Kosova:

We suffered a lot. We did not have a good life there, but at least we had hope. Every minute, every day, we hoped for something better. We thought that things would get better. How can we hope here? We are not employed. Do not have a job. Nothing. No house. What kind of hope do we have here? This is really bad.

Minire illustrates that despite facing various challenges, her belief that EU countries offer a better life remains a source of continued hope for her. Other participants rationalized the difficulties they faced while in asylum by saying that “you forget about the struggle, when

everything turns out well” (Sadije) and “if we could have done something to stay, things would be different” (Xhafer). These statements suggest that despite the challenges they faced, participants are both influenced by and perpetuate hegemonic discourses which depict EU countries as superior and worth the migration challenges they faced if the end goal is achieved.

Equating migration with a better life hinders participants’ ability to imagine a future in Kosova because even in light of conflicting evidence about the possibilities that migration offers, participants prefer migration to staying in Kosova:

If I had a future here, Kosova is great. There is no other place better than your own country. No one knows you better than your own people do. You can still go out with people, have a chat and overcome whatever challenges together. You came to talk with me for example, and it makes me feel like someone’s listening. (Drita, emphasis added)

Drita’s statement illustrates the importance of Kosova as her homeland and points to the tensions that participants had to navigate when making the decision to leave. That is, while the harsh socioeconomic conditions pushed them to leave, their emotional attachment to Kosova made it difficult for them to do so. For example, Samire said that “no other country can replace Kosova, our country. Of course, neither Germany nor America, no other place. We hope for a better life here. We always hope”. Xhafer also reflected on what he feels like when he leaves Kosova.

Well, every person likes to live in his/her own country. No other country offers the freedom that your country offers. I was born here. I grew up here. I speak my own language. When I leave Kosova...well, maybe I can learn another language, but I can never learn a foreign language as well as mine. No way. So, you cannot find a better place than home.

Xhafer’s description highlights the many irreplaceable aspects of the participants’ lives in Kosova. Despite their attachment to Kosova as their home, participants sought asylum, due to their internalized belief that migration will give them access to a better life. Additionally, among the most influential factors in their decision to leave was the belief that migration would necessarily lead to a better future for their children.

Migration as an opportunity for a *better future*. Considering that all participants were parents, their belief that migration leads to a better life also meant that they equated migration with a better future for their children. Merita explains that she and her husband “decided to leave to secure a better life for ourselves and our children”. Similarly, Sadije says that she sought

asylum “for the kids, so that they could see something different”. Drita, who was pregnant when she decided to seek asylum, says that “they told me whoever gave birth while in asylum would secure citizenship for their child. That’s the reason I left. I thought, I will get the papers [citizenship] for him. A better future”.

Participants felt responsible for their children’s future and believed that migrating to EU countries would give them access to a good life. They advanced that current conditions in Kosova do not allow them to imagine a future for their children in Kosova. Minire talked about the difficulties of seeking asylum, but justified such difficulties by saying that her status as a parent, which, she pointed out, differed from my own, encouraged her to seek asylum.

Well, you are not a parent yet, but you will find out that you are able to do anything for your child. You feel like you can handle anything when your child is doing well. This is the only thing that I kept thinking about.

In saying that she will do anything for her child, Minire alludes to the difficulty of making the decision to leave. She shared how difficult it was for her to take her son away from school. Merita also teared up and asked me “Do you know how hard it is to take children away from school, away from their teacher? And for what? For a better life.” In asking this question, Merita considers the potential benefits of migration as higher than the emotional cost of removing her child from school and leaving her social support network in Kosova. Similarly, Drita, who was advised to give birth pre-term while in Germany because her life was in danger, refused to do so. She pointed out that putting her son’s life in danger would make her journey pointless because she sought asylum “for my son. For his future. I suffered for this child. I crossed the border to give him a better future”.

One of the main push factors for Drita, as it was for all participants, was to ensure that her child grew up in an EU country.

If it wasn’t for my children, I would not do it. I would not leave my family here. I would not leave my country, my place. I could not leave this house. I don’t want to leave my house. But for my children...I guess...[silence]. (Sadije)

In their interview discussions, participants never questioned whether migration would necessarily lead to a better future for their children. Instead, they talked about it as a worthy sacrifice. Migration was considered as a sacrifice because the participants’ ultimate aim was not to settle in an EU country, but to help their children do so, and then return and live in Kosova.

I always planned to come back because I do not like to live in *gurbet* [migration]. But I did it for the children. I thought I could secure a house for my son...As soon as I saved enough money I would not stay...as soon as I thought that I had enough to build a house in Kosova, I would come back. (Merita)

Like Merita, Kadri explains that he left knowing that migration “would not be easy for me and her [his wife], but our children would be able to achieve something”. In highlighting these tensions, participants provided a nuanced understanding of migration. On one hand, they equate migration with a better future for their children. On the other hand, they discuss the emotional cost of leaving Kosova and the implications of migration for identity issues.

First of all, when I was in Germany my son began to forget our relatives. I used to talk about my brother, [brother's name], to my wife, and my son would ask “Dad, who is [brother's name]?” I told him, he is your uncle. Your uncle! And then he said “I don't know who that is.” My son is young and did not see my brother for a while, so he forgot about him. That was not easy for me. It was not a nice feeling. (Xhafer)

Equating migration with opportunities for a better life and better future led participants to feel torn between two places. Additionally, participants worried that their children's identity formation process no longer emphasized the importance of relatives. Yet, despite their stated attachment to Kosova and their families, participants consistently articulated their desire to migrate. Xhafer, after expressing worry that his son began to lose ties with Kosova, said “...but, if the roads were to open again, I would leave. There is nothing here...it's all going downhill”. Indeed, all participants expressed a desire to find alternative migration channels.

Desire for *remigration*. The participants in the study shared their desire to remigrate, despite the difficulties they faced during their asylum journeys. This is a strong indication of the deeply-held belief that migration leads to opportunities for a better life for participants in the short-term and a better future for their children. The very participant who stated “if I knew that I would suffer so much, I would die in Kosova and not seek asylum”, also later in the interview, was quick to state that if “the road opens again. When it opens, I would go anywhere just to escape from Kosova. Just so I could secure a better future for my son, because neither I nor my husband want to have more kids” (Drita). Similarly, Kadri, said that asylum was “horrible, to tell you the truth. I went for a better life, but if I knew that it would be this way, I would not leave with my kids”. He too expressed the desire to attempt migration through other channels.

See, both of us are unemployed. We do not receive any social assistant. How can we not leave then? Actually, I told her [his wife] today. If I had the means, if I could secure a visa, I would go and work abroad, at least for a year. There is no other way.

Kadri demonstrates that participants continue to see employment abroad as the only solution to their harsh socioeconomic conditions. His wife, Samire, added that “if it is not possible to employ two from one family, it would be good if at least one of them was employed [abroad]. The breadwinner, at least. This would be really good, until Kosova develops”.

Merita also stated that she would remigrate even if that meant leaving her husband in Kosova, pointing to the importance that migration holds for her children’s future.

If someone told me to migrate again, I would do it tomorrow. I now know what it is like, *but* I would leave tomorrow. As soon as I hear of a possibility. If my husband does not want to come, I will leave with my children. (emphasis added)

In this quote Merita explains that although she knows the difficulties of seeking asylum, she is willing to try again. While Merita wanted to remigrate because of her children, Sadije was encouraged to do so by hers. As she explained, they “are constantly thinking about going there. My children do not want to stay here. You have nothing here. You have everything there”.

Xhafer did not limit his talk about the desires to migrate for himself and his children. He also said that everyone in Kosova wants to leave.

Here, not just me, but the entire population, a lot of people, are waiting to see if the borders open again. Everyone would leave right away. We are stuck here today. But with this living standard, if something were to open tomorrow, I would leave. Not that I want to, but I would be happy to do so.

Xhafer illustrates the underlying discourse which paints EU countries as a source of employment and consequently the means to a better life. Participants hold onto this belief by undermining the negative experiences they had during asylum, while at the same time emphasizing the difficulties they face in Kosova. That is, they always construct their image of Kosova against their expectations of, and experiences in the EU.

Discourses of comparison: construction of EU member states. The emotional connection of participants with Kosova as home becomes less important when Kosova is compared to EU member states. Specifically, participants construct these states as more advanced because “there [Germany], first off, you have good schools, medicine, laws,

cleanliness. Everything. There it is very different. You can sleep on asphalt and be ok. I stayed there for eight months and never had to wash my shoes” (Merita). Additionally, participants placed importance on the futures that EU countries can offer for their children.

First of all, they [authorities in EU countries] would ask to enroll your child in kindergarten and they would pay for it. As soon as the kid is 18, he could start an apprenticeship, and he would earn half a salary. Then he would start working full time...in Germany, your kid would work, you would work. I could take him to ballet, the gym, to school. (Drita)

In addition to the expectations they had about life in EU countries, a few of the participants had experiences which reinforced a positive image of the EU. Merita explains that “in Germany I felt like I feel in my own house. I had a shared bathroom. I felt just like I do in my house. Freezer, fridge, two bathrooms...here I only have one bathroom. I had a perfect living standard”.

However, while Merita’s basic needs were met, the same was not true of her other expectations about life in EU countries. In fact, she contradicts Drita’s assertion about access to education in EU countries.

Well, I found out that it is difficult to live in Germany because you have no one to support you. You are alone. You don’t speak the language. They did not take our children to school. When I returned to Kosova, I felt different. This is still my country, so it is better.

Similarly, Drita also talked about the difficulties of living in a different country and asserted that “in Germany, life is so cold [emotionally]. In Switzerland too. No one can tell me differently. There, you work, sleep, and have some vacation. It is difficult there too. You have to pay all of your dues there too”. Also, as parents, participants were not satisfied with EU regulations which are not attentive to the needs of children.

It is very difficult to have children in France. Because with the two salaries that you get...we were given €11.45 a day, about €350 a month. Whether you had two or three children did not matter. But how can you afford to meet the needs of those children if you have three of them?! (Minire)

Participants expressed surprise when they talked about the difficulties they faced while in asylum. Samire, after talking about the discrimination which she faced, asserted “I thought they were modern people. I did not believe it. Simply put, I just did not believe it. But, I saw that they

do not like foreigners”. Expression of such disbelief illustrates the internalization of an exclusive EU, whose member states are constructed as superior in terms of development and modernity.

Participants justified the difficulties they faced and explained that “Life is hard. Don’t think that life is good there [EU]. But at least there you can work, you eat and drink and have everything you need” (Xhafer). Similarly, the fact that Minire’s basic needs were met in camps reinforces her image of EU countries as superior. She asserted that “neither France nor Germany asked for us, but at least they provided shelter for us. They gave us enough to eat and drink. They even paid us”. As Minire suggests, participants often asserted that EU countries were doing them a favor by hosting them. Minire contrasts this favorable image of EU countries with a negative image of Kosova by explaining that “when you [Kosova’s government] ask for us to come back, you have to guarantee support. At least they [EU countries] did not ask for us”. This double standard illustrates the internalization of the idea that EU is always superior and Kosova, when compared against EU standards, is subordinate.

Discourses of comparison: construction of Kosova. When comparing Kosova to EU countries, participants were not hopeful for a future in Kosova. Minire, for example, described Kosova as “a hopeless place” which only allows for a “a hopeless life” and stated that participants prefer EU countries because they “are not sure what will happen, but for right now, they [EU countries] offer something”. Consequently, participants suggested that Kosova would be a better place if it resembled Western countries, especially Germany. As Samire illustrates:

Kosova can learn a lot from Germany regarding laws and the economy. Germany is a strong country. If Kosova were *half as good*, that would be enough. It can really learn from Germany. Maybe not from Italy because they failed. Neither from Hungary. But it could learn from Germany. It could sign an agreement allowing our youth to go work there. (emphasis added)

As Samire’s statement suggests, participants still hope for employment opportunities abroad, pointing to a positive image of EU countries and the inability of Kosova to be like EU member states. Participants cannot envision a solution to their problems in Kosova because it is their assertion that no matter how rapidly Kosova develops, it can never be as developed as Germany.

If...only if Kosova was more like there. Well, at least *half as good* as it is there...but a long time has to pass for Kosova to be like Germany. Maybe if there was no corruption it would be better. Even a German there told us that Kosova is not bad, but these leaders do

not know how to lead it. Corruption is not letting us open our eyes. If we were ever to compare to Germany, I would not ask for anything more. (Merita, emphasis added)

These comparisons suggest that both Kosova's current situation as well as its future development is rated as successful if it resembles EU countries.

Participants cannot imagine their future in Kosova because when compared to EU countries, Kosova is characterized as an unjust county ruled by nepotism and corruption.

In order to finish university, you spend a lot of money. You have to study. You get stressed. And after all of this, you are unemployed. Everyone who already has a post in public administration will secure employment for their relatives. They never ask if you finished university. If you have the right connections, they will take you. That's the problem. (Samire)

Many participants related this situation to my own situation. They warned that my education would not be recognized in Kosova unless I had the right connections.

You, for example, will finish your masters. I think that you are finishing it for nothing. If you have support from someone – I mean one of the big guys, and not your family – you have someone from the state, then you might find employment. Otherwise, you will never get your turn. Those who have not completed an education will get a job before you do.

The ministry should come and offer you a position, but no, they will take someone who is not educated. (Kadri)

The advancement of those who are powerful, because of their connections, worries participants because it oppresses those who have actually made an effort to obtain graduate education, but “who work as shoe shiners, baristas etc.” (Sadije). Emphasizing the importance of their role as a parent, participants are particularly worried about the impact of nepotism on their children's willingness to attend higher education and, therefore, their ultimate futures.

My son is not studying anymore. It is very bad. Here you are not valued based on your work and knowledge. Here, you are valued based on who you know, whether you know someone with a post in the government, whether you have the right last name. Nothing else. (Sadije)

In addition to nepotism, participants are disillusioned by the rate of corruption in Kosova. They blame the developmental stagnation that Kosova is experiencing on the fact that most development aid has gone to the “private pockets of politicians” (Samire).

Do you know how much aid Kosova received? Not just from Americans and Germany, but also from Albanians who live abroad. Do you know how much funds they raised for Albanians [in Kosova]? They gave €100, €1000, just to help us out. But none of the money actually reached us. (Sadije)

Additionally, participants explain how their repatriation experiences and access to assistance has been impacted by corruption in Kosova.

When we were in Germany, we understood a few things. Angela Merkel gave €1 million or €300 000 just so we could return. Just so we could be repatriated. Neither us, nor anyone else saw that money. You probably know from your other interviews how difficult it is to get [social] assistance. (Samire)

Samire's statement demonstrates how Germany's positive image is upheld and lack of assistance is blamed on Kosova's government. In fact, when asked about the assistance she received, Samire explained that "simply put, Germany gives aid to our government, and then they distribute it to citizens".

While constructing Germany as a helper, participants say that they feel "suffocated by theft and corruption [in Kosova]. Every second person is corrupt. They are all working to preserve their personal interests. If we cared about each other, things would not be this way" (Merita). Additionally, participants believe that Kosova is led by "those who are strong and not those who are smart and skilled" (Sadije). This perception of Kosova's leaders contributes to the construction of participants' national identity and emerges as participants compare Kosova Albanians with Westerners.

Discourses of comparison: construction of a national identity. Discourse of comparison have implications for issues of identify, as illustrated by Merita who asserts that "Albanians are backwards because we always worry about each-other's business. He saw me. I saw him. What did he do?" (Merita). While she looks down upon Kosova Albanians for not helping each other, she also explains that she left so that her children could "grow up like they do in Western countries. Not like here. Because we are very backwards. I liked Germany because they would not intervene into one's personal stuff". Interestingly, these discourses frame the same values as modern in Western countries, but primitive in Kosova. That is, while individuality is a desirable trait in Westerners, it is seen as a sign of primitivism when embodied by Kosovars.

In fact, while Westerners are given the benefit of the doubt for being oppressive, Albanians are not. For example, throughout the interviews, comparisons between Kosovar Albanians and Westerners suggest that participants have a negative image of their national identity. Sadije states that “Albanians do not know anything. We are used to suffering and we do not know how to ask for what’s good”. Merita was encouraged by Albanian diaspora members to seek asylum but then could not get in touch with them once she reached Germany, and concluded that “Albanians, I tell you, do not want to know about you as soon as they achieve something in life”.

In contrast to a generalized Albanian identity, Westerners who discriminated against participants were depicted as different from the stereotypical Westerner. Drita explains that while Albanian authorities whom she approached for support would “scoff at her and say ‘get out of my way’, Germans at least were nice and welcoming”. However, later in the interview Drita explained how a German family took advantage of her husband’s skills and then disappeared without paying him for his work. She was furious and stated that “Albanians are not half as mean as Germans are!” and that Germans “will suck your soul before they give you any money”. Nonetheless, she still rationalized this behaviour: “Germans in other parts of Germany are very polite. They would take care of my son” (Drita). This illustrates that even when participants faced discrimination, they found a way to justify Westerners for behaving as they did. As such, while the Albanian identity is constructed as primitive and static, the participants’ perception of Western identity is fluid, and allows participants to maintain the belief that Westerners are better and more advanced than Albanians.

A further illustration of the inferiority that participants feel when compared to Westerners occurs in the resemblance they draw in shared acts of injustice.

A security worker in camps spoke German. I think he liked some of the girls in camp, so he would allow them to skip the line. He was not able to break the law, but he still did what he could to bend it. Everywhere you go, people will help you only if they know you. Networks always pay off. If you are not part of his family, you will be left aside. This exists in Germany as well! I did not believe it, but that’s what it is. In Italy also. (Samire)

Samire’s reluctance to believe that Germans would bend the law like Albanians do highlights the belief in the moral superiority of Westerners. An already established image of Westerners, in fact, led participants to believe that foreigners could solve the problems that Kosova deals with.

If I was asked, I would bring a German here. Or an American...to become president of our country. They will put us on the right track because we are not in the right track right now. That's what I would ask for. (Sadije)

When I inquired about the skills that a foreigner would have that local authorities did not, Sadije explained that a foreigner “knows everything. He only has to make Kosova like his own country. Even if he makes Kosova one quarter of his country, not 100%. We just want justice, nothing more”. Nonetheless, when asked about EULEX and UNMIK, which are Western-based organizations, Sadije contradicts herself.

[EULEX] is very suspicious. I watch the news, and I think that they are also part of it now. They are not very nice. Because this stuff [rule of law] should have been done by now. Do you know how much funding has come into Kosova?

Similarly, Kadri stated that “neither EULEX nor UNMIK have been helpful” and Samire criticized EULEX for doing the opposite of implementing rule of law.

They were also caught with illegal activities. Because of something that they did, EULEX members are now being arrested. We do not trust them anymore. Not at all. We have a negative image of them now. (Samire)

Participants were disillusioned with EULEX and the current government. As a solution, one participant suggested that Kosova can only move forward if “the government leaders change. If young leaders are given a chance, maybe they will be able to achieve something” (Merita). Participants identified that in its current state, Kosova has not been able to provide for returnees, and they expressed feeling deceived by government leaders who promised to offer repatriation assistance, but have not yet done so.

Discourses of deception. Participants, even months after coming back to Kosova, mourn their return and assert that Kosovar leaders deceived them into coming back. Importantly, the inability of participants to stay in EU countries contributes to the ‘exclusive EU’ mindset. That is, because they were not able to achieve their migration goals, they blame the Kosovar government for lack of repatriation assistance, while legitimizing the forced return imposed on them by EU countries. In describing her return, Drita teared up and complained: “...and they still returned us in the end. I wish I could have at least secured a future for my son there. But they returned us. They did not care at all”. Participants expressed dissatisfaction with their return, and described feeling deceived into coming back to Kosova.

They told us if you do not return, you will lose all of your rights in Kosova. If I knew that I would be treated like I have been, I would not have returned. I would have not decided. I could have at least postponed the return. I would have at least received that stipend. Here I have nothing. (Minire)

Merita and her family were informed that their asylum application would not be processed for another six months, so they could continue staying in asylum camps. However, they were forcefully returned the following day.

My family came to pick me up at the airport, no one else. They were surprised that I came back because I had told them that they extended my asylum stay. But they [German authorities] deceived us, and returned us the next morning. (Merita)

In addition to being forcefully returned, the experiences of participants suggest that they were coerced into signing voluntary repatriation forms. When talking about her family's return, Minire explained: "they told me, you either return willingly or by force. There are only these two options, but you can still decide. You will return either way, because your government asked for you". According to Minire's narrative, the authorities led her to believe that she had a choice of returning or staying, but in reality her decision was limited to returning voluntarily or forcefully. In response, Minire's husband signed a voluntary return form, but his decision to sign it was not voluntary. He told authorities in Germany that "he agrees to sign voluntarily, but only because this is mandatory", pointing to the forced nature of his return.

Participants felt deceived into returning because they believed that, had they stayed in the EU, their lives would have been better. This again affirms their construction of Kosova as inferior to EU countries. Indeed, despite being coerced and deceived into returning, participants continue to hold a positive image of EU countries and blame the Kosovar government for requesting their return.

To come and say return my people, when you are not able to take care of them! It would have been better to say Kosova is not ready. Please keep my people until we are ready. They should have done that, instead of asking for us...and now we keep knocking on doors that never open. (Drita)

Participants in the study voiced their anger that Kosovar leaders went to Berlin and asked for the return of Kosovars with the promise that they would offer the necessary supports. Merita explains that "Thaçi [Kosova's president] and Isa [Kosova's prime minister] were in Germany in

June and signed a form saying that all of us had to be returned to Kosova. So they returned us”. Mustafa’s promise that Kosova would offer the necessary assistance for returnees was interpreted as the critical element which led EU authorities to reject asylum applications.

In fact, asylum authorities in Germany perpetuated discourses which put the responsibility of return on the Kosovar government in order to convince and/or coerce participants to sign voluntary repatriation forms. For example, Minire stated that when her husband complained that returning would be difficult because he no longer owned a house in Kosova, the asylum officer reportedly advised him: “you just need to return. Your country will meet all of your needs”. Similarly, Drita explained that asylum officers told her that “Kosova is an independent country. Your leaders said that there will be jobs for you. You will have everything there. They are asking for you to return”.

The discursive tendency to hold Kosova’s government accountable for asylum rejection, while justifying the forced return imposed by EU countries showcases the internalized ideal that no matter what EU countries do, they continue to be better than Kosova. That is, EU countries are justified for their behaviour because their superiority gives them legitimacy. An exception to this was Samire, the only participant to address the Kosova-EU power dynamics, who explained that individual asylum seekers were the only ones who lost in the process. She elaborated that “other countries benefited from this [wave of migration]. Germany was given funds to host all asylum seekers. Kosova also received funds [for our return]. The citizen is the only one who lost in all of this”. Samire assigns responsibility to both Germany and Kosova for the forced return of rejected asylum seekers. In contrast, other participants emphasized the lack of support they have received from Kosova’s government, but did not problematize EU’s decision to forcefully return them.

This discourse, as well as the participants’ experiences since their return reinforces the negative image of Kosova:

As soon as you arrived at the airport [in Prishtina], you noticed that what they said was not true. There and then. As soon as we got out, because they said they would come to greet us and that we would have everything we needed. There, you realized that it was just going downhill from here on. (Minire)

Support was not offered by the authorities in Kosova to assist in re-integration. Participants stated that they felt cheated into coming back and wondered why “government leaders asked for

us to come back, if they are not doing anything to help?!” (Merita). Participants’ repatriation is especially hindered by lack of access to the financial assistance that they were promised. Kadri explained that municipal offices “told us, there is nothing for you here. And so we had to return. They mentioned a small business grant of €3000 that we can apply for, but nothing has come of that either”. Further, Sadije asserted, in an angry tone that a municipality officer told her ““Madam, we will help whoever returned in 2016. Those who returned during 2015 we cannot help’. So, who should help those of us who returned during 2015? Who? There is no one to help us”. Others also talked about the lack of emotional support and the negative impact it has on their reintegration journeys:

No one came to ask if we need anything. We just returned. Do we need anything? As migrants, we have needs...but nothing. Nothing at all. I wish they had just come to ask if we needed anything, even if they did not do anything for us...just to ask. (Merita)

As a result of these experiences, many participants got angry during the interview and had questions for Kosova’s leaders:

YEEEESSSS. Come back [they said]. When we came back, it would have been good for Isa Mustafa to be there. Because he kept telling us to come back. Where is he today?! Does he even care about anything?! He says pay the electricity bills. Pay hydro bills. Where do I get such money? (Sadije)

In fact, participants are also dissatisfied with the government because there is a general sense among them that Kosova’s government indirectly encouraged migration by opening its borders. Participants were convinced that this mass exodus “was part of the politics in Kosova. All of this. How did people leave? All Kosova politics” (Kadri) and that “this was some sort of trap created by our politicians. Because we could not have crossed the borders so easily otherwise. Both Albanians and Serbians allowed us to cross the border. Why did they?” (Merita). Participants hint at the dominant discourse which shaped their decision to leave by stating that Kosova “made a deal with Hungary and Austria, just so its people would leave, wander, and see something different” (Samire). Highlighting that migration allows them to see something different illustrates the divisions that participants see between Kosova and the rest of Europe and that they desire to see *the other*.

Indeed, most participants stated that their decision to leave was made in a rush, and without taking into consideration the challenges of illegal migration:

I did not imagine that it would be this way. If I had known, I would not have made my children suffer. We had to go through god-knows-what roads. What if something bad happened? We were illegal migrants, so no one would take responsibility for us. I told you, I left the house as if I was going to visit my uncle. I did not imagine it would be this way. My relatives took me to the bus station with three or four cars, but I knew nothing. When we arrived at the border the Kosova Police asked us “where are you going? Do you know that you cannot stay there for more than three months?”. One of the Albanians who was with us told him “we’re going to drink a coffee in Germany” (Merita).

Due to the difficult experiences which they had, participants believe that “this journey of going there and coming back had an aim that is still unknown. Our people were done wrong [by the government]” (Minire).

While the government did not keep its promise for repatriation assistance, participants’ families provided support for them. Kadri, for example, asserted that “only family members showed up to pick us up at the airport. No one from the government, nor the municipality came”. Additionally, Drita, whose rent is currently covered by her father, emphasized the key role that her family played in helping her re-integrate by saying that “if it weren’t for my family I, I would have killed myself when I first returned. There was nothing else for me to do...[cries]. But then I think of my son, and I move along”. In acknowledging her parents’ help, Drita also highlights that her role as a parent is a source of hope for her during the re-integration process.

Interestingly, participants give special importance to the action that Kosova’s government took in order to facilitate the repatriation of participants’ children. Precisely, participants noted their satisfaction with the decision of the Ministry of Education to allow all returnee children to continue school without having to repeat the semester they missed. This was a major relief for parents in the study. Minire, who returned in June, 2015 explains that she worried throughout the summer about her son’s education and whether he would be allowed to continue his schooling with the same teacher:

When I came back, I kept wondering what will happen. For three entire months, I wondered “will they admit him or not?” What will happen. I was really worried about this. A lot. But my sons’ teacher was really nice. We were in contact with her even when we were there [Germany], through Viber [web-based communication] and such apps. (Minire)

Similarly, Merita is thankful that her children did not fall behind their classmates because she believes that going back to their circle of friends made it easier for her children to reintegrate:

I thank God for not taking away all of the knowledge that they had already gained. They [her children] returned in those same classes that they left, with the same friends. I was really happy that they went back to their friends, and their teacher. When I returned, I used to worry that my children would fall behind their friends.

Even though the Ministry made the decision to allow returnee children to continue their education with their classmates, teachers were a key factor in helping children catch up with the lessons they had missed:

I swear to God, the school...the teacher supported my son as much as she could. She gave him a few books and a few notebooks, I think. She did not ask for money. And she always kept him close to her, so that he could adapt quicker to the class. Compared to what he was like, he is better now, and does not escape from school. (Xhafer)

Upon discussing the support they received from teachers, participants also offered their recommendations for what else can be done to facilitate their reintegration.

Participant recommendations. Participants identified a number of factors that would assist in repatriation, including employment, shelter, and change in government structures. All participants highlighted their need for employment and, when asked, recommended that securing employment for returnees would be most helpful for their reintegration:

I only want a job, a job that is guaranteed to pay me. That is all I expect from the government. Nothing else. If they find me employment; If they secure me a job; If I have a somewhat sizable salary, I will make things work. Slowly, I will make ends meet and not go to the government to say I want more. Employment is missing here, and that's why people are suffering. (Xhafer)

Participants requested stable employment, because many of them struggled with precarious employment before they left and continue to face similar challenges upon return:

[I would ask] for either my husband or I to have a monthly salary. We just want to know that we will work all month and then be paid for that work. He [her husband] works at the local farmer's market, but he is not regular there. When it is cold, he does not go. When the weather is warmer, then he will go. That is not a job – you work two days and then

you do not work for the rest of the week. When you have a monthly salary...[looks at her children and is silent]. (Merita)

Participant recommendations for more employment opportunities took into consideration Kosova's high unemployment rate. They recommended that in order to give more people an opportunity for employment, Kosova's government has to be mindful of how public sector jobs are allocated:

You, for example, might have five members in your family, and you receive five salaries from the government. Why should you, for example, receive five salaries from the public sector, while we do not receive any? They should organize things so that every family gets a salary, and not allow five members of the same family to be employed by the government. What should the rest of us do? They need to assess the situation and see who needs help. But no one pays attention to that. (Kadri)

Kadri hints at the influence of nepotism in securing a job in the public sector by highlighting that some families have multiple members employed in this sector, while others have none. In addition to employment, participants also talked about the importance of shelter:

First of all, you need shelter. You [the government] asked for us. Then employment, find jobs for us. You asked for us. Those who left and returned needed everything. They returned because you asked for them. There were people who were 100 percent ready to work. They told us there would be jobs, but there are no jobs. This is really unfair.

(Minire)

The constant reference to "you asked for us" alludes to the unmet expectations of participants upon return. Further, the participants' dissatisfaction with the current government leads to their recommendation that in order for the repatriation process to improve, there needs to be a change in government leaders:

These leaders need to be removed, so that young leaders can take over. As long as these leaders are here, it will be difficult to change. It is a huge problem because they have captured the state and they won't let go. They are too attached to their positions. They lead luxurious lives and do not think about anyone else. If the government were to change, maybe something will improve. (Merita)

The specific participant recommendations for employment and shelter, as well as their suggestion that current government leaders need to change, points out that structural changes are

needed in Kosova. These recommendations will be further discussed and contextualized in the next chapter. For now, it is important to recognize that participants, as experts of repatriation, offer recommendations which need to be taken into necessary consideration.

Conclusion

In summary, these findings suggest that participants use discourses of comparison, discourses of opportunities which equate migration with a better life and a better future, and discourses of deception, in order to assign meaning to their experiences of asylum. In doing so, they give insight into dominant discourses which perpetuate a hierarchy with the EU on top and construct Kosova as inferior to the EU, as well as depict Kosova Albanians as more primitive than Westerners. Participants are not merely influenced by such discourses, but are active agents of using and maintaining them, as demonstrated by their tendency to justify the discrimination which they faced in EU countries as well as their desire to remigrate.

Importantly, similar discourses, which exalt the EU, also appear in the Strategy. Comparisons between discourses used in the Strategy and those used by participants suggest that they both contribute to the conceptualization of an exclusive EU. Nonetheless, there are points where participants' beliefs and the views expressed in the Strategy diverge. At these points, participants create alternative narratives of repatriation as a consequence of the lived experience which do not align with the expectations outlined in the Strategy. The findings from both the Strategy and the interviews will be further integrated in the next chapter, which also connects them to existing literature on repatriation.

Chapter Five: Discussion

In this chapter, I go beyond my separate analysis of the interview transcripts and the Strategy, and use CDA to direct my attention to the intertextual and interdiscursive relationship between the two. I also account for the historical knowledges which inform the discursive practices presented in both texts (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 2010; Wodak, 2009; Wodak, 2011). Specifically, DHA assisted me in recognizing that “meanings are shaped by the historical and sociopolitical conditions in which texts are produced and received” and in doing so, it provided me with “a framework for looking at latent power dynamics, as it considers knowledge about historical, intertextual sources of social agents and the background of the social and political fields within which discursive events are embedded” (Angermuller, Maingueneau, & Wodak, 2014, p. 319 - 320).

As DHA provided me with a framework to investigate the “broader sociopolitical and historical context, which the discursive practices are embedded in and related to” (Wodak, 2009, p. 587), in this chapter, I will provide information about the history of the relationship between Kosova and the EU. I have chosen to focus on this specific relationship because the Strategy is guided by EU recommendations and participants sought asylum in EU countries. This is not to say that other aspects of Kosova’s history are not relevant for the analysis of the dominant discourses discussed here, but the Kosova – EU relationship is most critical because of the influence that the EU has on the drafting of the Strategy as well as the experiences of rejected asylum seekers. Moreover, exploring how the Kosova-EU relationship has developed throughout the past two decades facilitates my goal of addressing the impact of the Global North-South power imbalance in the repatriation process.

In summary, my aim in this Chapter is not merely to compare interview and Strategy findings, but also to provide background information to render visible the structures of power that impact and are perpetuated by the discourses used in both texts. This contextualized and critical approach to my findings will help to explicate how discourse “processes and relations are shaped by relations of power, how the dialectics of discourse figures in the constitution and consolidation of forms of social life which lead to and perpetuate injustices and inequalities and are detrimental to the well-being” (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 2010, p. 1215) of rejected asylum seekers. Specifically, both DHA and postcolonial theories directed my attention to what the

dominant discourse demonstrates about the impact of global and local power dynamics on the lived experiences of rejected asylum seekers.

Before integrating my findings, it is important to recognize that within CDA “...every explicit and systematic analysis of a text or discourse will always entail an interpretative ‘leap’ when reconciling the analyses of the text and context” (Wodak, 2011, p. 630). As such, I do not assume a neutral role as a researcher, but integrate reflexivity throughout the chapter in order to remain transparent about the influence of my own ideological direction and experiences in interpreting these findings. I will also connect my findings to existing literature and comment on how these findings contribute to an understanding of repatriation policies, both in Kosova and globally. Lastly, I will discuss the implications of my findings for social work theory, practice and education.

Connecting Strategy and Interview Findings

Building on Strategy and interview findings, I argue that the repatriation process and the identity of study participants are influenced by an overarching discourse which constructs the EU as ‘exclusive’. This discourse has colonial undertones because it upholds the Global North superiority, while delegitimizing local Albanian values. Importantly, this discourse has been created and maintained by several factors throughout Kosova’s history and is now internalized and reinforced by all stakeholders in the repatriation process, including rejected asylum seekers themselves. Emergence and maintenance of this dominant discourse is done through 1) using discourses of comparison to legitimize a hegemonic Kosova-EU hierarchy; 2) limiting Kosova’s migration policies and state-building process to established Western models of development; and 3) equating migration with opportunities for professional development, employment, quality education, and in general a better standard of living.

While both texts are influenced and contribute to this overarching discourse, however, there are points where participants and the Strategy diverge in their discussion of the repatriation process. Precisely, while the Strategy asserts that Kosova is working towards ensuring sustainability of return, participants blame Kosova’s government for deceiving them into returning and not offering the promised repatriation assistance. Furthermore, while the Strategy refers merely to repatriated people in their entirety and does not provide information about migration push factors, participants identify specific push factors and distinguish between several sub-groups of repatriated peoples. This divergence illustrates the participants’ agency and use of

their voices to offer alternative narratives of the repatriation process and challenge mainstream narratives which deny them basic rights.

My integration of findings and what they imply about the power structure in Kosova will be guided by Fairclough's (2005) suggestion that "the critical interest of CDA focuses, in particular, on four general objects of research: the emergence, hegemony, recontextualization, and operationalization of discourses" (as cited in Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 2010, p. 1215). That is, I chose to address these four aspects because each helps to contextualize the 'EU is exclusive' dominant discourse, therefore aligning with DHA principles. First, looking at the emergence of dominant discourses outlines the social process used to create dominant discourses and identifies key players involved in this process. Second, an analysis of the hegemony of discourse illustrate how the 'exclusive EU' discourse is used to maintain social inequalities and unbalanced power relations which marginalize rejected asylum seekers. Third, recontextualization of a discourse points to its dominance because its power is "operationalized, 'put into practice', dialectically transformed into new ways of acting and interacting, new identities, new material realities" (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 2010, p. 1216). Lastly, looking at how discourses are operationalized helps to understand language "as an element of the social process which is dialectically related to others" and calls for researchers to "...keep a constant analytical focus not just upon discourse as such, but on *relations between discursive and other social elements*" (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 2010, p. 1214-5, emphasis in original). Therefore, as I integrate interview and Strategy findings, I will also analyze sub-discourses emerging in both texts using these four aspects of discourse – emergence, hegemony, recontextualization and operationalization - though not always in the same order.

Discourses of comparison. Both the Strategy and participants use discourses of comparison which legitimize an EU-Kosova hierarchy by constructing the EU as 'exclusive' and 'superior'. The Strategy does so by portraying Kosova as a country which is actively working to meet EU standards. The central place that Kosova's commitment to an EU future has in the Strategy does not only imply that EU standards are *better*, but also demonstrates the use of othering discourses. Precisely, relying on 'here and there' discourses, the Strategy depicts Kosova [here] as inferior to the EU [there] because Kosova has not been able to meet EU standards and, therefore, is in need of its guidance.

Participants are also motivated through discourses of comparison between ‘here and there’, which construct the EU as more advanced in terms of economic, educational, and social opportunities. They engage with discourses which portray EU countries as more advanced by emphasizing that Germany welcomed them as asylum seekers, and gave Kosova funds to facilitate their return. Using discourses of comparison, participants explain that EU countries met their basic needs even though they were illegal migrants, while Kosova cannot provide for them as its citizens. These comparisons then lead participants to highlight Kosova’s inferiority by asserting that Kosova could learn from EU countries, generally, and Germany, more specifically.

Grounded in postcolonial theory, I argue that the discourses of comparison identified in the Strategy and the interviews are a manifestation of the colonial nature of the Kosova-EU relationship. Discourses which exalt Western countries started to emerge on March 24th, 1999, when, for the first time in its history NATO started an air strike campaign against former Yugoslavia (Mulaj, 2008). The United Nations Security Council approved NATO’s military intervention due to their concern for “the excessive and indiscriminate use of force by Serbian security forces and the Yugoslav Army which have resulted in numerous civilian casualties and...the displacement of over 230,000 persons from their homes” (United Nations Security Council, 1998, p. 1). This military intervention was justified on the premise that the ethnic cleansing of Albanians by the Yugoslav Army violated human rights and imposed an ethical requirement for a military intervention (Uberti, 2013). The decision to intervene created a generalized construction of Westerners as saviours and served to legitimize the power they exerted over the local population.

This use of human rights discourses has a hegemonic nature because it highlights the moral prowess of the international community, while de-emphasizing the fact that “relying solely on air power, NATO did not want to sacrifice the life of a single soldier, even if ‘ethnic cleansing’ was taking place on the ground” (Ingimundarson, 2007, p. 105). Chouliaraki and Fairclough (2010) explain that discourses can perpetuate hegemony by focusing on “particular aspects of the social process that become relatively recurrent and enduring and which necessarily simplify and condense complex realities, include certain aspects of them but not others, and focalize certain aspects whilst marginalizing others” (p. 1215). Further, postcolonial theory holds that hegemony is the power of the ruling class to exert economic and political control, as well as use its control over the media and education to present their interest as the interest of all classes

(Loomba, 2015). Reflecting such colonial and hegemonic practices, NATO's intervention disregarded the fact that its reluctance to send ground troops placed a higher value on the life of a Western soldier than the lives of Albanians who were being killed. In doing so, NATO sent the inherent message that the lives of Kosova Albanians are not as worthy as those of Westerners. Relying on this information, Lemay–Hebert (2011) argues that the NATO intervention did not save Kosova, but instead “set the stage for a policy of imposing the international administration's authority in Kosovo [sic]” (p. 199).

Indeed, an analysis of the EU's current involvement in Kosova suggests that human rights discourses are used to justify EU presence in Kosova and uphold their saviour status. Specifically, the European External Action Service (EEAS, 2017) website depicts EU as an integral part of Kosova's state-building efforts and the largest donor to Kosova's post-war reconstruction and the development of stable institutions. Currently, the EU is present in Kosova as EULEX, which is “the largest civilian mission ever launched under the European Security and Defence Policy” and whose official “central aim is to assist and support the Kosovo [sic] authorities in the rule of law area, specifically in the police, judiciary and customs” (EEAS, 2017, n. p.). In addition to EULEX, the EU is present in Kosova through the EU Office in Prishtina:

The European Union Office in Kosovo [sic] plays a pivotal role in implementing the EU agenda in the territory, especially the promotion of *European norms*. The Office ensures permanent political and technical dialogue between Kosovo [sic] and the EU institutions. The EUSR offers advice and support to the Government of Kosovo [sic], coordinates the EU presence, and *promotes human rights and fundamental freedoms*. (EEAS, 2017, n. p., emphasis added)

The EU presence in Kosova is thus justified through a discourse which deems human rights to be “both natural and universal, leading to the belief that it is the duty of the world's powerful to guarantee that they are respected everywhere” (Carton, 2008, p. 6). That is, while claiming to ensure the respect of human rights in Kosova, the EU intervention has promoted the so called European norms. Such practices allow the EU to impose dominant Global North practices on Kosova without regard to how context impacts human rights practices locally. Further, using human rights discourses to justify the EU presence in Kosova constructs Westerners as experts of human rights, thus allocating them important decision-making powers.

To this end, although EULEX's aim has been to assist the capacity building of local institutions, it still retains "a number of limited executive powers" (EEAS, 2017, n. p.), even after nine years of operations in Kosova. The EEAS website states that "EULEX judges and prosecutors adjudicate and prosecute constitutional, civil justice (property disputes and privatisation matters), and selected highly sensitive criminal cases (war crimes, terrorism, inter-ethnic crimes, organised crime and corruption) both exclusively and jointly with the Kosovo [sic] counterpart" (EULEX, 2017, n. p.). In addition, international personnel in Kosova have immunity "from the laws they help to draft" (Uberti, 2013, p. 282). Such practices are justified on the premise that international personnel is facilitating Kosova's EU integration path.

I argue that reserving key positions in Kosova's institutions for EU personnel, as well as allowing them to be above the law is an illustration of the hegemony of discourse used to construct the EU. Giving the EU command of the justice system highlights the assumed objectivity of international personnel and depicts locals as inferior for being subjective and not having the necessary skills to lead some of the most important institutions in Kosova. These are neo-colonial practices because they concentrate power in one institution – namely EULEX – and do the opposite of empowering the local population.

To this end, while the formal international administration of Kosova came to an end in February, 2008, when Kosova declared its independence, the influence of the international community in Kosova has continued. Such influence is apparent in how both the Strategy and interviews recontextualize the image of Westerners as saviors. Namely, the Strategy gives special recognition to Western-based organizations and participants attribute repatriation assistance to EU countries. On a more personal level, participants also linked my interest in their experiences with the saviour image because they believed that my Western education was the main reason I chose to focus on such a marginalized group. Furthermore, participants were under the impression that because I am connected with a Western institution I might be able to help them out. Indeed, I had to make sure that participants were not mislead into thinking that participation in this research would increase their chances of assistance. Through this experience, I realized that participants continue to see Westerners as saviours and justify their presence in Kosova as a manifestation of their good will and their dedication to Kosova's progress and the well-being of its citizens.

The saviour image of Westerners perpetuates hegemonic practices because by placing Westerners on a metaphoric pedestal, participants must necessarily construct Kosova's leader as corrupt and unfit for their positions. In fact, I have a similar perception of Kosova's current leaders, but my opinion differs from those of participants in an important aspect. Contrary to the saviour image that participants perpetuate, I argue that the international community in Kosova has contributed to the rise of a corrupt political elite which allows them to maintain power over locals. I hold such a perception because I align with postcolonial authors, such as Fannon (1963) who explains how the colonizer impacts local intellectuals:

The colonialist bourgeoisie, in its narcissistic dialogue, expounded by the members of its universities, had in fact deeply implanted in the minds of the colonized intellectual that the essential qualities remain eternal in spite of all the blunders men may make: the essential qualities of the West, of course. The native intellectual accepted the cogency of these ideas, and deep down in his brain you could always find a vigilant sentinel ready to defend the Greco-Latin pedestal. (p. 45)

These relations between the colonized and the colonizer, much like the EU-Kosova relationship, assure that "the governing race is first and foremost those who come from elsewhere, those who are unlike the original inhabitants, 'the others'" (Fannon, 1963, p. 40). As documented in the findings chapter, Westerners are perceived as experts and identified as key stakeholders in the implementation of the Repatriation process. Importantly, Western expertise is exalted without any critical engagement with EU's presence in Kosova.

In fact, Ingimundarson (2007) analyzed the influence of the EU and UNMIK in Kosova's state-building process and predicted that "to survive politically in an environment dominated by outside players, Thaçi [Kosova's current president] embraced an agenda designed to make him the leader who would bring about Kosova's independence by democratic and peaceful means" (p. 105). Indeed, Thaçi, elected prime minister in 2007, declared Kosova's independence in 2008 and remained prime minister until 2014. In 2016, he was elected Kosova's president, but the election process was irregular; Thaçi failed to secure enough Member of Parliament votes in the first two rounds of voting (BBC, 2016). Thaçi was elected in the third round of voting, which required a simple majority, and took place after several opposition members were suspended from the Parliament for attempting to stop the voting process (Çollaku, 2016). Seeing that Kosova's opposition resists the current approach of the international community in Kosova,

Thaçi's election gave credence to the idea that those who align with Western values are the ones who will have power.

The support that Thaci received adds to Kamugisha's (2007) suggestion that the interests of political elites in developing countries are often similar to the interests of international capitalists. That is, supporting Kosova's current political elite, who are committed to Kosova's EU integration, benefits the EU because it makes it easy for them to further their agenda. As such, the EU support Kosova's current leaders, regardless of their skills and abilities. Specifically, what matters most for the EU is whether it can garner support from the local political elite, and not whether this elite is adequately prepared to lead Kosova's state-building process. As a result, current leaders can get away with state capture practices (such as corruption and nepotism) as long as they approve of EU recommendations. The support that the EU gives to the local elite, and vice-versa, perpetuates a vicious cycle which maintains the status quo, and marginalizes social groups such as rejected asylum seekers.

In fact, an illustration of the efforts that the EU and Kosova's political elite have put towards maintaining their expert and leadership positions, respectively, is their approach to Kosova's recent asylum seeking trends. Kosovars have been applying for asylum to EU countries in large number since 2013, but attention was not brought to this population until it presented a large enough problem for the EU. Precisely, Kosovar asylum seekers increased almost fourfold from 2013-2015 (20,230 in 2013, 37,895 in 2014, and 72,690 in 2015) (EuroStat, 2017). Even though the number of asylum seekers escalated significantly in 2015, the numbers in two preceding years were not insubstantial. The fact that at least 20,000 Kosovars sought asylum during these years indicates that there are substantial push and pull factors that lead them to do so. Nonetheless, neither local nor international leaders in Kosova brought attention to the large number of migrants until the bus station in Prishtina was overflowing with asylum seekers and the media raised concern about the 2015 mass exodus (Alexander, 2015; Ott, 2015).

I argue that both the international presence in Kosova, be it UNMIK or EULEX, and Kosova's current political elite, purposefully failed to officially recognize the issues that pushed people to leave. Precisely because doing so would reveal that Kosova's state-building efforts have not been successful, this conclusion would necessarily reflect badly on both groups. That is, if the state building process in Kosova had been as successful as EU Progress reports suggest (European Commission, 2016), presumably Kosovar-Albanians would not have sought asylum in

such large numbers. Indeed, study participants highlighted the difficulties of deciding to leave their homes and stated that they left because they were not able to secure stable employment in Kosova. However, both the EU and political leaders have silenced these voices because acknowledging their plea would threaten the power both hold in Kosova by revealing that the so-called state-building process in Kosova has been “reduced to adopting strings of ‘European’ standards, and writing self-congratulatory donor reports” (Uberti, 2013, p. 385). Indeed, when the large number of asylum seekers in 2015 forced both the EU and Kosovar leaders to react, the power that EU holds over Kosova became apparent.

As an example of the power that the EU holds over Kosova is precisely the fact that participants blame Kosova’s leaders, not the EU, for forcefully returning them. Such deeply-held beliefs demonstrate the extent to which the ‘EU is exclusive’ discourse is reinforced. However, addressing the circumstances which pushed Kosovar leaders to ask asylum seekers to come back gives insight into how discourses operationalize power. Within the first two months of 2015, approximately 50,000 Kosovars applied for asylum in EU countries (EuroStat, 2017). Despite this sizable number, Kosova’s leaders did not react until the EU threatened that an increase in the number of illegal migrants from Kosova did not reflect well on the country’s development and created barriers in its EU integration path. Upon this threat, Kosova’s leaders went to Berlin and agreed to take back all rejected asylum seekers. On this occasion, Kosova’s Prime Minister Mustafa spoke at the Council of EU integration:

Regardless of the actual migration data in the European Union countries, especially from Kosovo [sic], which do not show particular growth in this year compared to other years, because we have a process that continues for years, the fact of leaving of a great number of our citizens is very concerning for us. We are aware that this may affect the processes of integration and visa liberalization as very important processes for Kosovo [sic].
(Office of the Prime Minister, 2015, n. p.)

Mustafa specified that migration is of concern for Kosova because it affects the EU integration process, without mentioning the well-being of rejected asylum seekers. This echoes the Strategy’s objective to align with EU standards at the expense of meeting returnee needs. The speech emphasized how discourses which reinforce Kosova’s potential EU integration operationalize EU’s power over Kosova. That is, Mustafa focused on the process of EU integration because he responded to EU’s threat and anticipated that his speech will make a

difference in Kosova's EU future. Indeed, CDA offers that dominant discourses, such as the speech given by Mustafa, "are shaped by prior texts that they are 'responding' to and subsequent texts that they 'anticipate'" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 270). Specifically, seeing that Kosova desires something that the EU can offer, allows the EU to threaten with use of sanctions against Kosova in case its government does not fulfill EU expectations.

El-Lahib (2015) argues that the use of sanctions is a neo-colonial practice because it is mostly used to punish countries which oppose Western domination. Indeed, upon EU's threat to the Kosovar leaders, the latter respected their promise to the EU to take back rejected asylum seekers. They did this in the face of breaking the promises they made to asylum seekers. These practices suggest that the discourse of comparison which exalts the EU and limits Kosova's future to the EU have led to the adoption of repatriation as a durable solution, even though participant experiences point to the contrary. The discrepancy between participant needs and Kosova's political interests suggests that the Strategy and the repatriation process in Kosova, much like its entire state-building process, have been limited to Western models of development.

Dominant development approaches to repatriation. By constantly referring to the importance and desirability of EU standards, the Strategy and participants limit the implementation of repatriation and Kosova's overall development to already established Western standards of development. The Strategy and the ensuing repatriation process in Kosova aligns with EU standards. Specifically, the Strategy is built on the assumption that offering returnees a standard of living comparable to that which is available to EU citizens will address their reintegration challenges. Similarly, participants construct EU countries as better because of the opportunities which they offer, and assert that Kosova would be better if it was "half as good" as EU countries.

I argue that the construction of the EU as superior has created institutional and social frames which limit the Strategy's and participants' perspective of what Kosova should aspire to be. Specifically, both would like Kosova to resemble EU countries, regardless of whether such resemblance takes into consideration local needs and realities. The existence of such frames is important because it highlights the importance of conventional knowledge in shaping people's wants, beliefs, and decisions. van Dijk (1977) explains how frames help to organize information in a meaningful way:

Frames are not arbitrary chunks of knowledge. First of all they are knowledge units

organized around a certain concept. But, unlike a set of associations such units contain the essential, the typical and the possible information associated with such a concept. Finally, frames seem to have a more or less *conventional* nature, and thus should specify what in a certain culture is ‘characteristic’ or ‘typical’. (p. 215, emphasis in original)

For example, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the Strategy refers to housing as a right that is enjoyed by citizens of developed countries, and presupposes that such standards will meet the specific needs of returnees. Similarly, participants rely on the idea that if Kosova can resemble EU countries, then it will offer its citizens a better standard of living, even though many of them complained about missing aspects of life which they can only enjoy in Kosova – such as their tight-knit communities and sense of home.

Intertextuality, as discussed in CDA, explains that both texts do not justify their preference for EU standards because the presupposition that EU standards are better than what Kosova offers right now is taken for granted. Such presupposition, Fairclough (1992) argues, “are a way of incorporating the texts of others” where texts is “a more nebulous ‘text’ corresponding to general opinion, what people tend to say, accumulated textual experience” (p. 283). Specifically, both participants and those who drafted the Strategy are impacted by discourses which emerged with the involvement of the EU in Kosova, and which depict the EU as a good example for Kosova to follow.

To better showcase how the EU has limited the creation of the Strategy to Western development approaches, I will briefly describe how the EU request for decentralization has impacted the implementation of the Strategy. The EU has pushed for the decentralization of government responsibilities in Kosova because it considers it as a good means of engaging ethnic minorities, thus facilitating the creation of Kosova into a multi-ethnic society:

Taking into consideration that Kosovo [sic] is in the final stage of supervised independence, the decentralization process is entering into another important, and certainly decisive, phase of implementation, particularly considering the upcoming period of [the] country’s integration into European structures. (Ministry of Local Governance, 2012, p. 2)

Decentralization is a neo-liberal concept which “was declared as a key principle of Ahtisaari Package and taken over by Kosovo [sic] institutions for its implementation” (Ministry of Local Governance, 2012, p. 2). Formally known as the Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosova Status

Settlement, the Ahtisaari Package, signed in 2008, included guiding principles for the creation of Kosova into a multi-ethnic country, including adopting a constitution, creating a new electoral system, and decentralizing government competences (United Nations Security Council, 2007). While a comprehensive analysis of the plan is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is important to highlight that the plan has been key in guiding Kosova's EU integration efforts.

The impact of this plan on the Strategy becomes obvious with the adoption of decentralization as a strategic goal. While the concept of decentralization itself is not problematic, its implementation in Kosova has not been successful (OSCE, 2014). The decentralization foreseen in the Strategy has transferred more responsibilities to municipal offices, but the OSCE (2014) field assessments:

indicate that although the mechanisms are designed to work together to provide effective support for returnees and DPs [displaced peoples] at the local level, in reality this is often not the case. In nine municipalities the Task Force is the only functioning mechanism, either because the MWGR [Municipal Working Groups on Return] is not established or is dysfunctional. (p. 12)

According to participants, the municipal offices which they approached could not offer them assistance, even though leaders of the central government had promised such help. As such, a postcolonial analysis of the Strategy suggests that assuming EU requirements are appropriate for Kosova is a result of a state-building process which has been nothing more than "the creation of political entities accountable to the international community, and in line with dominant economic and social policies" (Carton, 2008, p. 6).

Further, CDA helps us to understand that referring to Western standards as the example that Kosova should follow reflects dominant development discourses which assert that established Western models of development are the sole way towards modernity. For example, the Strategy constructs repatriation as a sustainable solution to migration crisis, yet it also constructs returnees as a burden to Kosova's budget. In doing so, the Strategy points to the tensions of aligning with EU standards, while at the same time, recognizing the challenges that Kosova faces. Ultimately, however, the positive presentation of 'there' and negative construction of Kosova serves to emphasize differences and maintain unbalanced power relations. In fact, this discourse reflects the post-war intervention in Kosova, which has actively sought to maintain a power imbalance by using 'here and there' discourses to highlight EU's superiority.

Upon arriving in Kosova, UNMIK (which included EU personnel) sought to delegitimize existing governance structures and requested the eradication of such structures based on the premise that they belonged “to the terrible years of ‘ethnic hatred’” (Blumi, 2003, p. 216). UN representatives in Kosova claimed that UNMIK was charged with turning Kosova “from virtually nothing to practically everything” (Priest & Graham, 1999, n. p.), thus delegitimizing the structures which existed before the war. Said (1978), who advanced a postcolonial theory of Orientalism, argued that Western texts purposefully construct the Orient as the “traditional” other in order to justify Western domination which, presumably, brings about civilization and modernity that is lacking in non-Western societies. Similarly, in 2004, Javier Solana, the EU’s High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, stigmatized Kosova by calling it “a sick society” (Ingimundarson, 2007, p. 103), thus constructing EU personnel as the physicians who would cure Kosova of its illness. In doing so, the EU uses Kosova as a source of negative characteristics upon which it builds a superior image of itself.

These colonial discourses of ‘here and there’, which were created by the international intervention in Kosova, are internalized by Kosova’s political elite and study participants. Indeed, in addition to contributing to a negative image of Kosova, EU’s agenda has contributed to the marginalization of asylum seekers by shaping their identities. In fact, Ingimundarson (2007) argues that suppression of public discussion about the role that UN and EU have played in Albanian identity formation allows these entities to maintain their power:

The tension between UNMIK and the Kosovar Albanian political class makes it all the more remarkable that both sides have been skirting a key issue: how international power—the drastic political, social and ethnic reordering of Kosovo [sic] from 1999 to 2006—has influenced Albanian identities. UNMIK has set the parameters of governance for now and in the future: the implementation of the so-called standards plan in the fields of governance (democratization), justice (rule of law), the economy (neoliberalism) and human rights (support for minority rights). These standards—which are far too rigorous and ambitious for the poorest region in Europe, and which even developed countries would find difficult to implement—will become the rhetorical, if not material, basis for any deal on the constitutional status of Kosovo [sic]. (p. 114 -115)

Participants construct Albanians as more primitive and less capable than their European counterparts. Indeed, this is the image of Kosova that I held when I left to complete my

education abroad. Leaving Kosova, yet using my studies to understand its development, allowed me to see the colonial nature of the international intervention in Kosova. My positionality - being physically away from Kosova, but constantly studying its development through various frameworks – was crucial for my ability to be knowledgeable of and critical of Kosova's state-building process.

In particular, I became aware of my own sense of inferiority while reading postcolonial theory. I could especially relate to Fannon's (1963) explanation of natives in colonized countries:

The native is declared insensible to ethics; he represents not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values. He is, let us dare to admit, the enemy of values, and in this sense he is the absolute evil. He is the corrosive element, destroying all that comes near him; he is the deforming element, disfiguring all that has to do with beauty or morality; he is the depository of maleficent powers, the unconscious and irretrievable instrument of blind forces. (p. 40)

This apt description, and my efforts to deconstruct my internalization of it, is why I chose a postcolonial framework to guide my study. Until I left Kosova and was not yet introduced to postcolonial theory, I thought that Kosova's post-war development was slow because we did not have appropriate leaders. Now, as I read more about Kosova's situation immediately after the war, I realize that those leaders who valued local approaches were sidelined by the international community (Blumi, 2003; Pula, 2003). This further reinforced the perception that Kosova does not have skilled locals. Reflecting similar notions as my pre-migration beliefs, participants portray Albanians as primitive. For example, they are irritated by relatives and friends who inquire about personal aspects of the participants' lives. Moreover, this construction of the Albanian identity emerges from comparisons with Westerners, who are constructed as individuals who work on their personal goals and do not care about other's business.

I chose to highlight this comparison because, in addition to illustrating the sense of inferiority that participants expressed, it also demonstrates the use of double standards and the existence of a colonial mindset. Specifically, participants view individualism as a sign of modernity and construct Kosova-Albanians as backwards for being intrusive. However, of importance here, although participants idealize individuality in Western countries, they still identify Kosova's collective culture as a key aspect of their lives. For example, participants referred to the importance of the support they receive from their social networks, especially

during their repatriation journeys. As such, participants value individuality when it is associated with Westerners, but they construct individualism as selfishness when it is embodied by Kosova-Albanians. Such tensions illustrate that participants are influenced by a colonial mindset, which is best elaborated by Fannon's (1963) description of the exertion of colonialism:

The colonialist bourgeoisie had hammered into the native's mind the idea of a society of individuals where each person shuts himself up in his own subjectivity, and whose only wealth is individual thought... Brother, sister, friend--these are words outlawed by the colonialist bourgeoisie, because for them my brother is my purse, my friend is part of my scheme for getting on. (p. 47)

Building upon the participants' nuanced discussion of migration, I argue that the repatriation Strategy and its implementation have marginalized individuals partly because of their loyalty to Western repatriation standards. Namely, through adopting EU recommendations on how the repatriation process should pan out, Kosova's government has excluded variations of development approaches which might better address the needs of Kosovar Albanians. For example, local solutions, which build upon already existing support systems such as extended families, can be more responsive to Kosova's cultural and social context and better address the needs of repatriated persons. Nonetheless, I argue that the emergence of local approaches is hindered by the dominant discourses which depict those who are Western-oriented as cultured, whereas those who recognize local values are considered backwards.

As CDA explains, dominant discourses which solely focus on Western development standards also perpetuate colonial practices by limiting the ability of Kosova's citizens to imagine a future other than the one which holds the promise of EU integration. Habermas' (1970) description of language illustrates how the use of language operationalizes power:

Language is a medium of domination and social force. It serves to legitimate relations of organized power. Insofar as the legitimations of power relations, whose institutionalization they make possible, are not articulated, insofar as these express themselves in the legitimations, language is *also* ideological. (p. 287, as cited in Wodak, 2011, emphasis in original).

Indeed, relying on discourses which legitimize EU superiority, study participants suggested that they would live in Kosova if it could offer the opportunities that EU countries offer.

Alternatively, they asserted that it would be ideal if Kosova and the EU signed agreements which

allow Kosova's work force to secure employment in EU countries. Lack of local alternatives offered by participants illustrate the belief that Kosova cannot offer the necessary assistance for them. This belief is internalized by participants, who, despite the difficulties they faced while in asylum, continue to consider remigration as the only solution to their current challenges.

Discourses of opportunity. As the findings chapter suggests, the dominant discourse equates migration with opportunities for a *better life* and *better future*. Participants deliberately stated that they are seeking alternative migration channels of migration. The Strategy, while it officially states that its goal is the sustainable repatriation of returnees, it constructs migration a desirable endeavour and implies that Kosovars cannot access the same quality of services in their country. This discourse is echoed in the speech that Prime Minister Mustafa gave to the Council for EU integration, during which he legitimized Kosovar's desire to migrate:

But, on the other hand, no one can expect from the citizens of Kosovo [sic] to prefer the ghetto in this part of Europe and isolation from the rest of the world, in time of the interdependence of economic development, educational development, health and cultural development, in a globalized world as we like to call it. (Office of the Prime Minister, 2015, n. p.)

Through this statement, Mustafa blames the EU for not granting Kosova visa liberalization and keeping Kosovars isolated. In constructing Kosova as a "ghetto", Mustafa reinforces the EU's ability to restrict Kosovars' movement. Therefore, in framing migration as an opportunity and thus the EU as a desirable, but unreachable other, Mustafa's speech discourages participants from trying to reintegrate.

Looking at their emergence, it becomes obvious that discourses which link migration with opportunities have historical roots for Kosova-Albanians. Migration has been an integral part of Albanians' lives for centuries. During a visit at the National Museum Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeg in Kruja, Albania, I happened upon a note that Jakob de Katalajn sent to King Ferdinand Napoli in 1467. The content of his letter, translated below, made me feel as if I was reading something written about the 2015 mass exodus:

...no one is left [in Albania] and I see this as a bad sign because they have even brought their church bells with them to Brindizi, and the one who finds a mode of transportation to get here is a happy one. Within the span of two days, nine ships arrived here, and not an hour goes by without seeing another ship arrive...Sir, it makes me cry when I see

these miserable and poor people who come here carrying their children, and who are not admitted in your cities and villages, but remain in the streets, naked or not dressed properly. (National Museum George Kastrioti Skanderbeg, 2017)

The concern expressed by Jakob de Katalajn points out that Albanians have historically used migration to escape poverty. Further, migration is so intertwined in the lives of Kosovar Albanian families that there is a saying which wishes each family six sons: "Two to go abroad and work, two to stay home and care for the family, and two to die for the country, fighting for freedom" (Haxhikadrija & Dahinden, 2009, p. 4). This saying suggests that Kosovar-Albanians readily accept migration as part of their life. Indeed, many Kosovar-Albanians are named Mërgim (male) or Mërgime (female), both of which mean migration, as a way of recognizing the influence of migration in their family's lives.

As explained in the literature review chapter, Kosova's recent migration history began in the 1950s and 1960s, when a large number of Kosova-Albanians went to Switzerland, Germany and Austria as guest workers (Kotorri, 2013). These individuals are now part of Kosova's sizable diaspora of at least 800,000 individuals (IOM, 2012). The diaspora is an important social group in Kosova because their remittances amount to around 10% of Kosova's GDP and are the lifeline of many Kosova-Albanian families (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2013). Haxhikadrija and Dahinden (2009) relying on data from the Living Standards Measurement Survey conducted in Kosova, identified a correlation between having a family member who lives abroad and the family's standard of living. They state that "rural households with a migrant family member are more likely than those without a migrant to own a car or a truck (56% v. 37.3%) a refrigerator (72.3% v. 60%) or an electric or gas stove (63.7% v. 48.1%)" (p. 7). In addition to its contribution to the economic state of individual households, Kosova's economy in general is reliant on investments from the diaspora. In fact, "25% of all businesses in Kosova were set up with partial or complete funds generated from work abroad" (Haxhikadrija & Dahinden, 2009, p. 8).

Diaspora expenditures while visiting Kosova, as well as their remittances reinforce the idea that EU countries offer economic opportunities (UNDP, 2013). That is, in addition to meeting their own needs, Diaspora members have enough to send to their families in Kosova. Relying on their knowledge of Diaspora members, many participants expressed the wish to live abroad for a few years and then return to continue their lives in Kosova. Research suggests that

diaspora members who return to Kosova worked abroad on average 7.5 years before they could earn enough to invest in Kosova (Haxhikadrija & Dahinden, 2009). This time-period is longer than the three to four years that participants proposed they needed to work before being able to return to Kosova. This also reinforces the notion that EU countries allow one to earn more is an important pull factor for participants.

Nonetheless, the contribution that Kosova's diaspora has made to Kosova's development is undeniable and the basis of the idea that migration can lead to more opportunities. As such, I am not challenging the notion that migration can lead to opportunities. However, I problematize discourses which continue to equate migration with opportunities because they are recontextualized without taking into consideration how migration trends between Kosova and the EU have changed since 1960s. Specifically, although I agree that migration can offer opportunities for some, as it has done for me, these opportunities are intertwined with one's socio-economic class, educational level, and professional background, among others. Above all, the opportunities that migration offers rely on the needs of the receiving countries. As El-Lahib (2016) has argued in his discussion of Canada's construction as a land of opportunities, there are "tensions around who can access these opportunities and at what cost" (p. 771).

Precisely, migration to EU countries offered employment opportunities for Kosovars in the 1950s and 1960s because these countries needed migrants to fill their labour shortages (Kotorri, 2013; Kovacheva & Grewe, 2015). For those guest workers who migrated to the EU during those decades, migration did indeed lead to economic opportunities because jobs were readily available. However, starting in the 1970s, EU countries stopped recruiting migrants and created restrictive migration policies (Kovacheva & Grewe, 2015). That is, the labour market needs of EU countries have changed since the 1960s, and migration to such countries no longer assures access to employment. However, the belief that migration will necessarily lead to employment and a better life persists.

Discourses which link migration with opportunities remain dominant in Kosova because EU countries offer migration channels which can lead to opportunities, but they only do so occasionally, thus keeping Kosovar-Albanians interested in migration. Specifically, a similar process as that which took place in the 1960s and 1970s is taking place now. The health care sector in Germany is currently "facing labour shortages, both of academics as well as of workers with vocational training" (Kovacheva & Grewe, 2015, p. 7). Among the initiatives undertaken to

address these shortages is that of attracting qualified migrants (Kovacheva & Grewe, 2015). Among the medical staff who are interested in migrating to Germany are Kosova-Albanian physicians and medical students. Nushi (2017), in her article in *Prishtina Insight*, interviewed Kosova-Albanian medicine students and concluded that “an increasing number of health professionals from Kosovo [sic] are finding jobs in Germany, leaving behind an aging sector that lacks specialists” (n. p.). I have also seen the impact of these policies in my own family. My brother and five of my close cousins are currently studying medicine in Kosova and attending German language classes. They hope to continue their residency and specialization years in Germany and none of them consider staying in Kosova once they complete their degrees.

Programs which open migration channels that give interested Kosovar medical personnel the opportunity to work in Germany reinforce the idea that migration leads to opportunities. However, migration leads to opportunities only when Germany, in this case, can benefit from it. On the contrary, migration is denied to the rest of Kosovars who are not even permitted to travel to EU countries, let alone live there. Kosova remains the only country in Europe that has not received visa liberalization and, as a result, its population is the most isolated in Europe. This isolation has contributed to discourses which construct migration as an opportunity for all, without considering how one’s social position and identity categories impact their access to such opportunities. Indeed, such discourse contribute to the marginalization of rejected asylum seekers because they left with the belief that migration would lead to opportunities only to return with even less assets. To this end, El-Lahib’s (2016) analysis of constructing migration as an opportunity is relevant to Kosova’s case and points to how discourses of opportunities maintain hegemony:

In other words, the construction of immigration through opportunity discourses implies that immigrant-sending countries, especially those located in the Global South, lack such opportunities and build on neocolonial discourses that construct the Global North as a better place through a comparison between the North (here) and the South (there).

Canada as a place of opportunity becomes exaggerated/evident only when such a comparison is employed. (p. 771)

Further, the impact of neocolonial discourses which El-Lahib (2016) alludes to are best explained by Fannon (1963), who discusses the role of othering in maintaining a colonial mindset:

The look that the native [in colonized countries] turns on the settler's town is a look of lust, a look of envy; it expresses his dreams of possession--all manner of possession: to sit at the settler's table, to sleep in the settler's bed, with his wife if possible. (p. 39)

As such, offering migration opportunities occasionally and to a limited number of people allows the EU to maintain its superiority because EU countries are the ones who decide when migration can lead to opportunities. Therefore, discourses which equate migration with opportunities are a manifestation of the Global North-South power dynamic, and not merely a reflection of the living conditions in the country of origin. Indeed, connecting these findings to those of previous studies illustrates that repatriation and immigration policies not just in Kosova, but globally, are influenced by global power dynamics.

Connection to Existing Research

My interview findings give insight into the unique challenges that Kosovar rejected asylum seekers face, which Chu et al. (2008) identified. Precisely, my findings suggest asylum seekers are pushed to seek asylum because of lack of access to shelter, employment, and adequate healthcare, as well as identity issues which create tensions between Kosova as the participants' home, and EU as a land of opportunities. In addition to these factors, rejected asylum seekers face unique challenges during their repatriation process due to the forced nature of return and lack of repatriation assistance. When discussing repatriation assistance, the Strategy mentioned the housing, employment, educational and other integration needs of returnees, but also acknowledged that a small country like Kosova cannot handle a mass return. Indeed, participants stated that there was lack of institutional support during their repatriation journeys because they were not greeted at the airport, as is foreseen by the Strategy. Further, they were not able to access the repatriation assistance which was promised to them by Kosova's leaders. The lack of support - especially that which is offered immediately upon return - is detrimental to repatriation because, as previous studies have pointed out, such support reinforces a sense of safety and belonging, thus facilitating the entire reintegration process (Davies et al., 2011; De Bree et al., 2010; Ruben et al., 2009; White, 2014).

My findings also reflect those by Carr (2014) and Davies et al. (2011) who report that returnee health needs are rarely addressed by their countries of origin, especially if the country is dealing with a sudden mass return. Specifically, when discussing the medical needs of returnees, the Strategy states that Kosova might not be able to meet the health needs of returnees.

Moreover, participants, such as Drita and Merita, who received medical treatment in Germany were disappointed with the lack of access to the same services in Kosova. They both reported that they were not able to access the same quality of services in Kosova because they could not afford the high fees of private clinics or pay bribes in the public sector, which have become a normal step in Kosova's healthcare system. Indeed, earlier authors have argued that returnees' well-being is threatened by harsh economic conditions (Carr, 2010; Fu & Vanlandingham, 2010).

Legitimizing past research concerns (Carr, 2014; Stefansson, 2004), study participants asserted that they were not able to access health, social services and employment opportunities because Kosova suffers from a high rate of corruption and nepotism. That is, participants believe that jobs exist, but they are reserved for those who have connections to people in power. These findings support the high rates of corruption documented in Kosova (Transparency International, 2016; The World Bank, 2015) and echo those of previous studies which suggest that corruption and nepotism prevent returnees from accessing employment (Ruben et al., 2009; Setrana & Tonah, 2014; White, 2014).

My research also gives insight into why the many needs of rejected asylum seekers are not addressed. Specifically, the institutional approach to repatriation, as outlined in the Strategy, constructs returnees as a homogeneous group. In doing so it fails to recognize the various and unique needs of rejected asylum seekers. Previous studies, which have mostly analyzed development-focused policies, have also not challenged this homogeneous construction. As such, the voices of rejected asylum seekers and their unique needs have not been identified, let alone addressed (De Bree et al., 2010; Lietaert, 2014; Siriwardhana, 2015). Through comparing Strategy and interview findings and exploring repatriation from two perspectives, I created a space for alternative narratives which take into consideration the well-being of rejected asylum seekers. My findings suggest that while both the Strategy and participants are impacted by and perpetuate the same overarching discourse which construct an exclusive EU and depicts migration as an opportunity, they have different entry points into this discourse. For example, while the Strategy is mostly used to illustrate Kosova's commitment to an EU future, findings from the interviews demonstrate how this commitment contributes to the marginalization of rejected asylum seekers. These findings echo those presented by Sinatti (2015) who was the first to look at multiple perspectives of repatriation, and concluded that "against global discourses

suggesting the triple-win nature of return...the policies of origin and host countries are driven by conflicting aims and serve the interests of states before addressing those of migrants” (p. 285).

In addition to these challenges, my findings suggest that rejected asylum seekers also struggle to reintegrate because they are impacted by the ‘EU as exclusive’ dominant discourse. Through emphasizing the importance of discourses of comparison used both in the Strategy and by participants, my findings do not merely address the lack of repatriation research coming from Global South countries (De Bree et al., 2010), but also grounds this research in the Global North-South power dynamic. Contextualizing my findings within the Kosova-EU relationship, suggests that Kosova adopted repatriation as a durable solution to migration crisis mostly because the creation and implementation of the Strategy is impacted by EU requirements. The EU’s request for Kosova to admit all those who were denied asylum in 2015, for example, implies its preference for repatriation, regardless of whether it is voluntary or whether Kosova can meet the needs of returnees.

Ighodaro (2007), Poggiali (2006), and Sinatti (2014) have argued that Global North countries choose repatriation as a durable solution to migration crisis when it is convenient for them to do so. To this end, my findings, like many of those presented by previous authors (i.e., Black et al., 2004; Chu et al., 2008; Toscani et al., 2007; von Lersner, 2008), call into question the evidence basis of political discourse which endorses repatriation as a durable solution to migration crisis. Indeed, all study participants expressed the desire to remigrate, thus illustrating that their return is not sustainable. Adding to existing research, my findings suggest that the sustainability of return for rejected asylum seekers is affected by discourses which construct Global North countries as more advanced and thus, migration to these countries as an opportunity for a better life. In fact, previous studies suggest that Global North countries endorse repatriation but do not provide economic help for countries of origin (most of which belong to the Global South) in order to maintain the power divide between the North and South (Bessa, 2009; Chimni, 2004).

Indeed, Kosovar asylum seekers do not have access to assistance and compare their current living standards with those they had while in asylum or aspired to once they were granted asylum. Those participants who were satisfied with their conditions in camps mourn their return to Kosova because while their basic needs were met in asylum, they struggle to provide enough food for their families in Kosova. Previous findings suggest that migration to other countries and

return enables individuals to identify existing problems more easily because they compare conditions in their home countries with those in Western countries (Lietaert et al., 2013; White, 2014).

Stefansson (2004) suggests that harsh living conditions while in the host country make repatriation an attractive solution for returnees. In contrast to this and other previous studies, participants in my study continue to desire migration even when they did not enjoy a high standard of living while in asylum. Nevertheless, participants in this study justified the harsh living conditions in camps and upheld a positive image of the EU in the face of discrimination. The difference in these findings demonstrates that, unlike other types of returnees, rejected asylum seekers continue to be impacted by discourses which paint Western countries as better than their country of origin.

Furthermore, unlike previous research, my findings highlight how their migration experiences and the othering discourses of ‘us and them’ contribute to issues of identity for rejected asylum seekers. For example, Dahinden (2005) suggests that returnees with transnational ties have an easier time integrating because they have access to remittances which provide temporary financial support. Transnational ties, according to the findings in my study, are a double-edged sword. While remittances are helpful in the reintegration process, diaspora members were also the ones who encouraged participants to leave in the first place. Further, diaspora members depict life in Western countries as better than life in Kosova, thus hindering the desire of returnees to repatriate. Instead, participants focus solely on the role of Kosova in repatriation and are thus angry with Kosova’s government for asking them to return.

Even though participants signed voluntary repatriation forms, they state that they were forcefully returned. For example, Kadri and Samire signed voluntary repatriation forms in Germany, but then escaped to Italy to avoid their return to Kosova, thus highlighting the coercion they felt to sign such forms. Previous studies conducted with Kosovar returnees have also challenged the definition of voluntary repatriation because those who participated were forced into signing voluntary repatriation forms (ECRE, 2005). As such, I align with authors who challenge the notion of “voluntary return” because its adoption is largely based on the glorification of *home* – a concept which benefits asylum countries by justifying return (Chimni, 2004; Ighodaro, 2012; Long, 2012; Poggiali, 2006; Pottier, 1996; Zieck, 2004).

Current findings add an interesting layer of understanding to how the concept of home impacts the desire of rejected asylum seekers to reintegrate. Participants talked at length about their emotional attachment to Kosova as their home. They articulated that no other country can replace the freedom and sense of community that they experience in Kosova. Nonetheless, participants still desired to migrate because while their emotional needs may be met in Kosova, their more pressing needs – basic needs, such as food and shelter, are not. In providing this nuanced definition of home, participants trouble the justification that repatriation is a durable solution because it allows rejected asylum seekers to return to their home. Their lived experiences point out that Kosova is their home because it is their country of origin, but it is not home when it cannot provide them with the necessary means to live, particularly for their children. As Zieck (2004) argues, home is not a “physically bound place” (p. 49). Adding to this, I argue that home is a mental space where rejected asylum seekers do not have to be on survival mode. For study participants, migration can offer a sense of home because it gives them access to opportunities.

Indeed, previous studies suggest that Kosova-Albanians are not the only ones who construct migration to Global North countries as an opportunity for a better life. El-Lahib (2016), who analyzed the construction of Canada as a land of opportunities for immigrants with disabilities, argues that “the hierarchies and binaries that construct and define the relationship between colonizer and colonized are at play here in shaping and defining the construction of the Global North as a desired land of opportunities” (p. 760). These discourses of opportunity, El-Lahib (2016) contends “construct immigrating to Canada as a life-changing event that marginalized social groups desire and actively pursue, regardless of the challenges, costs and the systemic exclusion they may face” (p. 762).

Contributions to Social Work

I began this thesis by noting the lack of attention that social work has paid to politicized migrant populations such as asylum seekers (Humphries, 2004a; Siriwardhana et al., 2015). More specifically, my literature review suggested that neither social work, nor other academic disciplines, have paid adequate attention to returnee experiences (Chimni, 2003; Humphries, 2004; Masocha & Simpson, 2007). The limited repatriation research which exists, also call for more studies which are conducted by Global South researchers and, in addition, focus on repatriation experiences in Global South countries (De Bree et al., 2010; King et al., 2014), as

well as those which address the Global North-South power relationship (Ighodaro, 2002; Kibreab, 2004; Sinatti, 2015; Toft, 2007).

I was well-positioned to address several of the gaps that exist in social work literature in this research. My own transnational identity gave me insight into the othering discourses used to maintain the separation between Kosova and the EU. For example, when I am in Kosova, I am characterized by my Canadian educational background. When I am in Canada, I am characterized by my status as an international student. My Canadian education background gives me certain privileges in Kosova, as I am considered superior to those who have studied in Kosova, while my Albanian background and the fact that I survived a war often leads people in Canada to pity me, even if they do so in subtle ways and without necessarily being conscious of it. To them, I present ‘an unknown other’ because I have experienced atrocities which they are largely unaware of or are only privy to in the news.

My efforts to navigate the interweaving of several of my identity categories which are thought of as diametrically opposite prepared me to address a topic which is built upon discourses of ‘here and there’. Having been born and raised in Kosova meant that I was familiar with the history of the country and had lived experiences of pre- and post-war Kosova. It also meant that I have an emotional connection to Kosova and could approach my topic with special consideration for the plight of my compatriots. Although I have not lived in Kosova for the last decade, I maintained my connection to Kosova through frequent returns as well as lengthy conversation with my family members, all of whom live in Kosova. Additionally, I kept up with the latest development in Kosova through completing my undergraduate and graduate practicums with various organizations in Kosova and volunteering for several NGOs while visiting Kosova. At the same time, completing my secondary education in North America gave me insight into how Kosova is constructed in the Global North. Specifically, even though Kosova is geographically inextricable from Europe, its population is socially constructed as an inferior other, thus giving rise to a complacent image of a superior Western Europe.

To complement my personal reflections of transnational identities, my social work education allowed me to bring scholarship to this study through its focus on challenging structural inequalities in community and international development (El-Lahib, 2016; Humphries, 2004; Moosa-Mitha, 2014; Weinberg, 2010). Specifically, critical social work theory holds that “when a problem such as poverty persists, the failure to find adequate remedies is the result of

the advantages that some groups amass from its continuance” (Weinberg, 2010, p. 36). To this end, my social work research became the intersecting point of my Canadian and Albanian identities, helping me realize that to look at repatriation experiences of rejected asylum seekers in Kosova, without addressing the power dynamics between Kosova and the EU, would lead to a limited and decontextualized knowledge.

I answered to previous research suggestions for more social work research to be conducted by Global South researchers and in the Global South. In this process, however, I realized that, like myself, Kosova does not belong to either the traditional Global North or South, but instead challenges the separation between the two. Kosova is not associated with Global South countries because it is geographically located in Europe. At the same time, it is not associated with the Global North because it does not have the socioeconomic development typical of Global North countries. Thus, while it is important for more research to be conducted by Global South researchers and in the Global South, it is also crucial to emphasize that this focus, without a consideration of how the two interact could lead to faulty conclusions.

To this end, my choice of a postcolonial framework was helpful in addressing gaps in social work research. One of the main contributions of this study to theory building is the juxtaposition of social work research, which is grounded in social justice, and postcolonial theory. The intersection of social work values and postcolonialism facilitated my examination of the experiences of rejected asylum seekers as a marginalized group, and also helped me to contextualize these experiences within a globalized world. Importantly, relying on triangulation and researcher bias as trustworthiness measures, I examined interview transcripts and the Strategy while also providing background information about Kosova’s historical context and my own ideological tendencies. Furthermore, I called each participant to report my findings and ask whether my interpretation reflects their voices. In doing so, I involved participants in CDA to counter the use of othering discourses which maintain a social order that makes those who belong to Kosova feel inferior and primitive to their European counterparts.

This is an important contribution to both social work theory and practice because social workers often lack “consciousness about the postcolonial and post-developmental critiques of the established western development discourse” (Jonsson, 2010, p. 399) and end-up perpetuating the belief that Western models of development are the sole way towards modernity. Further, Global North social workers often portray Global South citizens as passive and unable to contribute to

their country's development (Deepak, 2012; Tew, 2006) thus recreating the very oppressive relations they seek to overturn (Jonsson, 2010; Tew, 2006). As such, a postcolonial analysis of Kosova's dominant migration discourses and its relation to the EU is important in challenging superficial attempts at social justice, both in international development and within social work practice.

Thinking critically about my findings, there are a few important observations to make in relation to social work practice. Namely, in addition to the recommendations provided by participants, key learnings from this study include the importance of problematizing a homogeneous notion of returnees; development of specific programs for rejected asylum seekers; and the necessity of addressing the intersection between politics and social work. I will discuss each of these observations below.

My findings emphasize the need for social workers to be aware of how construction of migrant groups impacts practice with them. That is, from a postcolonial and social justice framework the assumption that returnees are a homogeneous social group, as presented in the Strategy, is problematic because it is used to mask the various push factors that lead people to seek asylum in the first place. For example, the Strategy completely ignores the fact that recent returnees sought and were denied asylum when Kosova was not in a state of war or conflict. Not recognizing the multiple and diverse groups of returnees allows those who have drafted the Strategy to disguise the fact that current socioeconomic conditions in Kosova contribute to the number of asylum seekers, the vast majority of whom then become returnees. As such, those who are in power remove responsibility from themselves by focusing on war as the main reason people leave.

Further, assuming the homogeneity of returnees is problematic because it does not recognize the diverse experiences of various returnee groups, thus failing to identify the unique needs of each. The Strategy, for example, groups together victims of human trafficking, former refugees and rejected asylum seekers, even though individuals belonging to each group experience different forms of trauma and need specialized services to help them integrate. As such, social workers need to be at the forefront of defining returnee groups so that this categorization is done through a bottom-up approach and not imposed from those in power, thus allowing interventions to be more targeted, and potentially, more effective.

To this end, the second recommendation coming from this study is that social work practice needs to include specialized programs for rejected asylum seekers which are grounded in and relevant to local realities. Thus far, Kosova's repatriation programs have adopted a 'one size fits all' approach because the same services are available to returnees, regardless of their form of return or the social and identity categories to which they belong. The only axis used to differentiate returnees is that of time, seeing that those who sought asylum before July 26th, 2010 have access to more assistance than those who sought asylum after this date (MIA, 2013a). To challenge these arbitrary categorizations, social workers must be involved in developing targeted programs for rejected asylum seekers and assure that these programs meet local need. To this end, recommendations coming from study participants can inform social work practice. In particular, these recommendations will contribute to the development of social work practice in Kosova, seeing that the faculty of social work at the University of Prishtina was only established in 2011 (University of Prishtina, 2017).

Participants recommended that for the reintegration of rejected asylum seekers to be successful, Kosova's government must assist them in securing shelter and employment. Participants placed importance on shelter especially during the first month of return because that would at least allow them to gather themselves and re-start their lives in Kosova. In order for Kosova to create more employment opportunities for returnees, participants suggested that there needs to be a change in Kosova's leadership structure, seeing that current leaders have been in power since the end of the war and have captured the state through corruption and nepotism. State capture, therefore, limits the number of job opportunities open to rejected asylum seekers because most jobs are reserved for those who are related to current political leaders.

Participant recommendations highlight the fact that in addition to focusing on service provision, social workers also need to address structural factors, such as discourses and policies that perpetuate the problems which push people to seek asylum in the first place. Failure to address these structural inequalities interrupts the change that would make possible social work which is committed to social justice. As such, adding to the participants' recommendations, I suggest that, because the lives of marginalized groups are impacted by the political structure of the country in which they live, social work practice must be politicized. Remaining neutral in the face of political injustices would only make social workers part of an oppressive system.

My analysis suggests that asylum seeking and repatriation are politicized processes which are affected by and contribute to the Global North-South relationship. That is, study participants lived in various countries throughout their entire journeys and were impacted by asylum policies while in EU countries and the repatriation policy while in Kosova. Relying on this observation, I recommend that social workers need to be well-versed in migration policies of the countries and regions where they live and where their migrant clients travel to. Importantly, social workers need to know not only the content of these policies, but also they need to be aware of how and by whom they are drafted. This will allow for a critical engagement with the material and enable social workers to challenge policies which on the surface seem to benefit migrant groups, but upon further analysis reveal that they only fulfill the agendas of those in power.

Echoing these recommendations, Healy (2004) as well as Bartley, Beddoe, Fouché, and Harington (2012) suggest that it is important for social work practitioners to take the international context of migration into account. Furthermore, El-Lahib (2016) suggests that social workers need to be aware of the implications that immigration discourses have for social work practice with marginalized groups. Adding to this suggestion, and relying on CDA principles of inter-disciplinary work, I argue that social workers should address the intersection between social work and politics. As practitioners, we need to be comfortable with resisting politicians who bring forward and/or support discriminatory policies and stand with those who support policies which prioritize the needs of marginalized group. There is no one way of resistance or support, but considering that ‘knowledge is power’ remaining aware of the political power structures in the countries where they practice is key for social workers who are committed to embodying social justice values (El-Lahib, 2016; Harington, 2012; Moosa-Mitha, 2014).

It is critical for the development of such practices to start with the education of future social workers. Currently, Moosa-Mitha (2014) purports that international social work education is characterized by “universalizing tendencies of consultant social work educators from the global north advising on the development of social work education to universities located in the global south” (p. 203). In doing so, social workers perpetuate the dichotomies between the Global North and South while upholding Northern superiority. To this end, the intersection of social work and postcolonial theory, which guided my study, brings attention to the importance of addressing global power dynamics within social work education and practice. Further, my use

of CDA, which emphasizes that researchers are implicated in the power dynamics they seek to address, gives an example of how reflexivity can be used in social work to unpack the power imbalances among social workers themselves.

Limitations

My findings addressed several of the gaps which appear in repatriation literature and contributed new knowledge to social work theory, practice and education. At the same time, thinking critically about my research process, I identified several limitations of my study which could be addressed by future research on repatriation, within social work, as well as in other disciplines. First, this study focused solely on rejected asylum seekers who are parents. I chose this population based on the premise that many Kosova-Albanians sought asylum partly because they wanted to secure a better future for their children. As such, the in-depth analysis of how one's parental status impacts repatriation experiences of rejected asylum seekers is valuable because it provides knowledge upon which targeted programs can be developed. However, I recognize that many rejected asylum seekers, both in Kosova and worldwide, are not parents and therefore experience the repatriation process differently. Research focusing on the experiences of other sub-groups of returnees, therefore, is necessary.

Second, all study participants currently reside in urban areas and their experiences are likely different from those of rejected asylum seekers who live in rural areas. As such, future research might include other recruitment methods which target and facilitate the inclusion of rural populations in repatriation studies. Those studies could complement my findings, which give insight into the lives of urban rejected asylum seekers.

Third, as explained by participants, repatriation is not an isolated process, but part of the migration continuum. In particular, migration push factors are an important aspect of the repatriation process seeing that all participants talked about migration push factors. In my interpretation of findings, I included an exploration of migration push factors and their influence on repatriation. Nonetheless, more valuable information can be gained by exploring how the experiences of the rejected asylum seekers change as they move through the pre-asylum to the post-return continuum. To this end, longitudinal studies involving potential research collaboration between social workers based in Global North and the Global South, as well as researchers who are guided by different theoretical frameworks can enrich such studies.

These limitations are important to recognize, not because they call into question the usefulness of my findings, but because they point out how current unanswered questions about repatriation can be addressed through future research.

Conclusion

My study explored the discourses of rejected asylum seekers from Kosova and illustrated how dominant discourses impact and are perpetuated by study participants. Throughout this thesis, I emphasized that this research was not merely about the repatriation experiences of rejected asylum seekers, but also focused on how discourses are used to construct the participants' identity and navigate their experiences. Additionally, I connected the discursive practices conveyed through the interviews to those which appeared in the Strategy. This helped to highlight the dominance of the identified 'EU is exclusive' discourse, and the operationalization of colonialism through the use of this discourses. The contextualization of this discourse within the multi-layered interaction of Kosova and the EU governing bodies provided a necessary context for understanding how the participants' decisions to leave as well as their return are manifestations of a global hierarchy which exalts Western values.

Seeing that asylum seeking is a transnational phenomenon, this study also sought to bridge the North-South divide in knowledge production by exploring how the construction of the Global North as superior impacts the experiences of Global South citizens. In doing so, the study highlights the necessity of social work practice with migrants to move beyond discussion of domestic factors and address the impact of Global North-South relations on social work practice. This is important not only when working with migrant groups, but also for social work practice in general, considering that we live in an increasingly globalized world. Importantly, this study questioned siloed ways of thinking and as a corrective adopted a trans-disciplinary approach which allowed for a multi-perspective analysis of social issues. In doing so, this research can serve as a springboard that social workers can use to resist dominant discourses which are oppressive, thus furthering our commitment to social justice.

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List of Appendices

Appendix A: Recruitment Email

Recruitment Notice – E-mail

Sent on Behalf of the Researcher by the United Nations Development Programme staff (for use in convenience sampling)

E-mail Subject line: Study examining the experiences of Kosovar rejected asylum seekers

Dear _____,

Kaltrina Kusari, who is currently completing a Master of Social Work at University of Calgary, has asked me to pass her information about a study she is conducting, in hopes that you are interested in participating. Her study will examine the reintegration experiences of Kosovar rejected asylum seekers who were denied asylum in a European Union country during 2015 and 2016. Specifically, Kaltrina is looking at how Kosovo's current repatriation policy and its aspiration to join the EU shape the experiences of individuals who sought and were denied asylum within the last year and a half.

The following is a brief description of her study. If you are interested in getting more information about taking part in Kaltrina's research or would like to refer someone to his study, please read the brief description below and/or **CONTACT KALTRINA KUSARI AT kaltrina.kusari@ucalgary.ca or 044-916-112.**

Kaltrina Kusari is inviting you to take part in an interview which will last for approximately 60 - 90 minutes and take place at a time and location that works best for you. The interview will focus on your experiences dealing with reintegration into the Kosovar society since you were rejected asylum and returned to Kosovo. She hopes to learn more about some of the challenges or opportunities that you have encountered during your experiences with repatriation policies and/or programs.

Participants will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview session, lasting approximately 60 - 90 minutes, to reflect on your experiences since returning to Kosovo.

To participate you must be:

- ☐ **A Kosovar who was forcefully returned to Kosovo after seeking and being denied asylum in a European Union countries during 2015 or 2016**
- ☐ **Between the ages of 19 and 40**
- ☐ **A parent**

The primary language of the interview will be Albanian. The interview will be audio-recorded in order to be transcribed and analyzed at a later date. Before starting the interview, all participants have to consent to being audio-recorded. In appreciation for your time, you will receive €20. In addition, you will be compensated for your transportation costs to get to the interview location.

In addition, this study has been reviewed and cleared by the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board.

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is being conducted you may contact: Kaltrina Kusari at Kaltrina.kusari@ucalgary.ca or 044-916-112.

Appendix B: Recruitment Poster

**PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH EXAMINING THE MIGRATION
DISCOURSE OF ASYLUM SEEKERS FROM KOSOVO WHO SOUGHT AND WERE
DENIED ASYLUM DURING 2015 AND 2016**

I am looking for volunteers to take part in a study that will explore the reintegration experiences of Kosovars who sought asylum, were denied and returned to Kosovo during 2015 or 2016. The study will examine the reintegration experiences of Kosovar rejected asylum seekers who were denied asylum in a European Union country during 2015 and 2016. Specifically, the researcher is looking at how Kosovo's current repatriation policy and its aspiration to join the EU shape the experiences of individuals who sought and were denied asylum within the last year and a half.

If you chose to participate, you will take part in a one-on-one interview session, which will last approximately 60 - 90 minutes, to reflect on your experiences since returning to Kosovo. The interview will focus on your experiences dealing with reintegration into the Kosovar society since you were rejected asylum and returned to Kosovo. The interview will be audio-recorded in order to be transcribed and analyzed at a later date. Before starting the interview, all participants have to consent to being audio-recorded. The researcher hopes to learn more about some of the challenges or opportunities that you have encountered during your experiences with repatriation policies and/or programs.

To participate you must be:

- ☐ A Kosovar-Albanian who was forcefully returned to Kosovo after seeking and being denied asylum from a European Union country during 2015 or 2016
- ☐ Between the ages of 19 and 40
- ☐ A parent

If you are interested in getting more information about taking part in this research or would like to refer someone to his study, please **CONTACT KALTRINA KUSARI AT** kaltrina.kusari@ucalgary.ca or **044-916-112**.

The primary language of the interview will be Albanian. In appreciation for your time, you will receive €20. In addition, you will be compensated for your transportation costs to get to the interview location.

This study has been reviewed and cleared by the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board.

Appendix C: Interview Guide

Examining the Discourses of Rejected Asylum Seekers

Kaltrina Kusari, MSW Student

(Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary)

Beginning the interview

Thank you for participating in this interview. As you recall from our previous communication, your participation in this study is valuable and would contribute to our knowledge about different factors that shape the reintegration experiences of rejected asylum seekers in Kosova.

Just to give you an idea about me, I am originally from Kosova, but have completed all of my education abroad. Currently, I am a Master of Social Work student at University of Calgary.

Through this degree, I have developed a specific interest in displaced populations. My interests in this area of research stem from the experiences which I had during the 1999 Kosovo war which displaced my family. Further, I decided to focus my thesis on the experiences of rejected asylum seekers because of the large number of Kosovars who sought asylum during 2015 and were rejected.

I divided the interview into three sections. The first section focuses on your experiences during the first week of your return. The second section is about how things developed after the initial return and your current situation. The final section will ask you to reflect on your overall experience and give some recommendations about improvements that can be made to the reintegration process.

Before we start the interview, do you have any question for me?

Section 1: Your first couple of weeks

In this section, I am interested in hearing about your experience during the return and immediately after (the first week).

Prompting questions include:

1. Please recount your return experiences and share some of the first steps you had to complete to start the reintegration process.
2. Were you greeted by a Kosovar government representative at the airport? Can you elaborate? You can talk about administrative steps that were required by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, as well as personal steps.
3. What types of supports did you have during this process? (e.g. family members, settlement services, social workers, embassies, local and international organizations etc.)
4. Which factors facilitated and hindered your ability to start reintegrating into the Kosovar society?

Section 2: How things developed, progressed or evolved

In this section, we are going to be talking about how things developed after your first week of return, as well as your current reintegration experiences.

Prompting questions include:

1. Where are you in the process of reintegration right now? How long has it been since you returned?

2. What aspects of your life were impacted the most during the reintegration process? (e.g. work, education, family, etc.?)
3. Has your role as a parent been impacted by the reintegration process. If yes, how so?
4. What types of supports do you have that facilitate your reintegrate into the Kosovar society?
5. What types of barriers have you and your family faced? What has helped you overcome those barriers?

Section 3: What do you need for the future?

In this section, I would like to hear your recommendations about potential improvements that can be made to the reintegration process in Kosova. Prompting questions include:

1. Taking your overall experience into account, what would you say are the supports that are missing that could have been helpful in your reintegration process?
2. Do you have any other recommendations for Kosova's central institutions and the organization which assisted you?

Ending the interview Thank you for participation in this interview. Before we end:

1. Is there something important we forgot?
2. Is there anything else you think I need to know about?

Section 4: Demographics

In this section, I would like to collect some information that will help me to better understand your context. Questions will include:

How old are you?

How long did the asylum seeking process take? (From the day you left Kosova to the day you came back)

How many family members do you have?

Appendix D: Counselling and reintegration support information sheet

Counselling and reintegration support information sheet

Below is a list (alphabetical) of agencies which offer services for rejected asylum seekers and where you can find someone to talk to, if you have something on your mind.

Danish Refugee Council

Services provided: Reintegration and Community Stabilization Assistance; Sustainable return to Nenkalaja, Prizren; Social Inclusion and Economic Empowerment of Marginalized Group;

Head office in Prishtinë:

Address: Mark Isaku 30, Prishtina - Kosovo

Phone: +381 (0)38 243 793/4 & +381 (0)38 246 594

Fax: +381 (0)38 243 796

E-mail: representative@drc-kosovo.org

Mitrovicë/a field office:

Address: Brigada 149 Mehë Uka, No. 99

Mitrovicë/a - Kosovo

Phone: +381 (0) 28 533-541

E-mail: projectassist@drc-kosovo.org

Prizren field office:

Address: Str. 178-Behajdin Hallaqi, Nr. 1,

Prizren - Kosovo

Phone: +381 (0)29 231 702

Civil Right Program Kosovo

Services Provided: Legal assistance for forced returnees from Western Europe; Legal assistance for internally displaced people.

Address: R. Zogovic St. # 10, Peyton, Prishtina, Kosova, 10 000

E-mail: crp@crpkosovo.org

Phone: (038) 243 - 610

Diakonie

Services provided: Voluntary return assistance; Trauma counselling;

Address: Rr. Bislim Bajgora P.N. (Te Rampa), Mitrovicë/Kosovë, 400000

Phone: +381 (0) 28 530 156

Email: info@diakoniekosova.org

International Organization of Migration

Services provided: Health care services; Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration; EU – Return and Reintegration in Kosovo Programme;

Address: Gjergj Balsha E-6/B-7, Arbëri III, 10000 Pristina, Kosovo

Telephone: +381 38 249 040

Fax: +381 38 249 039

Email: iompristina@iom.int

*Field offices***Mitrovica field office**

Shemsi Mehmeti str.nn.

40000 Mitrovica, Kosovo

Gjilan field office

Medlin Albright str.32

60000 Gjilan, Kosovo

Prizren field office

Maja e Pikëllimës 23

20000 Prizren, Kosovo

Peja field office

Mbretëresha Teutë str.95

30000 Pejë, Kosovo

URA 2 - The Bridge Return Project

Services provided: free social counselling; partial reimbursement of travel costs to the center; job placement/job-creation measures; contribution towards training costs

Address: Rr. Mark Isaku Nr. 24/ Prishtina/10 000/Republic of Kosova

Telephone: 00381 (0) 3822 3770 / -3772

E-mail: [Write a message](#)

Online: [to contact form](#)

Appendix E: Letter of information/consent form

Name of Researcher, Faculty, Department, Telephone & Email:

Miss Kaltrina Kusari, Faculty of Social Work; +377-44-916-112; kaltrina.kusari@ucalgary.ca

Supervisor:

Christine Walsh, Ph.D., Faculty of Social Work

Title of Project: Examining the discourses of rejected asylum seekers

Sponsor: Queen Elizabeth II Master's Scholarship – Provincial Funding

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study.

Purpose of the Study

This study explores the experiences of Kosovar asylum seekers who sought asylum in European Union member countries during 2015 and 2016, were rejected, and have returned to Kosovo since. Specifically, it aims to better understand how Kosovo's repatriation policy, and its aspiration to join the EU shape the reintegration experiences of rejected asylum seekers. In addition, the study also seeks to examine the emerging role of social workers within the migration field in Kosovo.

What Will I Be Asked To Do?

As a participant of this study, you will be asked to take part in an interview which will last for approximately 90 minutes. The interview questions will focus on your experience since returning to Kosovo and the kind of support you have received in Kosovo thus far. Follow-up interviews might take place if necessary. The interview will be audiotaped so that I can later transcribe and analyze in order to highlight the main emerging themes. As the research, I, Kaltrina Kusari and my thesis supervisor, Christine Walsh, Ph.D. will be the only people who have access to the interview transcripts and any other data gathered for the purposes of this research.

Your participation in the interview is completely voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the study, decline to answer any and all questions, or completely withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences or loss of benefits which you are entitled to, if any.

What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected?

Should you agree to participate, you will be asked to provide the following personal information: gender, ethnicity, age, educational level, city of residence, reason for leaving, time since you returned to Kosovo, as well as any other information pertaining to your reintegration experience in Kosovo.

As the principal investigator, I, Kaltrina Kusari, and my supervisor Christine Walsh are the only people who will access the interview audiotapes. These information will be kept in a password-secured folder in my computer, which is also secured with a password. Any other materials shared by the interviewees will be kept in a locked filing cabinet.

There are several options for you to consider if you decide to take part in this research. You can choose all, some, or none of them. Please listen to each of these options and choose Yes or No:

I wish to remain anonymous:	Yes: ____ No: ____
I wish to remain anonymous, but you may refer to me by a pseudonym:	Yes: ____ No: ____
The pseudonym I choose for myself is: _____	
You may quote me and use my name:	Yes: ____ No: ____
You may quote me and use my pseudonym:	Yes: ____ No: ____

Are there Risks or Benefits if I Participate?

You might experience some minor psychological and/or social risks during your involvement in this study. The interview may trigger some personal reactions to irritating experiences such as your journey towards European Union countries; the wait time to hear about your asylum status; your challenges since returning to Kosovo, just to name a few examples. Although I understand that many Kosovars took illegal roads towards asylum in Western Europe, the focus of this study is on your return experiences. None of the questions will ask you to share any details of your migration to Europe experience.

In terms of social risks, you may feel that your access to services, if any, may be affected based on the outcomes of your participation in this study. However, please note that you can stop the interview completely or take a break at any point of the interview process. In addition, all steps will be taken to ensure your information is kept confidential throughout the research process, ensuring that your participation in this study will not impact your future relations with any services, service providers or agencies you or your family members may be involved with.

Please also note that you can ask to stop the audio-recording at any time during the interview and can withdraw from the study up until approximately September 2016. If you decide to withdraw, your interview data will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in the study.

Benefits of the Study:

I hope that your participation in this study will allow you to have the opportunity to critically reflect on your experiences of reintegrating into the Kosovar society as a rejected asylum seeker. I anticipate that this research will help to understand how Kosovo's repatriation policies and its aspiration to join the EU shape the migration experiences of rejected asylum seekers. It is my hope that your involvement will also help you to make meaning of your experiences and use this process to contribute towards more inclusive policies and practices in Kosovo. Specifically, the results of the research will be used to: enhance social work's professional role within the migration field in Kosovo; develop an understanding of the issues that shape and impact the experiences of rejected asylum seekers; and challenge the marginalization experiences of rejected asylum seekers in Kosovo. In addition to covering your transportation costs, you will also receive €20 as a sign of appreciation for your time and contribution. If you chose to withdraw before the study is completed you will still receive €5.

What Happens to the Information I Provide?

Participation is completely voluntary, anonymous and confidential. In the case that a participant withdraws from a study, all data the participant contributed to the study will be destroyed immediately.

Confidentiality refers to the efforts taken by the researcher to protect the privacy of the data collected in this study. To ensure confidentiality, only the principal investigator and her supervisor will have access to the data from the interviews. All data from the interviews will be audio recorded, kept in a locked location and saved on a password protected hard drive.

Anonymity refers to whether the participants' identities will be made known during all phases of the research study from recruitment to data collection and analysis to communication of findings. All efforts will be made to ensure participants' anonymity is protected in this study. In the interviews, no identifying information will be requested and pseudonyms (if chosen) will be used to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of participants. However, please keep in mind during the interview that your identity might be recognizable through specific information you provide. To avoid this, no names of organizations or agencies will be discussed to ensure anonymity of participants and their affiliated agencies, if any.

The interviews will be transcribed and the original audio recording and any hand written notes will be destroyed after transcription is completed. Data from this study will be stored for five years from the end of the study, after which time everything will be destroyed.

Summary of Results

Should you wish to have a summary of results communicated to you after the study is completed, please provide your preferred contact method below (e.g. phone number, email, mailing address, etc.):

I hereby consent to receive summary of research results at the following contact information:

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Questions/Concerns

If you have any concerns about the way you've been treated as a participant, please contact the Research Ethics Analyst, Research Services Office, University of Calgary at (403) 210-9863; email cfreb@ucalgary.ca.

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator has kept a copy of the consent form.