EUROPEANIZING KOSOVO?

Role and impact of EU-funded non-governmental and civil society organizations (NGOs/CSOs) on policies and institutions of state-building

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Abstract

Kosovo has been present in European debates since the early 1980s, culminating with the 1999 international intervention in the country due to the Kosovo-Serbia conflict, and as a result of subsequent talks about Kosovo´s contested statehood. The EU has been described as a major influence on Kosovo policies and institutions. For the EU, cooperating with NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo complies with the Union´s role of promoting human rights and democratic principles in third countries, and making sure that Kosovo adopts EU rules, norms, and values in its process towards EU integration.

Drawing from empirical evidence, the purpose of this thesis has been to, first establish a comprehensive picture of the NGO/CSO activities in Kosovo; second, to assess the effects of NGOs/CSOs on both policy implementation and institution building – using Kosovo as a single case. The case has been analyzed through the scope of (External) Europeanization and EU credibility, legitimacy and coherence.

The findings of this thesis suggest that the EU is in fact using NGOs/CSOs as facilitators of EU rules, norms and values, however for this diffusion to be effective, NGOs´/CSOs´ capability to impact policy-making and institution building is dependent on several other factors such as domestic pressure, EU coherence and credibility.

Foreword

My time as a student is nearing its end. The writing of this MA thesis has been both an utterly challenging and extremely interesting process. I have since the beginning of my studies found EU and Kosovo politics to be fascinating, therefore the choice fell on a combination of both. This process would not have been possible without the help of several persons:

I would like to thank my supervisor Stefan Gänzle, who has offered me advice and support along the way. Thank you for your time and patience and for always being available.

I would also like to thank my family, my closest friends and my boyfriend for their support, patience and dedication.

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List of abbreviations and acronyms

EU European Union
NATO North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO Non-Governmental Organizations
CSO Civil Society Organizations
WB Western Balkans
IPA Instrument for Pre-Accession
EIDHR European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
CEE Central and Eastern Europe
DG NEAR Directorate General for Neighborhood and Enlargement Negotiations
KCSF Kosovo Civil Society Foundation
EULEX European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo
UN United Nations
EAR European Agency for Reconstruction
USAID United States Agency for International Development
EC European Commission
EP European Parliament
SAA Stabilization and Association Agreement
SAP Stabilization and Association Process
SAPD Stabilization and Association Process Dialogue
UNMIK United Nation Interim Administration in Kosovo
ESDP European Security and Defense Policy
ICTY International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
OGG Office of Good Governance
TAK Tax Administration of Kosovo
EU PRAG EU Practical Guide
CFSP Common Foreign and Security Policy
ECMI European Center for Minority Issues
CSF Civil Society Facility
TACSO Technical Assistance for Civil Society Organizations
CSF Civil Society Facility
CFSP Common Foreign and Security Policy

1. Introduction

In June 1999 the United Nations (UN), in collaboration with numerous international groups, bilateral aid donors and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), began a massive post-conflict reconstruction program in the small, former Yugoslav province of Kosovo (Venner, 2016). The European Union (EU) was an important contributor in the events during the conflict in 1998-1999. During the post-conflict stage, the EU established several separate agencies in Kosovo with different functions, policy priorities, and administrative methods. Between 1999 and 2008 the EU oversaw Pillar IV of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), responsible for ´economic reconstruction´ and the rebuilding of "physical and social infrastructure and systems" (Venner, 2016, p.55). The Union also provided more than 1.1 billion euros in reconstruction and development aid through the European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR) (Venner, 2016). The aim of the EU through the EAR was to build a critical mass of understanding about EU integration (Ante, 2010). After 2008, the EU Office in Kosovo replaced EAR as the main management agency for EU technical assistance and development projects. From 1999 to 2010 the EU provided around 2.5 billion euros for its activities in Kosovo (Fagan, 2011). The Union's response to the conflict has been identified as a turning point in EU foreign policy and its relations with the region (Venner, 2016). While EU funds to Kosovo in the immediate aftermath of the conflict targeted emergency relief actions and reconstruction, they are now more focused on promoting Kosovo`s state institutions, sustainable economic development, human rights, and Kosovo`s EU integration.

The prospect of a potential future EU membership constitutes a key element in the process of state-building, especially due to the fact that Kosovo never actually ´existed´ as a state before. State-building is defined by Capussela (2015) as the development of transparent and accountable political institutions, a sustainable economic system, a professional public administration, and civilian-controlled security forces. State-building is often understood as "an exercise undertaken by external actors in war-torn or developing societies, in order to eradicate the causes of conflict, instability and poverty" (Capussela, 2015, p.15). It can therefore be claimed to be an effort to trigger processes of institutional transformation that have elsewhere arisen instinctively, leading to the emergence of stable democracies and efficient economies. When the West allowed Kosovo to become independent, the aim was to create a stable democracy, however the outcome has proven to be a fragile state (Capussela, 2015).

According to the European Commission (EC), non-governmental and civil society organizations (NGOs/CSOs) are key actors regarding state-building efforts in Kosovo (EC, 2015). Frederica Mogherini states that, "civil society has a crucial role to play in our foreign policy. It is not only a key player, but also a main driver for change in all societies, in terms of democracy, good governance, resilience, cohesion, and promotion of fundamental human rights." (EEAS, 2015). An NGO is defined as a non-profit, voluntary citizens group on a local, national, or international level. NGOs perform a variety of service and humanitarian functions, bring citizen concerns to governments, advocate and monitor policies, and encourage political participation through provision of information (Ketola, 2013). NGOs play an important role concerning the diffusion of EU norms as they have the channels to introduce new ideas, initiate actions, as well as lobby for policy change (Keck and Sikkink, 1999). The term ´NGO´ is contested however, and it has thus been subsumed by many within a broader category of ´civil society organizations´ (CSO). Civil society is a broad term that captures the wide range of voluntary organizations operating outside the realm of governments. "It is crucial in terms of what it does as a mediator among the state, the economy, and society" (Henderson, 2008, p.2). A CSO is defined as "any organization, formal or informal, falling within civil society" (TACSO, 2010, p.4). Typically, CSOs include community-based organizations, non-governmental organizations, women´s organizations, faith-based organizations, social movements, and so forth (TACSO, 2010). NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo have eventually found themselves at the center of the EU`s intervention. NGOs/CSOs have, however, often been accused of establishing parallel institutional structures rather than supporting the establishment of autonomous and functioning Kosovo institutions.

Over the past decades the EU has become an important provider of civil society assistance to Kosovo. Such assistance has typically been transmitted via short-term project grants to local NGOs and delivered in the context of the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP). The process is steered towards enhancing the capacity of the state through partnership with NGOs/CSOs (Fagan, 2011). The Commission has largely used democratic consolidation and civil society development as grounds for legitimization of assistance to local NGOs/CSOs, but now greater emphasis is placed on NGOs/CSOs acting as agents of good governance, reform, and the transformation of state power.

The Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) signed in 2015 allocates 645.5 million euros to Kosovo for the period of 2014-20 with a significant amount going to the civil society sector (Fagan, 2011). NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo receive substantial EU funding through the Instrument for Pre-accession (IPA), which is the financial mechanism of the European Commission that aids countries within the EU enlargement policy. This financial instrument mainly supports projects from three major categories: political criteria, economic criteria, and European standards. The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) is an instrument of the EU that aims to provide support for the promotion of democracy and human rights outside of the EU, including Kosovo. Finally, NGOs/CSOs receive funding through the Civil Society Facility (CSF) program, which aims to increase civil society´s role in awareness and decision-making processes and support to the development of the civil society sector (KCSF, 2016).

1.1 Relevance of topic and research question

Kosovo is a relevant but special case due to several facts. First and foremost, its sovereignty remains contested internationally – it has not yet been recognized by five EU member states (Spain, Romania, Slovakia, Cyprus, and Greece). Romania, Spain and, Slovakia have their own domestic factions calling for separatism and fear that recognizing Kosovo will set a dangerous precedent. These member states have had the greatest tendency to be lukewarm about accepting Kosovo´s independence and are additionally worried about the broader repercussions of a possible precedent (Rettman and Krasniqi, 2007).

Secondly, Serbia-Kosovo relations are to this day extremely tense. The Northern city of Mitrovica is divided between Serbs and Kosovars, and more recently tensions grew when a passenger train was steered towards Kosovo displaying the slogan ´Kosovo is Serbia´ and brought the two countries to the brink of conflict in January 2017. Serbia has its own EU aspirations. It became an official candidate for EU membership in 2012, and since then the EU has not formally required that it recognize Kosovo`s independence. Instead, the EU has requested that both parties normalize relations and start negotiations to ensure that both Serbia and Kosovo are stable regional players (Economides and Ker-Lindsay, 2015). The two countries have been enjoying attention due to mediation attempts by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy in view of "normalization" of relations between Belgrade and Pristina. In April 2013, an agreement was reached by establishing a power-sharing arrangement in Serbian-dominated Northern Kosovo

(Mitrovica). This was possible because the EU engaged both Serbia and Kosovo through the SAA and through dialogue (European Union, 2014).

Thirdly, Kosovo's Europeanization is not as obvious as in other states in the region, as the country was "part of the Ottoman Empire for almost five centuries and economic, cultural and religious ties with Turkey remain strong, so the idea of a – "return to Europe"-, common in many Central and East European (CEE) countries, has less relevance" (Venner, 2016 p.53), and pertinence in the country itself. Europeanization would mean Kosovo's abandonment of non-transparent social and political arrangements that have developed over many years and acceptance of international norms of public administration and public life (DFID, *Kosovo*: Strategy Paper, 2001-2002).

Fourthly, Kosovo faces numerous domestic issues. The Western Balkans (WB), including Kosovo, are often defined in the literature as a region exhibiting late development, slow reform, and divergence from the rest of Europe (Anastasakis, 2005). This divergence was confirmed by the 2004 Eastern Enlargement of the EU that left out all Balkan countries with the sole exception of Slovenia. Kosovo lacks political culture and has an absence of democratic tradition. The civil society sector is weak, political institutions are superficial, and skill in governance is underdeveloped compared to European standards. Additionally, democratization processes are incomplete or superficial (Demetropoulou, 2002). Nevertheless, a promise of EU membership, or at least a vague concept of European integration, has been seen by many donors as the strongest incentive for the institutional transformations they see necessary in Kosovo (Venner, 2016).

Fifthly, even though the WB states (Serbia, Albania, Montenegro, Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia and Hercegovina, and Kosovo) are considered next in line when it comes to EU enlargement policy, it could be currently argued that there is no light at the end of the tunnel when it concerns Kosovo. Juncker has declared a moratorium on future enlargements for at least five years, stating that the 28-member group needed "a break from enlargement so that we can consolidate what has been achieved" (The Scotsman, 2014). Enlargement is now not on the EU's agenda, as there are issues considered more important. EU member states believe that they should focus their energies on solving their own internal problems before deliberating how and whether to move ahead with further enlargement (Belloni, 2016). Economides and Ker-Lindsay (2015) argue that the EU has not been able to guarantee membership. "Although the states of the region are eligible for EU membership, they are not promised early, or easy, access to the club" (Economides & Ker-Lindsay,

2015, p.1029). Further, Economides and Ker-Lindsay (2015) argue that the process of Europeanization, or the "process of encouraging Europeanization," begins at a much earlier stage in the WB than in the Central and Eastern Enlargement (CEE). Additionally, EU intervention may not even have the purpose of eventual enlargement but rather could be demands placed "to promote EU values or a process of learning" (Economides & Ker-Lindsay, 2015, p.1030). This leads to the argument that this is just "a practical preparation of the ground for fulfilling the prospect of a potential future accession" (Economides & Ker-Lindsay, 2015, p.1031). Trauner claims that "a certain enlargement fatigue, the controversy on the candidacy of Turkey and several other factors contribute to the fact that it is unclear when, or whether, these countries will actually make it into the EU" (2009, p.774).

This makes the choice of topic particularly relevant, as Kosovo has begun its integration process even though its future of becoming an EU member state is still very much unknown. It will therefore be interesting to examine through its civil society if and how Kosovo`s Europeanization is evolving. Towards this background, the research question is as follows:

Do EU-funded NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo have an impact on policy- making and institution building? If so, by which means?

The growing political debate of the EU and its relations to third countries, has motivated a discussion about the nature of the EU´s external power. Kosovo presents a good case for the objective of this thesis because it has been on the receiving end of both the EU´s common and security policy (CFSP) and enlargement policy. Therefore, it is difficult to clearly categorize the EU´s involvement in the country under either foreign or enlargement policy.

The research question is inspired by the complex relationship between the EU and Kosovo, which has been described as one of the EU´s most extensive interventions in a third country (Venner, 2016). For the EU, cooperating with NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo complies with the Union´s role of promoting human rights and democratic principles in third countries, making sure that Kosovo adopts EU rules, norms, and values in its process towards EU integration. However, the EU also wants to make sure that its `backyard` is stable. This commitment with Kosovo´s civil society is distinctive of the EU´s self-image as a normative force in the international scene (Lerch & Schwellnus, 2006). This commitment also establishes a collaborative framework on a state level, where political dialogue is used as a mechanism of diffusion (Börzel & Risse, 2009). The EU

frames its assistance to Kosovo by utilizing resources towards the interaction between recipient NGOs/CSOs and state agencies.

Towards this backdrop, the purpose of the MA thesis is twofold: First, to establish a comprehensive picture of the NGO/CSO activities in Kosovo; second, to assess the effects of NGOs/CSOs on both policy implementation and institution building – using Kosovo as a single case.

1.2 Literature review

Civil society has reemerged as a core interest of social science research over the last decade (Warleigh, 2001). It has long been viewed by political theorists as the means to realize a legitimate governance structure and to enable political engagement (Warleigh, 2001). In order to tackle different political obstacles, attention has shifted towards the ´Europeanization´ of civil society; however, this attempted change requires actors who are both able and willing to act as agents for change. Although there is disagreement about the kind of civil society that should be present at the EU level, most actors appear to agree that a greater role for civil society should be a central feature of European governance (Warleigh, 2001).

The view on involving NGOs/CSOs to bring change with regards to EU integration in third countries has fueled bourgeoning literature on the EU-civil society relationship. NGOs'/CSOs' ability to trigger change regarding both policy implementation and institution building has been both praised and criticized by numerous scholars. Even though literature on the EU´s involvement with Kosovo´s NGOs/CSOs is rather sparse, one can compare some of the same principles using literature concerning other cases. Several arguments have been deployed to explain the processes observed. While Ketola (2013), using the case of Turkish NGOs in the process of accession, claims that the EU's civil society funding links to a perception of NGOs as potential agents of domestic change, others emphasize the disturbing effects of NGO and CSO activities in general and in Kosovo in particular (Fagan, 2011; Cheema and Popovski, 2010; Carothers, 2010). Carothers (2010) claims that, in general, NGO sectors in countries undergoing a democratic transition are often dominated by elite-run groups that have "only tenuous ties to the citizens on whose behalf they claim to act and they depend on international funders for budgets they cannot nourish from domestic sources" (Carothers, 2010, p.20).

According to Ketola (2013), the growth of the NGO sector has so far been viewed as supply driven, meaning that organizations do not arise out of local needs and may not be the most suitable for the needs and requirements of the country in question. Donor priorities tend to frequently shift, forcing NGOs/CSOs to readjust their interests in order to compete for funding. Further, Ketola (2013) claims that donor effects to engage civil society have been criticized for being alienated from the political realities of the domestic context and civil society. This eventually instrumentalizes civil society, making it "means to an end, not an end in itself" (Ketola, 2013, p.6), leading to NGOs/CSOs becoming tools for delivering goals set by the donors. However, he argues that the EU views NGOs as an instrument to the overall cause. "They help to fill the gap between an aspirational goal of Europeanization and the current state of affairs" (Ketola, 2013, p.33). Further, the EU's idea of civil society is based on a universal idea of the concept, "the notion of civil society as understood in the European context, is assumed to be readily transferable to contexts that are culturally and historically different" (Ketola, 2013, p.33). The claimed capacity of NGOs to participate at the numerous stages of the policy-making process contributes to the view that NGOs can increase effectiveness of these processes. In addition, "the strength in numbers element of NGO advocacy is regarded as the enabling factor behind the NGO ability to influence governmental decision-making processes" (Ketola, 2013, p.82).

Fagan (2010) claims that an evaluation of EU assistance channeled through NGOs in Kosovo must be viewed within the extensive literature assessing foreign donor assistance for civil society. Like most multi-lateral and bi-lateral donor agencies intent on supporting civil society across post-socialist Europe, the EU has guided much of its assistance through NGOs (Fagan 2010, p.22). The Commission´s strategy for supporting NGOs across post-socialist states has been significantly influenced by the legacy of United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and other bi-lateral American donors. Fagan (2010) claims that whilst the impact and extent of such aid tends to be exaggerated, professional NGOs competing for externally funded donor projects have become "ubiquitous and almost generic feature of post-socialism" (Fagan, 2010, p. 26). NGOs in locations across the post-socialist world as well as their donors on which they depend for their income have been criticized for wasting resources, duplicating projects and initiatives, failing to engage with communities and local campaign agendas, and generally being temporary constructions that are neither accountable and legitimate nor particularly sustainable (Fagan, 2010, p.28).

Rather than helping to kick-start the economy and involve the state and the market in the provision of services, "NGOs and voluntary organizations that assume core service provision functions often weaken the capacity of both the state and the market to offer such services by luring professionals from the other sectors into the more lucrative NGO world" (Fagan, 2010, p.18). These organizations also weaken the state and market by eliminating the incentive for state agencies to compete with donor-funded NGOs and provide sustainable public services. Fagan (2012) claims that even though NGOs are often criticized for their detachment from community organizations and campaigns, they nonetheless perform a critical "behind the scenes" role in policy change and state transformation. However, he claims that the large amount of aid that has been poured into Kosovo, plus the SAA designed to deliver supervised statehood to the country, represents an ambitious assistance package, "taking EU intervention in and assistance to the country to new heights" (Fagan, 2012, p.42).

Shabbir Cheema (2010) holds the view that NGO/CSO capacity deficits complicate the legitimacy issues posed by accountability insufficiencies. This means that the rapid expansion of EU-funded CSOs/NGOs in Kosovo has not been accompanied by increasing capacities and resources. "Even assuming that NGOs/CSOs have the financial capacity to identify and implement measures to ensure that they operate transparently and accountably, they may be incapable of following through and achieving desired effects through their organizational capacity" (Shabbir Cheema, 2010, p.18). However, Shabbir Cheema (2010) states that NGOs/CSOs are playing a vital role in stimulating democratic change in various ways, including engagement of parliamentarians to communicate concerns of citizens; the protection of minority rights and marginalized groups; supporting the independence of the judiciary; and holding local officials accountable to improve access to public services. However, to remain effective advocates for the people, NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo need to strengthen their linkages with other organizations as well as address issues related to their legitimacy and improve capacity.

1.3 Outline of the thesis

The thesis contains six chapters. The first chapter introduces the objective and relevance of the study. The chapter first describes the background of the relation between the EU and Kosovo, it further presents the relevance of the topic, and is accompanied with the research question and the

inspiration for it. The first chapter additionally offers a literature review containing previous and recent research on NGOs/CSOs as possible agents for change.

Chapter two examines the analytical framework. Here, the concept of (External) Europeanization is explained. This chapter also explores the EU´s commitment and strategy as an external actor together with the diffusion of EU norms and values in third countries. The chapter also considers the concepts of EU legitimacy, coherence, and credibility.

Chapter three explains the research design and methodology used for this study and is where the processes of data collection is presented, including the methodologic challenges. The reliability and validity of the data are also discussed, and it includes an overview of the interviewed NGOs/CSOs and their past and/or current EU projects.

Chapter four examines the political and economic relations between Kosovo and the EU. This chapter also maps the active NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo and the distribution of EU funds.

Chapter five is where I answer the research questions by applying the analytical framework to the empirical data and by discussing the research findings. The results from this chapter answer whether NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo have an impact on policy implementation and institution building. This will be answered by determining whether NGOs/CSOs can draw on the mechanisms of diffusion and whether, push and pull factors and the EU´s legitimacy, coherence, and credibility has an impact on NGOs'/CSOs' ability to act as agents for Europeanization. Finally, chapter six summarizes and concludes the findings of this study.

2. Analytical framework

This chapters seeks to review the analytical framework, which will be used to examine and analyze the empirical evidence, answer the research question and test the hypotheses. This chapter first sheds light on the understanding of a more general concept of Europeanization, and thus serves as an introduction on External Europeanization, which emphasizes the EU´s relationship with its `near abroad´. The second part of this chapter explains, Manners´ (2002) Normative Power Europe concept, where he discusses how the EU diffuses norms and values in third countries, followed by Börzel and Risse´s (2009) mechanisms of diffusion in a regionalism perspective. I will additionally outline how both domestic and external pressure may impact EU policies. Finally, I characterize the concepts of EU legitimacy, coherence and credibility, and present the hypotheses formulated for this thesis.

2.1 The concept of (External) Europeanization

Europeanization serves as an analytical framework in the sense that Europeanization is not a theory per se, but is best understood as a conceptual tool that explains the complex dynamics of EU-triggered change in politics, policy and polity of (member) states. Research on Europeanization became significant in the late 1990s, when students of European integration became interested in the impact of European processes and institutions on member states. Although it is no longer a new concept in the European studies, it remains ill-defined, as there is much debate over the nature, causes and effects of Europeanization (Bulmer & Lequesne, 2013). As observed in literature, Europeanization is a phenomenon, a puzzle that requires further explanation (Graziano & Vink, 2008; Radaelli, 2004). Though the term has been described as 'multifaceted' (Olsen, 2003), Europeanization – as an outcome – refers to how EU institutions and policies affect the domestic level (top-down dimension) and vice versa (bottom-up dimension). Although the precise meaning of Europeanization has often been unclear, a well-used definition states the following;

> Processes of (a) construction (b) diffusion and (c) institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, ´ways of doing things´ and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU decisions and the incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures and public policy (Radaelli 2003, p.30).

Ladrech (1994) explains Europeanization as a top-down process converting change from the supranational level to the national level in decision-making politics, whereas Bulmer and Radaelli (2004) suggest that in an idealized form, there would be a clear vertical chain of command, in which EU policies are transferred from Brussels into the member states. Although the Europeanization concept remains unclear, different dimensions of the term offer a framework for further discussion.

For the EU as a regionally integrated system of liberal democracies, ´European Governance´ is defined by regionalism, supranational integration, multilateralism, transnational markets, the regulatory state, and democratic constitutionalism (Schimmelfennig, 2010, p.7). Europeanization in this context consists in the adoption of these principles beyond the EU. From its immediate neighbors in the Balkans and beyond, the EU proposes regional economic integration and the establishment of supranational organizations as a tool to bring peace and welfare to other parts of the world. Therefore, Europeanization in this regard is not restricted to member-states, it also reaches other parts of the world. The EU uses its own policy-making, "which it projects abroad and uses to spread its own rules beyond its borders" (Schimmelfennig, 2010, p.7).

The EU´s engagement with its "near abroad" (Papadimitriou & Petrov, 2012, p.745) has recently mushroomed extensive literature on the projection of EU power. The EU´s ability in terms of policy instruments and the number of countries it can reach, has sparked several new concepts to frame the essence of the process. Some have sought to conceptualize it as exporting Europeanization beyond the territorial borders of the EU (Fischer et.al., 2007; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2005). Others have discussed a process of external governance- that is, the ability of the EU to project aspects of its own governance to its neighbors (Lavenex, 2004; Lavenex & Schimmelfennig, 2011; Dimitrova & Dragneva, 2009). Underlying both perspectives is the importance of the EU´s conditionality strategy in the various frameworks of its external relations as a means of exerting pressure on third countries to adopt EU norms and rules (Papadimitriou & Petrov, 2012, p.748). The EU is therefore gradually expanding its sphere of influence beyond the circle of member states (Lavenex, 2004), which means one can assume that EU policies also impact abroad in one way or another.

The mechanism to Europeanize a potential candidate is "predominately conditionality" (Schimmelfennig, 2010, p.12). The main tools of the EU, consist in setting conditions for membership and at the same time "monitoring potential candidates` progress in compliance, and granting and withholding the reward accordingly" (Schimmelfennig, 2010, p.129). A government will adopt EU rules and norms, if the benefits of EU rewards exceed the domestic adoption costs (Schwartz, 2016). The external dimension of Europeanization´ purpose is to move away from the typical studies on the EU`s effects on member states, and offers a framework for analyzing the external effects on non-EU member states.

Recent literature shows that the external effects "take place along a continuum that runs from fully voluntary to more constrained forms of adaption, and include a variety of modes such as unilateral emulation, adaption by externality, and policy transfer through conditionality" (Lavenex & Ucarer, 2004, p.1). The Maastricht Treaty on the EU is according to Lavenex and Ucarar (2004) what started the Union`s goal of forming an identity on the international scene, and the common goal is to integrate and reflect on common policies and institutions on the outside world, "its dynamics can also be extended to states other than EU member states in so far as they refer to a process of change in national institutional and policy practices that can be attributed to European integration" (Hix & Goetz, 2000, p.27).

It can be claimed that Kosovo belongs in this dimension. Kosovo is a `state` beyond borders of membership. The EU is therefore using conditionality to transfer its norms and policies in what one could call a top-down process, without an actual promise of membership in the near future. This way the EU monitors Kosovo`s state-building process and security issues, but at the same time keeps it at an arm's length. Hix and Goetz (2004) claim that EU policies on third countries concerns whether these effects derive voluntarily or result from a series of factors that oblige adaption or change. In the case of Kosovo, the adaption may be best characterized as motivated by the conditionality linked to a potential future membership. However, this may also cause a stagnation due to the uncertain time frame within which adaption will be rewarded and "the questionable credibility of an unclear promise for membership" (Lavenex & Ucarar, 2004, p.433).

2.2 EU norms and values beyond borders: mechanisms of diffusion

As the discussion is shifting from analyzing individual member states to analyzing the EU as a distinct institution, the idea of the EU as a normative power has emerged. Former High Representative Javier Solana commented that, "the EU has responsibility to work for the global common good. That is a fitting way of describing the EU´s global role and ambition" (Aggestam, 2008, p.6). Manners has long argued that the EU is a normative power and he defines this as the way "it changes the norms, standards and prescriptions of world politics away from bounded expectations of state-centricity", which are "generally acknowledged, within the United Nations system, to be universally applicable (2002, p.45-46). Manners (2002) claims that the notion of the EU as a normative power is the desire to move beyond the debate over state-like features, and rather act by example.

Manners (2002) suggests several factors that contribute to the way the EU diffuses norms and values in its international relations. He classifies these factors from softer and general appliances to more concrete activities. The EU uses *Informational diffusion* in the process of shaping others conceptions. This technique is a result of tactical communication, such as dissemination of new policies. CSOs/NGOs use informational diffusion as lobbying tactics co-opting local citizens to put pressure on decision makers. *Procedural diffusion*, which involves the institutionalization of relations between the EU and its international partners in form of an inter-regional co-operation or a membership, is used as part of a procedural diffusion. Partners benefit from the result of political dialogues because it gives the partners the opportunity to be part of the decision-making process, e.g. NGOs/CSOs often participate in the processes of monitoring and in helping draw Progress Reports by offering direct information to the EU. *Transparence* is diffused as a natural step and is usually observed when the EU exchanges goods, aid, or technical assistance with third parties. Manners (2002) argues that *transparence* and *procedural diffusion* are linked with the principle of conditionality as it is often manifested in financial rewards or sanctions from the EU to its partners. *Overt diffusion* is the outcome of the EU´s physical presence in third countries. This may be identified by the monitoring routines and evaluations, as well as in the presence of EU delegations and embassies. Often EU funds to NGOs/CSOs are administered and redistributed by EU delegations and Liaison offices, this way the EU can monitor domestic actors on the ground. Another factor is the *Cultural diffusion*, which is seen in the effects of international norms and political learning, in which actors are involved on a cultural interplay regarding the construction of

knowledge and the building of political identity.

Börzel and Risse (2009) emphasize the importance of the EU´s cooperation agreements with third countries as they increase the Union´s capability to spread required norms and values in the international scene. They define diffusion as "…processes through which ideas, policies, and institutions spread transnationally, i.e., cross-border and cross-regions, across time and space" (Börzel & Risse, 2009). Further, Börzel and Risse (2009), present five factors of diffusion the EU applies on its external relations. They can be subsumed under three major logics of social action that are based in assumptions about actors and their relations with social structures and institutions (Börzel & Risse, 2009):

1) Instrumental rationality or rational choice
2) Normative rationality
3) Communicative rationality or logic of arguing

These three logics give rise to different expectations as to "when and how actors seek to promote ideas and decide to adopt them" (Börzel & Risse, 2009). Based on these logics they identify five different mechanisms of diffusion:

Coercion implies that an actor has no choice but to accept an idea because the legal obligation from the Union´s side is too powerful. However, Börzel and Risse (2009) argue that the EU, on its external relations, does not have a coercive power. A mechanism of this manner can be too challenging regarding both time and resources which is why the EU invests in the use of mechanisms that involve dialogue, learning-processes, and promotion of EU values and norms.

Manipulation of utility calculations refers to the EU´s use of positive incentives by giving access to markets, financial and technical assistance, or negative incentives, as sanctions or by empowering domestic actors who push for the adoption of ideas. Domestic actors in this case may well be NGOs/CSOs, because they can serve as actors who push for policy-change and act as watch-dogs to the government. Conditionality and external incentives are integral parts of this mechanism. With the use of conditionality, the EU tries to manipulate the cost-benefit calculations through creating positive and/or negative incentives (Börzel & Risse, 2009). The principle of conditionality is often presented on the cooperation agreement between the EU and its target country. In the context of the EU´s role as a state-builder in third countries, the principle of conditionality is apparent as an instrument in which democracy can be promoted by the EU when

negotiating partnership agreements (Lavenex & Schimmelfennig, 2011).

Socialization is based on the ´logic of appropriateness´ and normative rationality. Socialization implies that an actor is willing to adopt EU norms and values because it is the right thing to do, and not due to profits. This mechanism is related to pressure form one actor to the other, and involves a learning process in which actors redefine their interest and identity (Börzel & Risse, 2009). The EU´s can empower NGOs/CSOs to act as agent of change through direct support and by an indirect legitimization of the democracy cause. It can serve as reference point about the appropriate democratic action, and this way shape societal understandings of the right democratic behavior. Therefore, NGOs/CSOs will seek the appropriate thing to do. By helping NGOs/CSOs take up their role as democracy watchdogs in their polity, the EU can have a more profound and more durable effect on democratization beyond its borders.

Persuasion is based on the actor's ability to use argumentation, reason and normative statements. This mechanism emphasizes the importance of involving non-state actors in the process of persuasion. The importance of including NGOs/CSOs in this process is that they have the ability of presenting domestic actors' international ideas and in influencing actors into accepting them (Börzel & Risse, 2009).

Emulation is characterized by indirect influence, as this mechanism is based on the principles of lesson-drawing and competition, where actors borrow ideas from each other. Actors may also see how policies help other countries before transferring them into the domestic context. Local NGOs/CSOs have often been identified as playing a crucial role in facilitating emulation of European norms. Often influence stems from personal interactions between members of NGOs/CSOs and e.g. EU officials (Börzel & Risse, 2009).

Figure 1 The EU toolbox for external diffusion of ideas

Diffusion mechanism	Instrument
Coercion	Legal or physical force- military intervention
Manipulation of Utility Calculations	Conditionality
Socialization and Persuasion	Political dialogue
Emulation	Conditionality, political dialogue

Source: (Börzel & Risse, 2009)

The toolbox presented on Figure 2 illustrates how instruments as political dialogue and conditionality are decisive in the way the EU diffuses ideas on its external relations to ensure the successful promotion of required norms and values, e.g. human rights and democracy. Additionally, the toolbox also exemplifies how the mechanisms of socialization and persuasion benefit from the use of political dialogue as the main instrument of diffusion. The process of learning is therefore important for both mechanisms. By way of illustration, Börzel and Risse (2009) argue that while socialization is based on the logic of appropriateness, in which actors seek the right thing to do, persuasion is based on the logic of arguing, in which actors intend to pursue each other through reason-giving and normative statements. *Persuasion* is often used to describe the way in which some NGOs/CSOs work. Their persuasive power may lead to change, because they use it in pushing for policy-change at the government level.

Despite the well-used mechanisms to diffuse norms and values in third countries, their success is largely determined by both internal and external factors. Conditionality is the most explored area in the more recent External Europeanization literature. In a top-down perspective, scholars of External Europeanization tend to look at domestic aspects as barriers rather than possible drivers of change. According to Yilmaz and Soyaltin (2014), top-down researchers have therefore limited the research range and brought danger of overlooking possible explanatory factors in the domestic area, such as internal pressure for change. A way to look at Europeanization is as an interactive process between domestic and EU-related factors, therefore one needs to apply both the push and the pull factors. According to Börzel (2000), the main proposition of the pull-and-push model is that pressure from below (i.e. pull) and pressure from above (i.e. push) increase the adoption and implementation of EU rules. The literature suggests two possible explanations for compliance with EU norms and rules. One is based on rational choice assumptions, assigning primary importance to actors´ cost-benefit calculations in making compliance decisions, while the other focuses on norms and values, and puts emphasis on normative considerations as a driver of behavioral change (Schimmelfennig, 2010; Börzel, 2000).

Börzel (2010) presents which factors are decisive for the impact of the EU´s normative power. She points out the *cost of the adaption* as the first challenge, referring to costs of possible reforms and the cost of implementation of new law in the target country. Secondly, she refers to the *external push* to adopt the EU´s requirements. On this, she refers to political pressure during the negotiation process and before two parties consolidate an agreement. The third factor will depend on the target

country´s capacity to *adapt* to the EU´s requirements, e.g. the institutional ability to formulate and implement reforms. The target country should also maintain *willingness* to respond to the EU´s demands and promote domestic changes, and at the same time, the target country should be able resist EU pressure (Börzel, 2010).

Interdependence between the EU and the target country can play a huge role in the degree of political pressure the EU can apply on third countries (Börzel, 2010). With this observation, she suggests that target countries might have a positive outcome from improving their relations with the EU as it may lead to access to trade benefits and economic integration. However, she points out that it is not unlikely that the country may be in possession of something that may be of interest for the EU. This increases the interdependency between actors and affects the way the EU negotiates with third countries (Börzel, 2010)

2.3 EU legitimacy, credibility and (in)coherence

The EU´s leadership capacities have the last years been under scrutiny, with the economic crises, Brexit, the refugee crisis and several other internal problems. External actors' perceptions usually orbit around questions concerning the EU´s ability to act as a legitimate actor, if it can offer promises that are considered credible, and if its policies are perceived as coherent. These three aspects are important if the EU is to be successful and effective as an external actor beyond its borders. Experts on EU foreign policy have for many years commented upon the significance of outsiders´ perceptions of the EU, and external perceptions´ impact upon the effectiveness of EU policies (Elgström, 2015). In other words, what the world thinks about the EU is an important factor in facilitating or opposing the achievements of EU policies (Lucarelli, 2013). Therefore, external images of the EU help to assess whether the EU can be considered a normative power.

Legitimacy is defined as "a generalized perception of the assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (Suchman, 1995, p.574). Hurd (1999) claims that there are three reasons why an actor may follow the policy advice from another actor: (1) because the actor fears the consequences of not doing so, (2) because it views the advice to be in its own self-interest, and (3) because it believes that the other actor is legitimate (Hurd, 1999, p.376). Legitimacy can therefore be explained as a source of influence and a component of "soft power", thus the greater legitimacy

an actor has, the easier will it be for it to persuade others into accepting its polices. In EU literature, there is a distinction between input and output legitimacy. Output referring to effectiveness of the EU´s policy outcomes for the people, and input, referring to the EU´s responsiveness to citizen concerns as a result of participation by the people (Schmidt, 2012, p.2). A dilemma for the EU is the fact that once it has started to hand out economic support, or to make unilateral concessions, external expectations tend to rise. To keep aid in pace with expectations often results in problems for the EU (Elgström, 2015).

Like legitimacy, an actor´s *credibility* is a subjective quality and depends on perceptions of resource availability, of (dis) unity and (in)coherence (Elgström, 2015). If promises, threats or other types of commitments are not perceived as being legitimate, other actors are not likely to take them seriously. One possible obstacle is domestic resistance to policy decisions. If a national parliament, or national veto players can be predicted not to support a decision, this will ultimately affect the EU´s credibility. (In)coherence will have an impact over the Union´s bargaining credibility and hurt its negotiation strength. External actors will be less likely to obey if you have a reputation of being unpredictable, rather than if you have a consistent record of accomplishing your commitments. (Elgström, 2015, p.6). In its relations with third countries, a lack of credible commitment to e.g. economic support or membership, the EU´s repeated promises will by actors be viewed as mere rhetoric.

To draw conclusions on the specific nature of the EU as a foreign policy actor, one should be able to answer the question as to how the EU deals with coherence. Coherence is best understood as a norm in guiding foreign policy as well as other international actors (Portela, 2009). EU literature has over the past years shed light on the obligation of the EU to live up to its promise to ensure the coherence of its policies. Hillion defines coherence "beyond the assurance that the different policies do not legally contradict each other, as a quest for synergy and added value in the different components of EU policies (Hillion, 2008, p.17). The measurement of consistency is straightforward: a policy is coherent or it is not. One can conceive different degrees of coherence: something can be "more or less coherent" (Missiroli, 2001, p.4). The works of EU enlargement and Europeanization focus on the transformative power of EU accession and membership and analyze the impact of conditionality on domestic politics. However, the situation becomes much more complicated when enlargement or pre-accession are accompanied by proper foreign and security policy initiatives, including state-building. Papadimitriou and Petrov (2013) claim that this

brings into the discussion a whole new set of elements. The questions that arise are thus related to how to coordinate actors and instruments across the former EU pillars and create synergy in the EU´s external action in an environment that is also shared with other international actors with the same goals. Coherence, as one of the principles guiding the Unions policy-making, requires a consistency in the EU's external relations, security and development programs with the Union's core values (Algieri, 1999).

Nutall (2005) makes a distinction between three types of coherence in the EU system, *horizontal*, *institutional* and *vertical*; however, one more category can be added, namely *implementation* coherence; *Horizontal* coherence implies that policies with external repercussions, pursued by different parts of the EU, should be consistent with each other. *Institutional* coherence put emphasis on external relations positions being coherent, regardless of whether decisions are taken in a supranational or an intergovernmental context. Vertical coherence addresses coherence among and between member states and EU institutions. *Implementation* coherence means consistency between words and actions (Nutall, 2005). Institutional coherence seldom seems to pose any major problems as the EU is mostly pictured as one monolithic actor, however horizontal and vertical incoherence are viewed as key types of the consistency problem, especially in the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) (Elgström, 2015).

2.4 Hypotheses

Researchers using qualitative methods will have an indication as to what the findings and conclusions to their research will be, therefore formulating hypotheses can be very useful, not only for the researcher, but also for the reader. The research question will be exposed to the External Europeanization approach and further discussed in the framework of the instruments and mechanisms of diffusion, push and pull factors, and EU legitimization, coherence and credibility. The four hypotheses are therefore drawn from the analytical considerations, and will further be used to answer the research question.

The analytical framework offers different explanations as to how and why the EU diffuses norms and values in third countries. Additionally, legitimization, coherence, and credibility may offer further clarifications to the question on whether NGOs´/CSO´ impact capacity is evident. The idea is to tie the findings regarding the research question back to these analytical approaches. Based on the analytical reflections, I have formulated the following hypotheses:

i. The more NGOs/CSOs can draw from the instrument of political dialogue, through diffusion mechanisms such as socialization and persuasion, the more impact will they have on policy-making and institution building.

ii. Pressure from below (i.e. pull) and pressure from above (i.e. push) increase the adoption and implementation of EU rules, norms and values, and therefore NGOs'/CSOs' ability to impact policy making and institution building will depend on both domestic and external factors.

iii. NGOs'/CSOs' ability to impact policy making and institution building is dependent on the coherence of EU policies. Therefore, for NGOs/CSOs to have an impact on policy making and institution building, the EU needs to be more coherent with its policies towards the country.

iv. The EU´s lack of credibility regarding its enlargement policy weakens EU integration in Kosovo. Lack of credibility therefore limits NGOs'/CSOs' capacity to impact policy making and institution building.

3. The research design

The research design offers a framework on how to proceed in order to collect, process and analyze data. It builds on key scientific standards that apply regardless of which choice of method is made. Emphasis on scientific principles is what separates research from other procedures for answering questions about actual conditions (Hellevik, 2011). A conscious and critical reflection on the research design and methodology is therefore essential in any scientific work. A prerequisite for a good discussion regarding the research design is a clear understanding and explanation of the strengths and weaknesses of the choice of method (George & Bennett, 2005).

King, Keohane and Verba (1994) define research in social sciences through four characteristics. First and foremost, the objective is to draw conclusions. Secondly, the procedures must be public, so that the results can be tested and verified by others. Thirdly, one must recognize that the conclusions are uncertain. A scientific work requires that one reflects on the uncertainty (King et. al. 1994). This also applies qualitative studies where one cannot report in terms of numbers and percentages. Finally, content is method, which means that the validity of a scientific work is reliant on the methodical quality (King et. al., 1994). Gerring (2011) states that work on the field of political science is disposed to a great deal of uncertainty, "the causes and effects of democratization or the causes of economic growth will never be known with the same degree of precision as the effect of de-worming on school-attendance" (Gerring, 2011, p.633).

In the following chapter I will review the choice of method, the data collection and the research design, and thus discuss the methodical challenges through validity and reliability. Empirical data has been collected through interviews with key informants from Kosovo and Brussels, as well as through document analysis composed of relevant books, articles and various official documents. I consider that a qualitative approach to this research is more appropriate than a quantitative one, as a qualitative case-study provides the researcher with the opportunity to have personal contact with the chosen case (Hellevik, 2011), and because a single case study offers a deeper and more detailed understanding of a single phenomenon.

3.1 Case study as a method

Much of what we know about the empirical world is presented through case studies and the method still accounts for a large proportion of research carried out by scholars in political science (Gerring, 2004). A case study involves intensive examination of information about a single or small number

of cases (Thagaard, 2013). The interest and the need for a case study design emanates from the opportunity it gives to understand complex social phenomena. A case study enables real-life perspectives to understand processes. It is close to real-life, and thus tests an occurrence directly related to how it unfolds in practice (Flyvbjerg, 2006). There is no objective formula as to when use a case study, as it mainly depends on what it is you want to answer. The more a question seeks to explain how and why certain social phenomena unfold, the more relevant will a case study be (Yin, 2014).

There is no common understanding as to what a case study refers to, and there is an on-going discussion as to what case studies are or should be within the social sciences. Some argue that case studies are a sub-branch to "real" science, while others see it is an alternative approach to conventional science, however what these two perspectives have in common is that they claim that case-studies are limited to generalization (Andersen, 1997). Single case studies have been criticized for containing limited benefits for theory development (Hellevik, 2011). Still, others view the case study method as an independent scientific approach, with the intent to generalize (Andersen, 1997). However, the problem of representativeness cannot be ignored if the aim of the study is to reflect on a broader population of cases (Seawright & Gerring, 2008), at the same time a truly representative case is not necessarily easy to identify. Gerring defines a single case study as "an intensive study of a single unit… a spatially bounded phenomenon – e.g. a nation-state, revolution, political party, election, or person – observed at a single point in time or over some delimited period of time" (2004, p.342).

One of the main reasons I chose Kosovo as a case is because its uniqueness can help build new understandings and knowledge about the research problem. When going through various official documents, articles and reports, it became evident that even though a great amount of research has been conducted on Kosovo/EU relations, not much research exists on the field of EU- funded NGOs´/CSOs´ impact capacity on policies and institutions of state-building in Kosovo. The reason I chose Kosovo as a case is first and foremost because it is my home country, but also because one can find attributing factors that do not exist in other countries in the region, e.g. its contested statehood, the country's very complex relationship with the EU, and its geo-political issues, making it a *sui generis* case.

3.2 Data collection

Qualitative researches intends to understand, describe and explain social developments through a variety of approaches (Gibbs, 2008). The purpose of the data collection is that it will clarify certain problems. Data quality in social sciences depends on several factors. The main prerequisites for data quality are; 1) data must be based on correct information; 2) data must be based on logic and on precise concepts and linguistic formulations; 3) the selection of texts must be done in accordance with the issue in a proper field; 4) researchers should be careful with information selection (Grønmo, 2004, p.218).

3.2.1 Interview

The interview is the predominant method in qualitative research and can be designed in several forms. From one extreme, characterized by following a structured template constructed of the same questions in the same order, to a more open and conversation-based structure. The most common form is the semi-structured approach, where the themes are decided in advance, but the interviews are characterized by flexibility (Thagaard, 2013).

The thesis draws from semi-structured interviews, where the theme of the interview was decided beforehand, but the interview conduction was rather flexible. An interview guide containing 17 questions aiming to steer the topic, was sent out to the interviewees in advance. This was done to give the partakers a hint of what to expect, but also to ensure that they agreed to participate. The first six questions are more general and technical, whereas the rest are analytical questions in order to go below the surface. Key questions focus on the perceived roles of NGOs and CSOs as agents for change, democracy promotion as well as positive and/or negative effects triggered by EU funding, EU monitoring, expectations in the context of Europeanization and democratization policies, and the role of NGOs in state-building processes? Nine interviews were conducted in total. I did not decide on a specific sample size beforehand, however participation, resources and time only allowed for a smaller number.

The interview process started while I was finishing an internship in Brussels from September – December 2016, and during a visit to Kosovo in December 2016. During these trips, I interviewed officials from EU institutions in Brussels, as well as NGO/CSO stakeholders in Kosovo. In Brussels, I conducted interviews with EU officials from the Directorate General for Neighborhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), from the European Commission (EC), as well as an

official from the Republic of Kosovo Embassy in Belgium. In Kosovo, I interviewed NGO/CSO stakeholders ranging from project coordinators, managers and CEO´s, and across different fields, e.g. human rights, minority issues, gender equality, advocacy and youth. Several interviewees requested to remain anonymous. For this reason, the names of the respondents are not mentioned in this thesis. The ethical guidelines on which project planning is based on, emphasizes the moral principle of respect for human privacy, their anonymity and their right to participate or not (Thagaard, 2013).

The main reason for conducting the interviews both in Brussels and Kosovo, was so that I could gather perspectives from both sides. Interviewing officials in Brussels allowed me to get an apprehensive picture of the situation in Kosovo from afar, whereas interviewing NGO/CSO stakeholders in Kosovo offered a more comprehensive picture of the situation on the ground. This provided me with the dynamics required to understand and analyze the extent of the role NGOs/CSOs play regarding policy implementation and institution building, and the effects one can observe.

Qualitative studies are based on strategic choices (Thagaard, 2013), i.e. we choose participants who have characteristics or qualifications that are strategic in relation to the research question. The sampling of the interviews is based on a *non-probability sampling* technique. Qualitative research uses non-probability sampling as it does not aim to produce a statistically representative sample or draw statistical inference. (David & Sutton, 2004). Purposive sampling is often employed in a qualitative study. *Purposive sampling* implies that the number of people interviewed is less important than the criteria used to select them (David & Sutton, 2004). I thought it necessary to decide what characteristics I needed to reflect in the sample population in order to address the research question. To decide, it was compulsory to conduct a review of the current literature as well as keep in mind key definitions in my thesis, such as policy implementation, institution building, state-building, Europeanization, NGO/CSO and so forth. However, in the end, the interview sample was to a degree influenced by the interviewees willingness to participate. To gather as much data as possible, I decided to conduct longer interviews to create more depth.

However, I have also used the so-called *snowball sampling* technique, which implies that the sample-size to begin with is small, but gradually expands. I contacted organizations which had the qualities or qualifications relevant to the research question. I then asked these for the names of

others who had the corresponding qualities. The problem with this technique is that the selection may consist of organizations/people within the same network (Thagaard, 2013). However, I did first contact organizations from different networks, and thereafter asked for recommendations.

What I also needed to keep in mind were the challenges that follow when one selects the interview method. *Social desirability* bias refers to the tendency of research objects to give socially desirable answers instead of choosing responses that are reflective to their own true feelings (Grimm, 2010). This can become a major issue when the study involves socially sensitive issues such as politics, religion, environment, corruption and so forth. While conducting the interviews, both in Kosovo and Brussels, the respondents could at times exaggerate the success of a situation, whether it be the sustainability of a project or the ability to influence the government. This was perhaps to present themselves in a brighter light. However, the answers did at times not match reality. As I could not use a professional interviewer, a mechanism to prevent the bias, the avoidance of *social desirability* was problematic, however with the use of the document analysis method, I could reduce the bias by using e.g. progress reports on Kosovo. Fisher (1993) claims that one can further reduce `social desirability` bias if the interview questions are formed in an indirect way. The interview guide is constructed out of indirect questions, therefore this also allows me to argue that the bias is somewhat reduced.

Self- selection occurs when participants select themselves into a group causing a biased sample with non-probability sampling. This can also apply to my thesis as the interviewees decided by themselves if they had the desire to participate. In *self-selection* bias, there may occur several differences among the participants who choose to participate, such as the size of organization/institution they are a part of, resources, personal-beliefs, or the fact that the interviewees that chose to participate may have had better experiences with EU-funds, then the participants that did not choose to participate. This can cause a bias which will affect the reliability of this thesis. To avoid the bias, I have interviewed organizations which have applied and received at least 2-3 EU-funded projects, and at the same time, interview members in organizations that have the same capacities concerning resources, funding and personnel. I have in other words tried to match the people in my study and control groups as closely as possible. It is however important to mention that I cannot entirely overcome the *self-selection* bias, as the sample-size of the interviews is rather small. To get a clearer picture of the organizations I have interviewed on the ground, I have outlined their aims and goals, as well as their EU projects:

NGO/CSO working within the field of minority issues

The organization works within the field of protection and promotion of the rights and interests of all minority communities in Kosovo. The organizational goal is to provide an inclusive, democratic and stable multi-ethnic society in Kosovo (Interview #7). The NGO engages in a wide range of activities aimed at stabilizing inter-ethnic relations and in ensuring the effective implementation of the legal, policy and institutional framework for the protection of human rights. The organization uses a two-pronged focus, combining top-down implementation and bottom-up feedback, where they provide capacity-building and policy recommendations to government institutions for them to function effectively, accountably, and transparently (Interview #7). To achieve their mission, the organization conducts a wide range of activities, including capacity-building, monitoring, policy research, and awareness-raising.

The organization is currently working with several EU-funded projects, one of them being support to education in Serbian language in Kosovo. The project aims to help improve the quality of Serbian-language education and increase representation of minority communities in Kosovo institutions to enhance the existing Dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia. The project will seek to cooperate with the Ministry of Education. Not only is the project seeking to improve Serbian-language education, but also give greater representation to non-majority communities within public institutions of Kosovo (European Union, 2016).

NGO/CSO working within the field of youth

The organization is a value-based NGO made up of volunteers that aim to inspire and encourage youth leadership, and to empower communities. Their vision is to be a strong, credible organization working locally, nationally and internationally. Additionally, their aim is to build future and present leaders and invest in the youth of Kosovo. (Interview #6). Their purpose is to promote peace and unity, and celebrate each other's differences and diversity, and at the same time push for youth issues at the governmental and local level (Interview #6).

The NGO has worked with several EU funded projects in the past, one being a leadership program aimed at strengthening youth leadership capacities. The project was based on including young people from different municipalities and communities, including Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian and Serbian communities. The projects´ goal was to develop future leaders capable of being founders of own businesses.

NGO/CSO working within the field of anti-corruption and democracy

The goal of this organization is to limit the influence of political corruption in Kosovo´s public institutions. To reduce corruption and to pave the way for development, the NGO is committed to transparent and accountable institutions. Within its activities, the NGO monitors suspected cases of corruption in Kosovo courts, monitors and reports on corruption cases and reviews and proposes changes to the legal and institutional infrastructure against corruption (Interview #5). Reviewing and analyzing public procurement contracts is an activity in which the organization is specialized and has developed self-research methodologies, thus generating important data on public spending. The organization is currently working with several EU-funded projects revolving around freedom of speech, democracy promotion and awareness-raising.

NGO/CSO working within the field of law and politics

The organization is an independent and non-profit public policy organization. Their main aim is to conduct credible policy research in the fields of politics, law and economics and to push forward policy solutions that address the failures or tackle the problems in public policy. The NGO is determined to support the democratization of the polity regarding institutional and substantive policy reform. They want to help improve regional cooperation, to enhance economic growth and to strengthen the rule-of-law capacity and performance through informed policy solutions and advocating strategies (Interview #1). The organization receives EU-funding to complete extensive research within different policy areas. The aim is to use this research at awareness-raising in government institutions. Additionally, the research should make it easier for NGOs/CSOs to policy influence.

NGO/CSO working within the field of gender equality

The mission of this organization is to integrate sensitive gender-issues in programs and policies in all sectors of Kosovo society by increasing awareness, increasing focus on gender issues in the Kosovo educational system, develop gender studies and ensuring the inclusion of gender sensitive policies in the public sector. They aim to be a strong research institute, where local and international governmental and non-governmental institutions can gather policy recommendation and research that exemplifies and inclusive gender perspective (Interview #4). An EU project the organization is currently working with focuses in engaging women in political processes. The aim is to encourage young women to successfully compete in politics and public institutions and improve

policies fostering greater involvement for women. The outcome goal is to raise awareness on the importance of full participation of women in the public and political scene.

NGO/CSO working within the field democracy promotion

The organization is founded on the beliefs on democratic values and in a democratic Kosovo. The NGOs goal is to support values and practices in the scope of good governance, rule of law, elections and political parties, social issues, and human rights. The aim is to create a society where democratic values and culture are the norm. Their mission is to impact decision-making and strengthening the participation of citizens in public policymaking and implementation (Interview #3). The NGO is currently working on a EU project which aims at strengthen the role of civil society in promoting human rights and democratic reform. The goal is to promote issues covered by the EU Human Rights guidelines and in the EU´s Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy.

3.2.2 Document analysis

Document analysis is described as a qualitative content analysis. In document analysis, one must gather data in order to reveal important correlations and information about the conditions of society one wants to study (Grønmo, 2004, p.120). The word ´document´ can be used to describe all written sources that are relevant to the researcher during the analysis, ranging from official documents, such as white papers and annual reports, to documents of a more personal nature, such as letters. When taking into use a document analysis, documents should be evaluated by the context in which they are put in (Thagaard, 2003). The documents can vary, both in form and context. When it comes to form, documents often have a written presentation, but they can also be audio recordings of oral presentations and visuals.

The thesis focuses on sources in written form. The document analysis consists of primary documents, such as public records collected in the EU´s own database, e.g. Kosovo progress reports from 2014-2016 published by the EC. The progress reports paint a picture of Kosovo´s Enlargement Strategy and other main challenges Kosovo faces in its relations with the EU. The document analysis also contains statements from EU officials regarding both NGOs/CSOs as domestic actors for change; the EU´s civil society policy towards Kosovo; as well as the SAA between Kosovo and the Union. I will also benefit from documents published by Kosovo Civil Society Foundation (KCSF), namely, *Kosovo Civil Society Index* (2016) and *Kosovo Civil Society*

Dialogue (2013), as well as Technical Assistance for Civil Society Organizations (TACSO) reports, *Civil Society in Kosovo* (2010), *Advocacy and Policy Influencing for Social Change* (2011), and EuropeAid´s (2007) *Strengthening project internal monitoring. How to enhance the role of EC task managers*. As secondary literature, I will profit from articles and other media coverage to understand the relationship between NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo and the EU, as well as the European Union Office in Kosovo, the European External Action Service (EEAS), The European Commission (EC) websites, to get an overview of the situation regarding NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo.

3.3 Methodological challenges

There are methodological challenges to each research design. As this thesis examines an understudied area where the thematic of NGOs/CSOs as agents for change in Kosovo is not altogether a known fact, and having in mind that few researchers exist on the EU´s diffusion of norms and values in Kosovo, I consider that these two issues set limitations to the data collection. Moreover, the issue of distance also occurs, as I am writing this paper in Norway. Even though I conducted the interviews face-to-face in Kosovo and Brussels, I have collected a great amount of data through the internet, therefore only news articles that have been published and replicated in multiple global papers have been analyzed. This has been done to enhance the credibility of the findings because credibility depends on the quality of the data.

Due to the above-mentioned obstacles, I consider that the methodological challenges for this thesis is the validity and the reliability of the data collection. Validity refers to the relevance of the research design with respect to the research question (Hellevik, 2011). Is the research design measuring the data that was intended to be measured in order to get a valid result? The reliability refers to the consistency and the accuracy of the research design. It deals with the quality of the data collected and refers to the probability of other researchers making the same observations when studying the same object (Gibbs, 2008). High reliability is necessary to have high validity (Hellevik, 2011). A successful case study is reliant on the data collection, assuming it has both high validity and that the data collected is highly accurate in relation to the theoretical framework.

Considering that an important source of the data collection are the official documents from the EU, it can be assumed that this represents a challenge for the reliability of the study, as it is likely that these documents are providing unilateral information and that they function as example-settings for the EU´s enlargement policy. In order to tackle this challenge, the informants selected for my

interviews range from different organizations and institutions which will give a more holistic and impartial understanding of the case study.

Another obstacle which occurs is that when choosing a single case one can set limitations to identify, not only the EU´s role as a diffuser of norms, values and so forth, but also how EU-funded NGOs/CSOs impact on Kosovo institutions in terms of policy-making and institution building. A smaller number of interviews may lead to them not being sufficiently representative. However, the NGOs/CSOs interviewed are large organizations with high capacities and funding, because several interviews were conducted in Pristina, which is where most large NGOs/CSOs operate and because the EU primarily funds organizations which have surficial experience.

4. The EU, NGOs/CSOs and Kosovo

This chapter seeks to give an overview of the Kosovo-EU relationship. The first part of this chapter characterizes the economic and political relationship between Kosovo and the Union, focusing on the EU´s presence in Kosovo and the SAA. The second part of this chapter explores NGO/CSO activities in Kosovo and funding.

The EU has, as also mentioned earlier, managed to earn the title as the largest donor to Kosovo´s reconstruction since the conflict in 1998-1999, and is to this day a major influence on the policies of the Kosovo government (Venner, 2016). Even though Venner (2016) claims that its activities in

the country have been criticized to be more concerned with the development of the EU rather than the development of Kosovo, its policies aim to a degree transform the political and economic situation in the country.

The EU is engaged in the process of reform and transformation in the less- developed country for it to adopt ´European standards´ (European Commission, 2014). According to Venner (2016), EU activities in Kosovo need to be understood in the light of the EU´s internal market, as well as its prior involvement in the economic and political transformation in other former socialist countries. Since the 1950s, the EU has evolved into a comprehensive political and economic union, "the 1986 `Single European Act´ intensified the process of removing all barriers to trade and commerce between EU member states" (Venner 2016, p.52). In 1992, the Maastricht Treaty established the basis for a monetary union and presented a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), which provided the EU with the opportunity to act externally to promote democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

According to Radeljic (2014), Kosovo was mentioned as early as 1981 in the available transcripts of European Parliament debates, following the riots starting at the University of Pristina. The debates expressed concern to the Yugoslav government and requested that "the Albanian section of the population of Yugoslavia to be guaranteed equal opportunities for development in economic, social and cultural spheres" (Radeljic, 2014, p.432). By the end of the 1980s the Europeans had become aware of the situation and the growing tension in the former Yugoslavia. Aware of the possible problems surrounding the implementation of its Resolution 1244 adopted in June 1999, the UN welcomed the European Union to develop a wide-ranging approach to the economic development and stabilization of the region affected by the Kosovo crisis (Radeljic, 2014, p.434). The EAR was launched in 2000, and the SAA was introduced in 2001. However, Radeljic (2014) states that at the time, Kosovo´s independence was not on the agenda and that technically, Kosovo was still part of Yugoslavia.

The *acquis communautaire* is an approximately 80.000-page volume of EU directives, which must be adopted into the legislation of member-states, "accepting and enacting all elements of the *acquis,* translating EU legislation into national legislation, and demonstrating that it is implemented…, is thus a pre-condition for membership (Venner, 2016, p.52). This process of EU enlargement through adoption of EU norms and values was successfully applied to newly democratic states of CEE,

resulting in their accession to the EU. Since 1999, a similar method has been extended to the countries of the WB, including Kosovo. The SAA signed between Kosovo and the EU contains further specific conditions such as, requirements to comply with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), and the requirement for Kosovo to improve its relations with Serbia (Venner, 2016).

Kosovo´s unilateral declaration of independence in February 2008 presented the international community, including the EU, with a serious political and legal challenge. For the EU, which has, since the Kosovo war in 1999, been closely involved in almost all aspects of governance in the province, the declaration of sovereignty by a politically and economically weak area posed difficulties. However, the challenges faced by post-independence Kosovo are not that dissimilar to those experienced by other post-socialist states within South East Europe and the former Yugoslavia (Fagan, 2011). Establishing a market economy, public administration reform, dealing with corruption and the adaption of EU norms and values are some of the issues which they have in common.

While some have praised the EU´s approach to state-building, arguing that it has stimulated economic and political growth in the country, and at the same time led to changes in law, policies and institutional transformation, (Anastasakis, 2015), others have criticized the asymmetrical, hierarchical relationship between the EU and Kosovo citing the demanding reform agenda, and expressed concern that "new rules and procedures introduced under EU pressure will lack political support and may be disregarded, contested or changed" (Klasnja, 2007, p.34).

4.1 Political and economic relations between the EU and Kosovo

The EU is active in Kosovo through the Special Representative (EUSR), and the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) mission in the rule of law area (EULEX). The Union is also present through member countries´ Embassies and Liaison offices.

The European Union Office in Kosovo plays an essential role in implementing the EU agenda in the territory, especially in the promotion of democratic principles and other EU norms and values. The Office ensures the existence of a permanent political and technical dialogue between Kosovo and the EU institutions. It offers advice and support to the Government of Kosovo, coordinates EU

presence, such as funding to civil society, and lastly, it ensures the promotion of human rights (ESDP, 2015).

EULEX is a deployment of EU police and civilian recourses to Kosovo, and it operates under the umbrella of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) established by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244. It is the largest civilian mission ever launched under the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP, 2016). EULEX operates as a technical mission that mentors, monitors and advises, but it holds several limited executive powers. However, its prosecutors, judges and investigators have the power to confront serious crime (Capussela, 2015). The rationale for this choice is that political corruption, organized crime, and poor governance are so pervasive in Kosovo that they threaten the stability of the Balkans and Europe´s internal security. (Capussela, 2015). EULEX is a rather controversial mission. Its poor performance and mistakes in particular, the confirmation of the untouchable status of the criminal segments of Kosovo´s elite, indirectly assisted them in strengthening their control over the country (Capussela, 2015). In other words, what was meant to prove the possibility of an effective common foreign policy, has resulted in a questionable mission.

The Stabilization and Association process (SAP) is the European policy framework for relations between the EU and the WB countries. The SAP is constructed to promote peace, stability, freedom, security and justice, prosperity and quality of life. The SAP also promotes the transition to a market economy, regional cooperation and preparation for EU accession (SAA, 2014). The EU has conducted several meetings with the Kosovo authorities as part of the Stabilization and Association Process Dialogue (SAPD). These meeting are meant to monitor the progress in the EU enlargement process, following the "carrots and sticks" approach (ESDP, 2016). The EU and Kosovo are now discussing several policy issues and agreeing on follow-up actions in meetings. Prior to each meeting which is held once a year, the EU discusses the same issues with local NGOs/CSOs to gather inputs and recommendations. Annual progress reports asses the readiness of Kosovo moving closer to the EU. Meetings have been set up for discussions on specific areas such as innovation; internal market; energy; economic and fiscal matters; and trade. The EU´s political commitment to Kosovo is two-fold, one going under the Unions security policy, while the other under the enlargement policy. The EU helps meet Kosovo´s institution building needs and socio-economic development, and both its member states and its institutions, especially the Commission, play a prominent role in the reconstruction of Kosovo.

The EU- Kosovo economic relationship is also specified in the SAA. The EU states that it will support the efforts of Kosovo to develop its economic cooperation, and at the same time it will promote harmonious economic relations and gradually develop a free trade area between the EU and Kosovo (SAA, 2015, p.8) However, Kosovo must respect the principles of market economy as reflected in the Document of the Bonn Conference on Economic Cooperation of the Conference on Security Cooperation in Europe. Article 94 of the SAA further emphasizes the importance of an economic relationship between Kosovo and the EU, that shall facilitate the process of economic reform by cooperating to improve understandings of "the fundamentals of their respective economics and the formulation and implementation of economic policy in market economies" (SAA, 2015, p.88).

Despite the continued political and economic presence of other international agencies, the Commission is now the territory´s largest single provider of aid by a wide margin, having committed 2 billion euros from 1999-2007 with an additional 60 million euros invested in 2008 as part of the IPA annual programme. Much of this aid is, and will be channeled directly or indirectly through NGOs/CSOs (European Commission, 2015).

4.2 NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo and their funding

Since the end of the conflict in 1999, the number of NGOs/CSOs has grown exponentially in Kosovo. However, despite more than 8,500 registered NGOs/CSOs and other unregistered initiatives, the number of active NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo is estimated to be around 1,500, where less than 1,000 had any financial activity or employees during 2015 (KCSF, 2016). Most NGOs/CSOs are small, in terms of both funding and staff. NGOs/CSOs based in Pristina and other regional centers in Kosovo dominate the sector. KCSF states that, "the trend of registration of new NGOs has been stable for the past six years, with around 500 new NGOs registered every year" (KCSF, 2016, p.7). KCSF argues that it is difficult to know the exact number of NGOs/CSOs that exist in a country, different criteria can be used, with each of them producing different results (KCSF, 2016). Data from the NGO Public Register of the Department for NGOs of the Ministry of Public Administration shows that a total of 8,112 national organizations and 456 international or foreign organizations are currently registered in Kosovo. Many of the registered NGOs do not exist at all, "since deregistration of an NGO is not mandatory, many of those registered in the NGO

Public register ended their activity without formally deregistering their organization" (KCSF, 2016, p.15).

The data from the Tax Administration of Kosovo (TAK) may offer a more accurate picture of NGOs/CSOs active in Kosovo. Since 2009, when the fiscal number was introduced in Kosovo, until the end of 2015, 2,230 NGOs have been issued a fiscal number, which is a precondition to administer any kind of taxes in Kosovo. Furthermore, during 2015, 748 NGOs submitted the required annual statements to TAK, 864 NGOs have paid taxes or declared some sort of financial transaction, and 927 NGOs have declared having employees during that year (KCSF, 2015, p.15).

Figure 2 NGOs in numbers
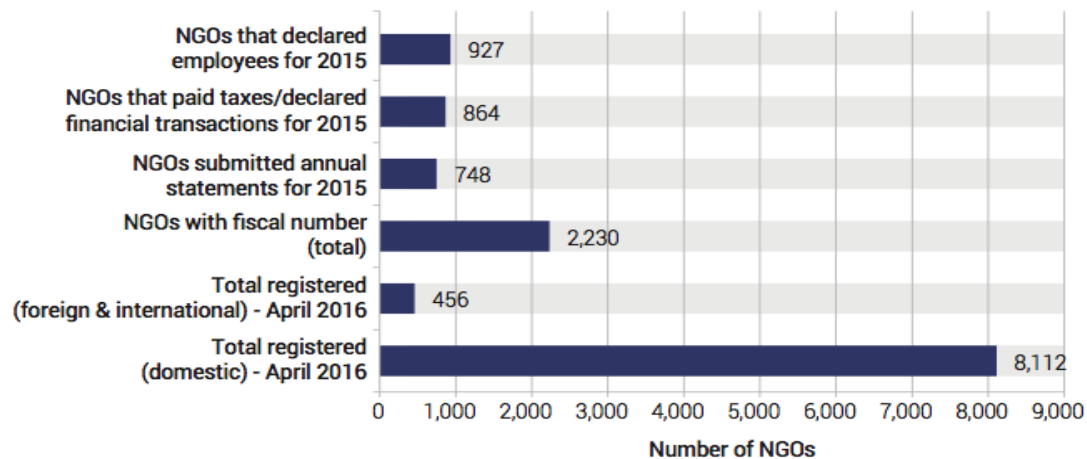
Source: (NGO Register and TAK, 2015)

The numbers presented in Figure 2 are combined numbers from both the TAK and the NGO register in Kosovo and offer a picture of the situation regarding NGOs/CSOs active in Kosovo. The number of total NGOs registered in April 2016 does not correlate with the actual NGOs/CSOs that pay taxes or NGOs/CSOs that have declared employees for 2015. Therefore, one could claim that it is difficult to accurately paint a picture of the active NGOs/CSOs operating in Kosovo. The numbers presented above offer an idea of the situation, however KCSF (2016) claims that registration is generally a poor reflection of agency, capacity or indeed levels of political engagement:

Many, if not most, registered CSOs are either moribund or dormant, or lacking sufficient capacity to carry out meaningful activities. Civil society´s voice is incoherent and its actions uncoordinated. Public understanding of the aims and values of civil society in Kosovo is confused and CSOs have so far failed to command significant public support for participation (KCSF, 2016, p.45).

Most NGOs/CSOs operate in urban areas, such as Pristina and Prizren. Almost three quarters of the registered NGOs/CSOs are located in the larger regional centers of Kosovo. Among them, more than half are located Pristina (KCSF, 2016, p.16). This is not strange, as big cities and capitals often attract businesses, but also people.

Figure 3 Geographical distribution of NGOs
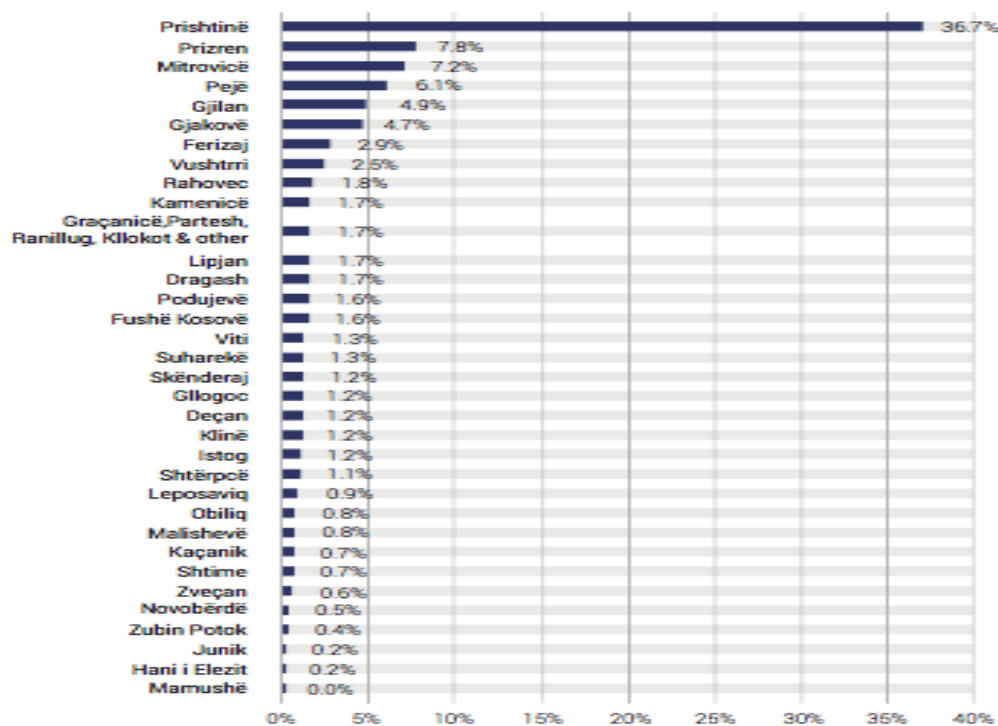
Source: (NGO Register, 2015).

Figure 3, Geographical distribution of NGOs, highlights that NGOs/CSOs in Pristina dominate the sector with 36,7%, while in Prizren, which is the second largest city in Kosovo, there is estimated to be only 7,8 % active NGOs/CSOs.

When it concerns area of focus, what NGOs declare their area of expertise during the registration process does not necessarily correspond with reality. KCSF presents three important features in their Kosovo Civil Society Index (2016, p.34):

1) The declared area of activities of many NGOs do not correspond with their actual daily areas of activities. This is the case for many NGOs and is most visible when they apply for funds. Donor agencies have raised the issue of NGOs applying for projects in certain fields that are not part of their mission or official area of activity. The same pattern has been confirmed also with Serbian NGOs in the northern part of Kosovo.

2) The areas of activities declared during registration tend to be very general, as to allow for full flexibility of operation: This is indicated by the fact that a major portion of NGOs categorized as "other" in the NGOs Registry fall in the ambiguous category of "society for society". The NGOs are put in this category when their mission and area of activity are too general to be placed in a specific category.

3) The information collected by the NGO Department is not systematic and does not provide reliable data on the real structure of the sector: This is observed not only by comparing the NGO Public sector vis-à-vis publicly available information of many active NGOs in Kosovo, but also by those who work directly with the civil society sector. To illustrate this, while the public register of the NGO Department lists only two NGOs which have declared minority rights as their main area of activities, a KCSF managed grant scheme, within a short period of time, received applications from seven NGOs that declare this area as their main area of activities. Similar examples can be found in the area of European integration, transparency, and citizen participation, among others.

Civil Society in Kosovo is very much dependent on foreign donors, with more than 70 % of funds coming from outside Kosovo (KCSF, 2016, p.38). The EU comes in third place as one of the largest contributors to Kosovo after Sweden´s SIDA and USAID (KCSF, 2016).

Although the EU falls under the categorization of the larger group of foreign donors, due to Kosovo´s EU perspective, the portion of NGOs/CSOs that received EU funds in 2015 is not very high, as only 17 % of the NGOs/CSOs that were reviewed, received EU funding (KCSF, 2016, p.69). The issues NGOs/CSOs face with the application and/or implementation of EU funds shows that only well-established NGOs/CSOs have the capacities to apply for and receive EU funds. Complicated procedures for application, high demands in time and human resources and difficulties in ensuring co-financing as required by the EU, are the main challenges NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo face (KCSF, 2012). The strict rules of the EU Practical Guide (EU PRAG) was reported as one of the main reasons for the low number of NGOs/CSOs receiving EU funds, however recent changes to the EU PRAG, using domestic capacities to manage funds for civil society and additionally using re-granting as a mechanism to reach smaller, more grassroots NGOs/CSOs, may make it easier for Kosovo NGOs/CSOs to apply and receive EU funds in the future (KCSF, 2016).

When discussing the agenda-setting for EU assistance, Fagan (2011) claims that a distinction needs to be made between general programming (IPA) and specific resources allocated for civil society e.g. EIDHR and Civil Society Facility (CSF). EIDHR funding is strategically planned in Brussels for the whole world as EIDHR is a global instrument and not specifically associated with enlargement. CSF priorities are undertaken in Brussels for the entire WB´s. However, national allocations and priorities have a clear provision and are determined by the EU office in Kosovo through regular meetings and consultations with civil society (Fagan, 2011).

5. Analysis

This chapter seeks to first analyze the data collection and then discusses the findings through the hypotheses drawing from the analytical framework. As the main purpose of this thesis is to determine whether EU-funded NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo have an impact on policy making and institution building, the chapter begins with an evaluation of EU civil society policy towards Kosovo. Secondly, the effects of EU funding are presented. Thirdly, the chapter seeks to trace NGO/CSO triggered change on the ground. Lastly, the data analysis serves as a backdrop to the discussion of whether the EU can use NGOs/CSOs to diffuse norms and values in Kosovo, and the chapter further assesses whether the EU´s legitimacy, coherence, and credibility as well as push and pull factors can affect NGOs´/CSOs´ level of impact.

5.1 Evaluating EU civil society policy towards Kosovo

To approach the possible impact NGOs/CSOs have on policy making and institution building in an orderly way, it is necessary to first evaluate and analyze EU civil society policy towards Kosovo to be able to consider what it is the EU wants to achieve in Kosovo by funding NGOs/CSOs. Civil society has a prominent role in reinforcing and supporting the political reform process taking place in Kosovo through initiatives that aim to strengthen democracy by funding NGOs/CSOs (Venner, 2016, p.55). The EC has listed a Civil Society Dialogue where NGOs/CSOs play a vital role in reforms carried out by candidates and potential candidates for EU membership. During the conference *Civil Society Development in Southeast Europe: Building Europe Together* held in Brussels in 2008, it was agreed that a permanent dialogue between the Commission and NGOs/CSOs from enlargement countries should be established through regular meetings (ESDP, 2015). Additionally, a platform for NGOs/CSOs from potential candidates and the EU was established to enhance dialogue, develop specific projects, and exchange best practices. According to a respondent, NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo regularly engage in dialogue with the EC Liaison Office to Kosovo during the progress report drafting where they offer their inputs, "NGOs/CSOs are the main feeder of information for performance of institutions and meeting conditional benchmarks within the enlargement policy" (Interview #1). According to the ESDP (2016), their work can prove crucial in determining the pace and quality of the Europeanization process as a well as in generating public support for accession:

An empowered civil society is a crucial component of any democratic system and should be recognized and treated as such by institutions in Kosovo. Civil society needs to continue to play a crucial role in the democratic debate and in participating in the design and implementation of public policy" (Kosovo Progress Report, 2016, p.9).

To explain the EU-civil society relationship in general, Ketola (2013) presents two policy streams to explain how the Union promotes its rules, norms and values in third countries, namely democracy and dialogue. Democracy and dialogue can also be used in this context to show what the EU wants to eventually achieve by funding NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo.

5.1.1 Democracy

The democratic standards included in the criteria are perhaps the most important when it concerns reforms the Kosovo government faces regarding potential EU accession. The importance of democracy is what defines the first of the three pillars that make up the Copenhagen Criteria forming the conditions of entry for all candidate countries since 1999 (Venner, 2016). The role of civil society is mainly framed within the first pillar, around democracy and human rights:

A well-developed and functioning civil society is an essential element of a democratic system and efficient NGOs have a key role to play in expressing the demands of citizens by encouraging the active participation as well as raising their awareness. Furthermore, many elements of the *acquis communautaire* are based on the existence of operational NGOs operating within the related policy area (European Commission, 2003, p.3).

A look at two different EU-funded projects presented in the DG-NEAR project outline for Civil Society Facility shows how projects are often justified based on their contribution to democracy and human rights. Çohu, a local CSO in partnership with Communication for Social Development are cooperating on the EU-funded project *Open Justice in Kosovo*. The aim of the project is to ensure an open justice system through strengthening the capacities of local CSOs. The project will strive to achieve the following objectives: monitor the general performance of justice institutions and the processes and conclusions of corruption; evaluate organized crime, ethnically motivated

crimes codified as human rights cases, LGBT and domestic violence; and prevent statutory limitations cases (DG NEAR, 2015).

The second project is carried out by the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) in Kosovo. The name of the project is *Empowering Non-Serb CSOs in Northern Kosovo*, and the main objectives are to raise awareness about communities in North Kosovo through increasing the capacities of 8-10 CSOs from non-Serb communities in North Kosovo through selected trainings and improved community outreach. The project also aims to develop and advance constructive cooperation and dialogue between 8-10 non-Serb CSOs and municipal officials to effectively represent non-Serb communities (DG NEAR, 2015).

The reasons given for why these projects are necessary are that they are essential for democracy, enhance human rights, and are required by the accession process. A dialogue between CSOs/NGOs and the public sector is important because it increases the democratic participation levels of NGOs/CSOs. The democracy policy stream can be linked to conditionality as a means to pressure third countries to adopt EU norms and values. "One of the objectives of the EU´s engagement in Kosovo appears under the enlargement policy, which more generally is the policy aim of conditionality that the EU tries to build upon through transforming the whole policy sector into a European model" (Interview #1). Further, strengthening the civil society sector means strengthening democracy, as NGOs/CSOs are close to the citizens and can lobby for policy change:

> What the EU wants to achieve with NGOs is to support the processes of democratization and the processes of improving the countries in the region. Through support to civil society, I think that the aim is twofold, one is to strengthen the sector, which is important in terms of democracy development in the country. The other is letting civil society empower the sector so it can be part of the government. A modern and democratic government is an inclusive one, so that basically means that you would want a participatory process, you want citizens to be a part of it, be well-informed, and be aware of the impact of the legislations that are developed by the government. Therefore, we try to raise awareness about these issues at the governmental level. (Interview #2).

Awareness-raising is by TACSO (2011) described to be an important constituent to policy-impact and lobbyism. The term awareness-raising is often mentioned in combination with policy impact, and is an important pre-condition of all policy impact activities. TACSO defines awareness-raising as "mutual exchange of information between different stakeholders involved, either beneficiaries or decision-makers" (2011, p. 25). Organizations provide information to decision-makers, thereby raising their awareness about a certain issue.

5.1.2 Dialogue

Policy dialogues are carefully constructed, deliberative meetings that address regulatory, policy, or planning issues of common interest. "Policy dialogues seek to exchange information and build consensus recommendations between the public, private, and civic sectors through leaders who are able to make decisions or strongly influence the trajectory of a possible solution (TACSO, 2010, p.12). The dialogue phase of the EU-civil society relationship was first proposed in 2004 by the European Commission:

> Any future enlargement of the EU needs to be supported by a strong, deep and sustained dialogue. This would help bridge the information gap, achieve better mutual knowledge and bring citizens and different cultures, political and economic systems closer together, thus ensuring a stronger awareness of the opportunities as well as challenges of future accessions. Civil society should play the most important part in this dialogue (European Union, 2005, p.2).

The emergence of civil society dialogue represents an important policy shift that further centralizes the role of civil society in the enlargement process:

> Besides a significant increase in financial assistance to civil society projects under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), the Commission intends to improve consultations with civil society and work towards other measures to bolster civil society, for example by improving donor coordination and continuing work towards visa-free travel for citizens of the candidates and potential candidates (EEAS, 2016).

NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo are viewed by the EU as key agents within this process of dialogue who facilitate the accession process by establishing a channel of communication between the EU and Kosovo. Further, the EU claims that this dialogue can eventually lead to the development of a vibrant and lively civil society in potential candidate countries, which is important in order to promote human rights and democracy (European Union, 2000, p.4). Rational choice can help explain the emergence of civil society dialogue as a new funding strategy. The assumption that actors' behavior is governed by a `strategic calculus` (Hall & Taylor, 1996) would suggest that the policy towards civil society dialogue would lead to lower political costs for governments and would therefore achieve improved governmental compliance. The EC states that dialogue between NGOs and the EC should be seen within the framework of the democratic decision-making process of the European institutions. "Dialogue between the European Commission and NGOs is an important complement to the institutional process of policy-shaping" (European Commission, 2000, p.7). This process is based on policy effectiveness and democracy-enhancing characteristics of NGOs. These different policy approaches can be further understood as input and output legitimacy (Greenwood, 2007). Input legitimacy is based on the preferences of citizens, while output legitimacy is based on results and policy outcomes. This means that the EU´s rationale in involving NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo is that they can generate both input and output legitimacy, but the rationale is also that NGO/CSOs have a ´persuasive power` (Börzel, 2010) and can use both argumentation and reason when pushing for new policies and in convincing the public to accept them.

From an EU security perspective, it is also important that Kosovo remains stable. The EU has successfully managed to convince authorities in Kosovo and Serbia to engage in dialogue, which is an important part of the SAPD. Therefore, the EU uses NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo as a tool to facilitate a dialogue between Serbs and Kosovars. "Within this scope of policy, the EU intends to normalize relations between Kosovo and Serbia in one hand, and to gradually pave the way for membership for both countries in a way that none of them become a threat for the regional security" (Interview #1). The EU´s intentions are to foster dialogue policy through both civil society cooperation and regional policy, and the EU sees it necessary to include civil society and perspectives from North Kosovo in the ongoing Belgrade-Pristina dialogues (European Union, 2015). The Kosovo Progress Report (2016) states that, overall, Kosovo has stayed engaged in the dialogue and committed to implementing the agreements reached. However, the report also states, "Kosovo needs to make further efforts and contribute to the establishment of circumstances

conducive to the normalization of relations with Serbia" (Kosovo Progress Report, 2016, p.32). Further progress in this area remains crucial for furthering the European future of Kosovo. However, some local NGOs/CSOs seem to believe that too much focus is given to the North leading to funding becoming too politicized and compartmentalized:

> In Kosovo, millions of funds go into the North, where they are expecting miracles with the Serbian community that are 100% unrealistic. Instead of fostering cooperation in already diverse areas, they are creating a buffer in the Northern Municipalities, by funding areas that are incredibly mono-ethnic (Interview #5).

This mechanism used by the EU can be linked to the notion of interdependence between the EU and the target country (Börzel & Risse, 2009). In this context, the EU can apply political pressure on Kosovo in the sense that Kosovo must improve relations with Serbia to e.g. receive access to economic integration and visa liberalization. On the other hand, the EU is dependent on NGOs/CSOs to exert pressure for improving relations with the Serbian community in Kosovo to maintain peace and stability in the region. This creates a push and pull situation where pressure from above and pressure from below becomes evident in striving for domestic change (Börzel & Risse, 2009).

5.1.3 Relationship and cooperation: NGOs/CSOs, EU institutions, and government institutions

The relationship and cooperation between NGOs/CSOs and EU institutions is enhanced within Manner´s (2002) *overt diffusion*, where the EU is present in Kosovo through e.g. the European Union Office and through the way the EU cooperates with local NGOs/CSOs in monitoring processes and evaluations. NGO/CSOs in Kosovo claim that one can find both positive and negative aspects when it concerns NGO/CSO-EU institutional relationship and cooperation. The barriers mentioned include technical issues such as language and heavy bureaucratic processes, presenting challenges both regarding resources and lack of expertise in respective NGOs/CSOs. A project coordinator working in a NGO focused on gender equality claims that in order for NGOs/CSOs to improve their cooperation with EU institutions they should "break barriers such as technical issues and the difficulties of writing project proposals due to bureaucratic obstacles" (Interview #3) and claims that they should design other cooperative mechanisms. However, several

respondents seem to believe that the problem is not with the EU cooperation, as they claim that the Union is clear and structured and involved in all processes. An official at the Embassy of the Republic of Kosovo in Brussels claims that ever since the contractual relationship (SAA) between Kosovo and the EU, the cooperation has evolved and become much stronger between EU institutions and civil society. "Having a contractual relationship sort of frames the relationship between the two entities, and at the same time creates a dialogue between them" (Interview #4). Political dialogue is a decisive aspect when it comes to the diffusion of norms and values in third countries (Börzel, 2009), therefore creating a dialogue between NGOs/CSOs and EU institutions where they can exchange ideas, provide information, and report on processes is important in order for Kosovo to move closer to the EU.

A think-tank project coordinator working with issues concerning law claims that NGOs/CSOs and EU institutions, specifically the EU office in Kosovo, maintain a dialogue on several aspects. This relationship is enhanced in the context of the enlargement policy, where NGOs/CSOs first serve as "the main feeder of information on the performance of institutions and meeting conditionality benchmarks within the enlargement policy" (Interview #1). Secondly, NGOs/CSOs perform the role of monitoring on the ground, "monitoring processes which the EU itself has no capacities to deal with and therefore use NGOs/CSOs as a source of information" (Interview #1). Thirdly, NGOs/CSOs are also cooperating with EU institutions in developing conditionality policies. "Many policy reforms which the EU has announced in Kosovo have a basis in proposals coming from civil society organizations . . . where we offer preventive policy solutions" (Interview #1).

A DG NEAR official confirms that the relationship between NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo and EU institutions is quite developed, however the respondent claims that this may be due to the strict EU processes and conditionality policies. The respondent claims that "we maintain a good cooperation with civil society in Kosovo and report back and forth both on positive and negative issues" (Interview #8). Additionally, the respondent adds that the cooperation with NGOs/CSOs is quite good, because they are determined to do a good job, however domestic circumstances may sometimes prevent it (Interview #8).

The necessity for improving the relationship and cooperation between NGOs/CSOs and government institutions has been addressed on numerous occasions. As mentioned earlier, NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo are known to retain low levels of consultation with government

institutions, which may prevent policy impact. In the current condition one can observe both positive developments towards better collaboration between Kosovo institutions and NGO/CSOs as well as a lack of enthusiasm when it concerns NGO/CSO independence and involvement in the policy processes. A report published by TACSO states that, compared with the countries from the region, CSOs from Kosovo are "acknowledged" by national and local authorities to a lesser extent when it comes to consultation processes (TACSO, 2012). According to the Kosovar Civil Society Index, 64% of CSOs declare that they have been involved in the policy-making process during the last three years. However, only 29.29% of CSOs have declared that they have been regularly invited for consultations for policies relevant to their work (KCSF, 2012, p.8). A project coordinator working in a local NGO focusing on youth claims that "they seldom consult with government institutions because it is very difficult to get in touch with them, and when they do get in touch, they rarely have the time to meet with local NGOs operating in areas outside Pristina" (Interview #7). The informant further elaborates that consultations with the government should be improved so that NGOs/CSOs can serve citizens' best interests.

So far the Office of Good Governance (OGG) remains the only body of the Kosovo government at the central level responsible for civic participation and civil society involvement in government work. The OGG mandate is constructed to give advice and supervise the government´s work in areas of good governance, human rights, and equal opportunities (KCSF, 2013). More specifically, the OGG is responsible for e.g. establishing policies and issuing guidelines, fighting against fraud and corruption, improving democracy transparency and so forth. However, although this office has been active in the field of human rights and equality, the field of fostering civil participation has remained untreated (KCSF, 2012). This is because the mandate of this office is broad and does not have the capacity to cover these areas. Regarding the relationship with NGOs/CSOs, the OGG currently has no strategy or mechanism for cooperation with civil society (KCSF, 2013).

Some progress has been made in improving cooperation between government and civil society, as "minimum standards for public consultations were adopted and now need to be implemented across all levels of government" (Kosovo Progress Report, 2015). However, absence of political will means the participation of civil society in policy making remains extremely uneven. A project coordinator working with minority issues expressed the same concerns. "Where we struggle the most is when we must cooperate with government institutions and give them responsibilities. For example, if we arrange a training which is to be organized by an office of a government institution,

you have to follow this up because you never know if they are going to take full responsibility" (Interview #7). Further, some respondents claim that NGOs/CSOs are now demanding transparency when it concerns government institutions "for example in asking government employees to report on their incomes" (Interview #6).

Some respondents also claim that the government is not interested in cooperating with local NGOs/CSOs because government institutions focus more on issues with a political element and do not pay much attention to matters that are not decisive for Kosovo´s eventual future enlargement. They criticize the government for not being involved in processes meant to provide services to citizens. One respondent claims that the government is only interested in "issues like visa liberalization, the border demarcation with Montenegro and Kosovo-Serbia relations" (Interview #1). No agreement has been made when it comes to the border demarcation with Montenegro and Kosovo, which halts Kosovo´s progress of further European integration. The demarcation agreement is an important component in the direction of European integration as the agreement of formal borders between Kosovo and Montenegro would be a step towards the strengthening of Kosovo´s progress as a fully independent state. Additionally, demarcation is a requirement for the visa liberalization agreement where borders with neighboring countries must be agreed upon. However, some respondents still believe that the government should pay more attention to the needs of the people. The government is elected by the people and for the people, therefore they should also focus on improving the daily quality of life, which sadly is far from good enough for many in Kosovo. Due to this, the government should also cooperate with NGOs/CSOs that perform service provision rather than only think-tanks focused on policy making and politicized matters (Interview #5).

The EU states that since 2008, Kosovo has consolidated the functioning of its democratic institutions. However, the past year has brought serious challenges due to the ongoing deep polarization between the government and opposition. "Divisions over issues such as the border demarcation agreement with Montenegro and the dialogue with Serbia, dominated Kosovo´s political agenda, leading to a protracted political stalemate" (Kosovo Progress Report, 2016, p.6).

5.1.4 Perception of EU funding application processes

Applying and receiving EU funds is not an easy process. Application processes for EU funding have been described by respondents as heavily bureaucratic and extremely challenging. Usually, respondents stress the issue that only established NGOs/CSOs have the means, capacity, and knowledge to apply for EU funds, whereas the application process has often been criticized for excluding smaller, more grassroots NGOs/CSOs that struggle to apply and receive EU funds. First, every EU delegation in a country has its own civil society funding scheme. These schemes fall under the same categories. For instance, in several states one can find an instrument for democracy and a human rights call, however every call is designed based on the needs of each country; every delegation assesses each country and decides certain priorities and certain guidelines used to design every call for proposal (Interview #1). In the case of Kosovo, there have been several funding calls designed by the EU to respond to rising issues, therefore the procedure is not always the same, being subject to each country's national context. According to the respondent, "every four years, the EU undertakes a review of the assistance program to Kosovo, and within that they decide how to frame it" (Interview #1). Civil Society Facility and the EIDHR are the largest funding schemes for civil society (KCSF, 2016). However, "compared to the overall funding scope in Kosovo, the EU´s share, is not big enough to occupy let´s say one third of the money going to the civil society sector" (Interview #1).

Clearly, procedures for applying for and receiving EU funding are perceived as being heavily demanding regarding both the time and effort required. A respondent explains the process by stating that first:

> […] one must submit a note, if you pass the concept note, then you must submit a
> project proposal. The concept note is just a short description of what you are planning
> to achieve, what goals you are aiming to reach, and a budget approximation"
> (Interview #7).

The respondent further explains that the project proposal contains a great number of criteria set by the EU, e.g. experience with projects, cooperation partners, certificates, fiscal numbers, financial budgets of all NGOs participating, and letters of intent from all NGOs involved. "When you sum

it up, it is such a long and hard process. It is not that it is just complicated, but it is very time consuming, they want everything to be extremely detailed" (Interview #7). Usually, the duration of the application process depends on the type of grants to be handed out. "If it is a larger grant, it takes more time to go through the information that has been handed in and make sure that all the forms have been filled out properly" (Interview #6).

The EU demands transparency and accountability, and therefore the process becomes "highly professional, but also technically complicated, therefore also exclusive" (Interview #2). Further, the respondent claims that "the EU mainly funds large organizations that can cope with heavy bureaucratic technical demands that derive from dealing with receiving EU funds" (Interview #2), and therefore the process has been accused of excluding valuable partners at the grassroots level, however the respondent states that:

> We have now begun to devise instruments that aim to bring assistance closer to grassroots organizations. We receive an amount of funding which is to further be redistributed to smaller organizations through procedures which are lighter, easier to follow and accompanied with coaching, mentoring and support in implementing EU funds (Interview #2).

This project is confirmed by the European Union Office in Kosovo and is called the Grant Scheme for Advocacy Initiatives of Grassroots Organizations and is to be implemented by KCSF. This project provides financial support to advocacy initiatives of the grassroots civil society organizations in Kosovo that contribute to changes in society at the local level (KCSF, 2016).

However, the respondent claims that even though they receive some means to make it easier for smaller NGOs/CSOs, "it remains very bureaucratic, technical and complicated, therefore smaller NGOs/CSOs sadly are not always able to survive in a very competitive environment, which is a shame because several grassroots organizations usually work for very important causes in the domestic arena" (Interview #2).

5.1.5 Perception of accountability and transparency

According to the Kosovo Progress Report (2016), a regulated model to ensure transparent mechanisms for distribution of funding for civil society organizations has been identified.

Information on all funds disbursed to civil society organizations should be made easily accessible to the public. The lack of transparency in EU funding for civil society remains a concern (Kosovo Progress Report, 2016).

Accountability has different meanings for different people and institutions. Often in international literature, accountability is synonymous with good governance, transparency, equality, responsibility, and integrity. According to Bovens (1998), "accountability describes a relationship between an actor and a forum, whereby the actor is responsible for explaining and justifying his/her action, while the forum may pose questions and give assessments or evaluations that determine the consequences for the actor" (Bovens, 1998, p.4). Decision makers in government, the private sector, and civil society organizations are accountable to the public as well as to institutional stakeholders, whereas transparency is accomplished through the free flow of information (TACSO, 2010). Processes, institutions, and information are directly accessible to those concerned, and enough information needs to be provided to understand and monitor these efforts.

Accountability and transparency mechanisms are based on respondent views not well-established among NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo. "Many NGOs/CSOs but also government institutions do not practice accountability and transparency" (Interview #1). This is often true because projects and programs initiated have not generated desirable results. The large number of NGOs/CSOs registered in Kosovo creates a bad impression of the civil society sector at large. "Even if several NGOs/CSOs do practice accountability and transparency, it gets overshadowed by the great amount of NGOs/CSOs that lack capacities and basic knowledge on how to manage their organization and their projects" (Interview #5). Further the respondents state that policy-making is dependent on strong institutions. Effective, accountable and transparent institutions would eventually increase NGOs´/CSO´ impact capacity. However, the respondents claim that several NGOs/CSOs do in fact work towards making sure that the government functions effectively, accountably and transparently. EU-funding is in fact often aimed at projects that wish to do exactly that, however the government is very closed-knit and therefore it can sometimes be difficult to implement such projects (Interview #3).

5.1.6 Perception of EU monitoring processes

EU monitoring processes are perceived as being well developed and as an obligatory process of EU projects. "What the EU institutions usually do is send a representative to our offices to oversee

our work, but we must also inform them as they do not have the capacity to be present on a daily basis" (Interview #6). The monitoring processes are based on meetings, visits, feedback, evaluation, and so forth. A respondent explains that they have:

> […] either a monthly or a bi-monthly reporting process, where they must submit a periodic report on the implementation process as well as ensure that deliverables are met within the time frame established in the contract. Beyond this, CSOs have internal mechanisms for ensuring compliance with deadlines and quality control" (Interview #9).

The EC claims that these monitoring efforts are aimed at supporting management of projects and programs. Monitoring often focuses mainly on the project´s or program´s inputs, activities, and outputs. "It should look at how the outputs can effectively induce the outcomes and impact which the project or program is aiming at" (European Commission, 2014, p.6). EuropeAid (2007) has published a report that discusses necessary mechanisms to ensure a credible monitoring process. The report holds similar views, as it focuses on making useful field visits, regular internal reviews, project screening, project progress reports, and so forth (EuropeAid, 2007).

Further, EuropeAid (2007) emphasized the importance of maintaining sustainable monitoring mechanisms to ensure a coherent stream of policies. The way in which the EU monitors projects and programs managed by NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo resonates well with the way the EU diffuses EU norms and values in third countries by using o*vert diffusion*, where in this case monitoring and evaluation are identified in form of field visits and the drafting of reports.

5.2 Effects of EU funding

Several scholars have criticized the effects of EU funding, claiming that funds distributed by the EU often lead to overlapping activities, competition, and unsustainable projects (Fagan, 2011; Warleigh, 2001). One could argue that both negative and positive effects of EU funding are evident. Several NGOs/CSOs have an impact on the areas they are working within, and to some extent EU funding is being put to good use. One respondent states that "the positive effects of EU funding are first, that the EU normally hands out the largest grants, and secondly, that these funds tend to have the highest visibility" (Interview #5). However, "funding is often compartmentalized and

politicized. There is this issue of creating `sexy` projects. Instead of focusing on the deep effective projects, the focus is on the `sexy` projects with `sexy` visibility and deliverables" (Interview #5).

The respondent further elaborates that these projects are more often cheered on instead of the deep-rooted projects necessary to go below the surface. Corruption and other similar issues, though noted in all EU reports, often get put aside because they are simply not attractive and require serious time and effort. Barriers into areas that are traditionally closed off to outside forces are the main challenge. "Justice, marriage, social relations are traditional aspects in Kosovo in particularly, and these are difficult subjects to raise with older generations" (Interview #5).

As mentioned earlier, only well-established NGOs/CSOs manage to receive EU funds due to the difficult processes requiring NGOs/CSOs to have a requisite capacity and effectiveness. A main issue concerns excluding small actors. "We have always been critical of how heavy the EU is in dealing with small actors, if I may put it this way, and it is very difficult to change the EU´s practices and policies in this regard" (Interview #2). For EU funds to be more effective, the Union must include several actors, for "if the EU puts more emphasis on developing polices on including more grassroots organizations, I am sure that we would experience even more positive effects of EU funding" (Interview #2).

One disturbing effect of EU funding is discussed by Ketola (2013), who claims that NGOs often chase the money trail and eventually become donor driven. This may generate a negative impact on the ability of NGOs/CSOs to maintain the reputation of being independent, a quality considered important for influencing a political process (Ketola, 2013, p.7). Because most NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo are dependent on foreign funds, one could assume that many also become donor driven. Often NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo do not specify their area of expertise, adding fuel to the assumption that NGOs/CSOs chase the money and not the other way around.

A respondent confirms this assumption and states that a notable problem with EU funding is that "NGOs often become donor driven, which undermines and discredits the work of other organizations doing valuable work (Interview #5). Ketola (2013) states that NGOs/CSOs are often competing with one another instead of cooperating, and this is a negative result of any kind of funding. NGOs/CSOs have the desire to receive as much funding as possible, and instead of becoming experts in one field or issue, they continue to become umbrella organizations that are less specialized. Although this is not a blanket statement applicable to all NGOs/CSOs, many small

organizations struggle, and therefore they turn to fields that are, in a way, 'in fashion' regarding EU policies, which often leads to both "messy procedures due to lack of knowledge as well as overlapping activities" (Interview #5). Duplicating initiatives and projects is something the EU has been criticized for (Fagan, 2011), and therefore one can argue that the EU in this regard needs to be more coherent with its policies towards Kosovo. "While for example, an EU official might have some notions of the situation in Kosovo, local CSOs are more adapt and knowledgeable about what is happening directly in society" (Interview #1). The respondent further elaborates that this leads to long and hard processes, at least on some aspects, because the EU does not always coordinate with the situation on the ground in mind (Interview #1).

Another negative effect of EU funding appears to be that several important areas have been left out. The EU has policies that they consider priorities, and "if they consider energy a priority in their own market, they dedicate a share of funding to energy as well, but that is not necessarily a main priority for Kosovo" (Interview #1). In other words, Kosovo does not always find its preferences compatible with those of the EU, as conditionality policy means downloading policies that may be less relevant to the domestic context. According to the respondent, Kosovo has more pressing issues, such as corruption, crime, accountability of the government, parliamentary democracy, and so forth. The EU plans its priorities in a horizontal way, "allocating funding to every priority which the EU in its own member states considers a priority, and that brings to the scene organizations that have no role in the civil society context whatsoever" (Interview #1). Often the external political environment changes due to the creation of new rules and regulations (TACSO, 2011). Donor priorities may quickly shift. If the EU creates new rules concerning e.g. environmental issues, EU-funded NGOs/CSOs are thus forced to start influencing government policies regarding environmental law. However, this may not be a priority for the government, and thus limits NGOs´/CSOs´ impact capacity.

Where EU funding to NGOs/CSOs seems to have positive effects is in raising awareness. "Kosovo is a weak state; government institutions do not function properly. EU funding to NGOs/CSOs has helped to raise awareness among citizens that this is not how things are done in Europe" (Interview #6). The general notion from the interviews seems to be that NGOs/CSOs are learning by doing, and they are additionally taking lessons from other countries and regions.

5.3 Tracing impact on the ground: NGOs/CSOs as agents for change

The essential focus of this paper is to examine NGOs´/CSOs´ role and impact on policy implementation and institution building. To do so, one must be able to trace possible impacts on the ground. The interviewed NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo may offer an indication of what role and effect NGOs/CSOs have as well as whether one can claim that they serve as agents for change in a Europeanization context. As mentioned earlier, the EU views NGOs/CSOs as possible actors for domestic change, but is the EU´s policy towards civil society triggering desirable results regarding policy making and institution building?

Although NGOs/CSOs are involved in many layers of society, a crucial part of their work is focused towards government institutions and the policy-making process. Advocacy is about achieving change and arguing for a particular position (Ketola 2013, p.83). It refers to groups that argue for a cause and seek to influence government institutions. Advocating for certain causes and issues requires certain preconditions. First, NGOs/CSOs need to have a solid level of communication with institutions relevant to their area of work, NGOs/CSOs need to act as watchdogs for the government, and NGOs/CSOs should be able to impact policy making on several levels e.g. institutional, societal, and governmental.

When asked about what changes the respective NGOs/CSOs have observed due to EU funding, the answers vary extensively. Kosovo is currently suffering from insufficient institutions and a corrupt elite, and societal obstacles can be observed in the form of poverty and lack of perspective. Therefore, for NGOs/CSOs to impact policy making and institution building, change needs to be evident on all levels. One respondent states that one can observe change on some levels (institutional, societal, governmental) and points to a project their organization is currently implementing regarding institutional changes:

> We have managed to promote citizen participation in the policy-making process, where
> we have managed to push for consultation with civil society in the rules of procedure
> in the government. This in fact makes consultation obligatory (Interview #2).

The respondent holds the view that this is indeed a breakthrough, as "with the support of the EU we have developed minimum standards for consultation, which is making it clear as to how

consultation needs to be conducted" (Interview #2). Consultation is a heavy process for both civil servants and civil society, therefore it is a prerequisite to have clear standards. This project has been executed in cooperation with other NGOs also funded by the EU and will be implemented as of January 1st. "We had to push the government into changing its procedures for consultation, and we managed to do so" (Interview #2).

The respondent further states that public consultation is manifested in the country law, and for the government to be transparent, they must allow for civic participation in decision- and policy-making processes (Interview #2). The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo obliges all public institutions to inform citizens and all interested parties of all their work and documents (Art.41 – Right of Access to Public Documents) and encourages participation of all citizens in public activities as well as the right to influence decisions of public institutions (Art. 45 – Election and Participation rights (Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, 2008, p.12-13)).

This is exemplified by the European Council's Code of Good Practice for Civic Participation in the Decision-Making Process, where public consultation represents "a form of civic participation in which public authorities ask for CSO's opinion on a specific topic of policies or developments" (2014, p.9). Considering that initiatives for consultation need to always derive from public authorities, it is they who primarily hold the burden and responsibility for the success of this process. The Kosovo Progress Report (2016) states that minimum standards for consultation are in place, however implementation has been rather slow as of 2015 (Kosovo Progress Report, 2016, p.8).

In light of Kosovo´s current situation it is important that government institutions have the capacities to handle domestic obstacles. A respondent informs that the last EU project they worked on dealt with overseeing the capacities of the parliament in the face of the government. "We played an important role in elevating the capacities of two of the most important parliamentary commissions, overseeing government policies, and engaging the government in parliamentary discussions" (Interview #1). An important role was also played in producing legislation allowing not only the government but also NGOs/CSOs to offer their views. The respondent claims that this project increased the role of NGOs/CSOs in the law-making processes and in parliamentary overseeing of the government, which is extremely important for parliamentary democracy (Interview #1).

This has additionally made it more convenient for NGOs/CSOs to participate in the decision-making process.

An important aspect of the Union´s involvement in Kosovo is the protection of human rights for minority groups. The relationship between Serbs and Kosovars in Kosovo continues to be extremely strained, as a bridge separates the North and South of Mitrovica. As for the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities the situation is not desirable. These groups' socio-economic status, the realization of their human rights, and other challenges they face in their integration process into Kosovo society are considered by the EU as fundamental factors that contribute towards building an open and inclusive society in Kosovo (European Union, 2007). Change is also observed in this field/area, where cases of violation are identified:

> In a previous EU project in the municipality of Prizren, we had a case where there was no representative of the Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian communities, and it was in fact guaranteed by the regulation in the law of the municipality. We made a request, prepared a letter and sent it to the mayor, and informed that the municipality is violating the law. Of course, they managed to provide a representative immediately (Interview #7).

The respondent elaborates that this is the kind of work we do. "We take cases, identify the problems, and we take measures, everything must comply with the law; therefore, we always follow up on the regulations in the municipality. (Interview #7).

When asked where EU funding has triggered the most substantial change, the common answers are democracy, human rights, justice institutions, and civic participation. Considering that the EU's aim is to foster democratic principles, law, and human rights in third countries, it is not a surprise that NGOs/CSOs manage to make impacts in these areas.

Justice institutions, often a mark of some scorn in Kosovo, have become noticeably modernized in certain municipalities due to several EU-funded projects, "and this is often visible in those municipalities" (Interview #5). Change can be observed in the sector of democracy building. This includes the context of increasing government accountability or of informing citizens about the lack of performance of public institutions in meeting certain benchmarks, "although this kind of

change is hard to notice, especially from the public" (Interview #1). The respondent also maintains that they have observed substantial changes in citizens' ability to speak up. "We always encourage citizens to speak up and make their voice heard, and to some degree this has shown effects, as citizens are partaking in decision-making processes to a greater extent" (Interview #1). NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo seem to use informational diffusion in lobbying for desired change and to make citizens see that they do have a part in decision-making processes, which enhances the EU´s role as a promoter of democratic principles.

When it concerns societal changes, the respondents agree that not much change is visible. "The simple issue in Kosovo still stands. How Kosovo will answer the Serbia/Kosovo question that needs to be answered before any substantive changes can be made regarding EU-funding" (Interview #3). Even though civil society is involved in protecting the rights of Serbs in Kosovo, it is observed that NGOs/CSOs do not influence the Belgrade/Pristina dialogue. "Only the highest levels of the government have an influence on the Serbia/Kosovo dialogue" (Interview #4). Further one can observe that nationalism is growing rather than shrinking in Kosovo, and this divides the country even further. The respondent additionally elaborates that "situations that are imposed on Kosovo cannot be made permanent without coercion, and the Serbia/Kosovo dialogue has already caused chaos in the parliament" (Interview #4). After these obstacles are resolved, perhaps then there will exist a normal discourse in Kosovo, however until the nationality question is answered, it can be argued that it will dominate the public discourse.

The respondents claim that a greater extent of change is observed in the context of human rights, where "we have come a long way in improving conditions for equal rights, minority issues, and LGBT rights" (Interview #4). When it concerns LGBT rights, NGOs/CSOs mostly lobby to increase awareness of the existence of the community as it is still a highly sensitive subject and therefore also a topic not many understand (Interview #7). "However, a greater extent of change would be visible in this aspect if we could get the government behind it, unfortunately this is not a priority for government institutions" (Interview #3). Accordingly, the efforts are enhanced by the EU, as the legal framework in Kosovo broadly guarantees the protection of human and fundamental rights in line with European standards (Kosovo Progress Report, 2016). Some progress has been made in this area, e.g. on data protection and high-level political support for the rights of LGBT persons. However, "implementation of human rights continues to be hindered by a lack of resources and political commitment, including at local level" (Kosovo Progress Report, 2016, p.22).

5.3.1 Project implementation and sustainability

EU-funded projects have often been criticized for lacking sustainability, transparency, and the government's approval (Fagan, 2011). The government's inability and lack of capacity to cooperate with local NGOs coupled with their incapacity to respond to project needs and project involvement limits the implementation and sustainability of projects. The public policy system in Kosovo is based on politicized grounds, therefore "one has more power to push for policies which consist of a political element, rather than issues which do not consist of one, and if one wants to push a policy reform for let's say pensions, social services or education, it will be extremely difficult" (Interview #1). Policy making revolves around issues present in top politics, e.g. Kosovo-Serbia relations and organized crime. "If you have to implement projects of a non-political nature, it is very difficult to involve the government and even the EU" (Interview #1). The respondent claims that several projects end up with the project's termination as well, as "the lack of sustainability in projects is a major issue, since there is no accurate plan for sustainability after the project ends" (Interview #1). The respondent claims that the reason for this is the lack of donor coordination and incoherence from the EU. "The EU is involved in Kosovo both through its security policy and its enlargement policy, additionally there are multiple international organizations operating in Kosovo all aiming for the same things" (Interview #1). The EU has long been dealing with the issue of incoherence. Several scholars have criticized EU coherence regarding its foreign policy. The CFSP has especially been criticized for lacking coordination (Schuman, 2015).

NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo have often been accused of lacking expertise and organizational capacity (Fagan, 2011). This is also evident from the interviews as several respondents stress the issue that NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo lack general knowledge to impact policy-making. TACSO (2011) claims that for NGOs/CSOs to be able to influence and implement policies there are certain guidelines they should follow. "Organizations undertaking policy influencing interventions often do not set up a strategy to understand the intended results or even impact of activities and fail to cooperate effectively on results (TACSO, 2011, p. 47).

It seems as though several NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo do not understand how to follow the Union´s guidelines. "You have a contract, you have general conditions that refer you to talk to people on different bureaucratic levels, and these things one must be able to understand. to implement and be a part of the policy-making process" (Interview #2). Some NGOs/CSOs spend too much time on

project planning rather than focusing on implementation. This often forces NGOs/CSOs to apply for extensions, as "they fail in creating a mechanism for cooperation between lead NGOs and partner NGOs" (Interview #7). All EU projects require special attention and staff to be involved and focused in the process, and because of the many details, technicalities, and policies one must go through, "the challenges with project implementation is that the staff in Kosovo NGOs/CSOs usually work on multiple projects at the same time, and they often ignore these important processes along the way" (Interview #3). To successfully impact policy implementation NGOs/CSOs must go through every step. These steps include identifying the issue, defining the policy issues, fact-checking the issue, coming up with an action-plan and then delivering the final message (TACSO, 2011).

5.3.2 NGOs/CSOs in state-building processes

State building, often defined as the establishment, re-establishment, and strengthening of a public structure in a given territory capable of delivering public goods (Capussela, 2015), is an important constituent in Kosovo´s path towards EU integration. Given Kosovo´s current situation, one could claim that the EU is aiding the country´s state-building developments. That the government of Kosovo should be the main driver of state-building processes ought to go without saying, however NGOs/CSOs are being pushed to enhance state-building methods in the form of policy impact and through increasing institutional capacities. Several respondents claim that even though NGOs/CSOs do provide assistance in this aspect, ultimately it is the government´s job to make sure that this process is steered in the right direction. The issue however is that despite extensive support from the West, the government of Kosovo still ranks poorly on several important indicators and has a persistent problem with issues such as organized crime and corruption. Capussela (2015) claims that Kosovo´s political and economic institutions remain inefficient. Corruption is ´omnipresent,' organized crime is equally widespread, and unemployment, poverty, and popular discontent are worryingly high (Kosovo Progress Report, 2015, p.23). Since its independence, Freedom House qualifies Kosovo as a `semi-consolidated authoritarian regime` with a 5.07 democracy score (Freedom House Country Report: Kosovo, 2016, p.2), and as recently as May 10, 2017, Kosovo´s government collapsed due to a motion of no confidence. One must wonder how NGOs/CSOs can be involved in the process of state building when the government of Kosovo is not generating anticipated results. When the government of a country does not do what is required

of them, how then can NGOs/CSOs help in this aspect? NGOs/CSOs are dependent on consultations with government institutions to generate results, but when government institutions have low capacities and suffer from ineffectiveness along with an elite accused of corruption and crime, achieving policy and institutional impact in matters important in `high politics` can prove to be quite difficult.

Still, a respondent holds the assumption that NGOs/CSOs are to a degree important in state-building processes because they in a way play the opposition role that Kosovo often lacks, "it becomes important in terms of counterbalancing the government with a view that is more credible and non-corruptive" (Interview #1). Grassroots-level work can create dialogue necessary to move forward as a country and can encourage scrutiny, free press, and other initiatives. But the fulfilment of chapters of accession is almost entirely in the hands of the central government, particularly concerning economic and security issues. Nonetheless, the respondents not only criticize the government but also the EU for using double standards. "EULEX has received a lot of negative feedback, people are frustrated with EULEX and view it as a failed mission. The EU criticizes violence from the opposition and corruption, but still the mandate of EULEX has been extended even though the mission has been accused of corruption (Interview #3). This does not exactly enhance the EU´s role as a credible and legitimate actor in state-building processes.

5.4 General observations

After analyzing the various interviews and reports, several observations can be made:

i. Although the cooperation and relationship between EU institutions and NGOs/CSOs is characterized as positive, the relationship between NGOs/CSOs and government institutions is rather strained. The lack of consultations, transparency, and participation in decision-making processes is a concern. NGOs'/CSOs' representation in decision-making processes is extremely uneven.

ii. EU funding is described as a highly bureaucratic procedure. Smaller NGOs/CSOs fail in processes of applying and receiving EU funds, whereas the EU prefers working with well-established NGOs/CSOs with high capacities and an experienced staff.

iii. EU-monitoring processes are perceived as unsatisfactory but under development. EU officials have monthly visits and evaluations of projects, whereas NGOs/CSOs report

back on the situation on the ground, acting as watchdogs. However, the EU appears to lack capacities to monitor on a more regular basis.

iv. The effects of EU funds are multifaceted. Although the respondents claim that positive effects of EU funding exist such as large grants and visibility, the negative effects overshadow the positive. Funding appears to be donor driven, causing several NGOs/CSOs to compete with one another instead of cooperating. Some NGOs/CSOs chase the funds, not the other way around. This discredits the efforts of some NGOs/CSOs whose work is important.

v. Although impact on the ground is evident in some aspects, when asked what kind of changes they have observed, the respondents tend to be rather broad and general. In other words, they cannot point to something specific they have managed to implement regarding EU funding. Instead, the answers tend to be based on projects they are currently ´trying´ to implement. The problem seems to be that issues in ´high politics´ are handled behind closed doors. It appears as though government institutions have limited interest in concerns emanating from everyday problems such as service provision, minority issues, and education. Issues such as Serbia-Kosovo relations and the demarcation agreement with Montenegro seem to be the only matters on the agenda. The most evident change NGOs/CSOs can point to regarding EU funds is aimed at raising awareness and promoting EU values and norms, such as human rights and democracy. These areas are where NGOs/CSOs seem to have the most impact.

vi. When it concerns project implementation and sustainability, the respondents claim that projects often end up with project termination as well. It seems as though EU projects lack coordination and coherence. Quite often, projects emanating from other international organizations conflict with EU projects.

vii. Even though NGOs/CSOs believe that they have a role in state-building processes, they state that it ultimately is the government´s job to make sure that Kosovo remains on the right path concerning issues that will lead to an efficient economy, stable institutions and ultimately accession.

5.5 Summary: Do NGOs/CSOs have an impact on policy-making and institution building?

So far, the NGO/CSO activities and the role and impact of NGOs/CSOs on policy making and institution building has been analyzed through interviews and various reports. This paragraph assesses the hypotheses that, based on the framework of External Europeanization, seek to determine whether the NGOs´/CSOs´ impact capacity is evident.

Chapter two assessed that Kosovo can be placed in the External Europeanization phase because it is a ´state´ beyond borders of membership. It is argued that Kosovo can be placed in this dimension because the country is a potential candidate for EU membership, and it can therefore not be placed in a pre-Europeanization phase. That would imply that Kosovo is closer to accession than what the circumstances allow for. Additionally, Kosovo has not received an actual promise for EU membership in its near future. However, the EU´s involvement in Kosovo can be linked to both state-building processes, such as security issues and rebuilding of institutions, and through enlargement policy linked to a potential future membership with an uncertain timeframe within which adoption will be rewarded (Hix & Ucarar, 2004). I therefore argue that NGOs/CSOs are being used as facilitators in this process and act as agents triggering change, pushing for policies and institution building processes through different mechanisms of diffusion.

Although it is difficult to evaluate the transformative effect of the EU´s role as a norm promoter through NGOs/CSOs, different mechanisms applied by the EU for the diffusion of norms and values in its relations with Kosovo´s civil society can indeed be observed. As mentioned earlier, it has been argued that NGOs/CSOs play an important role in diffusing EU norms as they can introduce new ideas and lobby for policy change (Keck & Sikkink, 1999).

Drawing from the toolbox on external diffusion of ideas where diffusion mechanisms such as coercion, manipulation of utility calculations, and emulation are presented (Börzel and Risse, 2009), hypothesis i. brings the expectation that: *The more NGOs/CSOs can draw from the instrument of political dialogue through diffusion mechanisms such as socialization and persuasion, the more impact will they have on policy making and institution building.*

The first signs of diffusion can be observed in the manipulation of utility calculations (Börzel, 2009), where the EU, by manipulating utility functions, empowers NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo to push for the adoption of ideas. This is done in the form of financial and technical aid, where several NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo apply for and receive funds through IPA, EIDHR, or CSF (Interview #1).

This empowerment is further accompanied by a political dialogue where NGOs/CSOs can offer their inputs, ideas, and practices. It is evident from the analysis that NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo maintain a satisfactory dialogue with EU institutions, e.g. by offering insight into the situation on the ground, by acting as watchdogs for the government, and by offering advice on the drafting of progress reports within several policy areas (Interview #1). Additionally, in the so-called civil society dialogue NGOs/CSOs go through a process of learning that results in norm internalization, where drawing lessons from other countries in the region becomes evident. "Through dialogue we try to evaluate what kind of measures countries in the region take to be successful in different policy-areas, and then we apply it here" (Interview #3). This way of acting is closely linked to the *logic of appropriateness* and processes of persuasion (March & Olsen, 1998), where domestic actors act as change agents, mobilize in the domestic context, and persuade others to redefine their interests and identities.

However, EU polices can cause a *"policy misfit"* between European norms and standards and domestic policies (Börzel & Risse, 2011, p.5). In other words, EU policies can clash with Kosovo policies, because priorities for the EU may not correspond with priorities on the ground (Interview #1). This so-called misfit equals compliance issues, leading to the EU using negative incentives, allowing and assisting NGOs/CSOs to act as agents to trigger change and push for policies at the local and central level. Börzel and Risse (2011) argue that change is most evident in the countries that indeed do have a *"policy misfit,"* because domestic actors such as NGOs/CSOs will try to persuade the government to redefine their interests by using argumentation in favor of EU norms and values. This is observed in the analysis where NGOs/CSOs try to push for policies concerning e.g. education or youth, issues not perceived as a priority on the central level. However, the observations from the analysis show that even though NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo do maintain a favorable dialogue with EU institutions, the case is not the same when it concerns their relationship with government institutions. For the EU to be able to transfer norms, values, and ideas through NGOs/CSOs, and for NGOs/CSOs to be able to push for policy change, it can be argued that the EU needs to:

1) Evaluate Kosovo institutions
2) Develop new strategies to enhance cooperation between civil society and government institutions

3) Improve project coordination, e.g. avoid duplication of projects

The logic of appropriateness enables domestic actors to act under the concept of `the right thing to do` (Börzel & Risse, 2011). As NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo act on behalf of the citizens, the emphasis falls on them exerting adoptive pressures on domestic-level processes, because these processes do not resonate well with domestic norms and collective understandings. By funding NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo, the EU is in a way diffusing norms and values by enabling local actors to lobby for policy change, but for the diffusion of norms and values to be effective, NGOs/CSOs need to able to communicate with the government, and therefore the EU needs to incorporate new strategies.

It can be argued that the hypothesis to a degree entails the right assumption. However, as observed above, NGOs/CSOs do not only draw from the instrument of political dialogue through diffusion mechanisms of socialization and persuasion. On the contrary, NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo also act through the instrument of conditionality through the diffusion mechanism of emulation where NGOs/CSOs draw from indirect influence and borrow ideas from others "…through cooperation with other NGOs/CSOs both on a local and international level" (Interview #2). However, even though NGOs/CSOs can benefit through the EU from instruments and mechanisms of diffusion, the policy impact is still largely influenced by both external and internal pressure for change.

Hypothesis ii. assumes that: *Pressure from below (i.e. pull) and pressure from above (i.e. push) increase the adoption and implementation of EU rules, norms and values, and therefore NGOs'/CSOs' ability to impact policy making and institution building will depend on both domestic and external factors.*

To discuss the hypothesis above, one must first consider the key domestic obstacles Kosovo faces. Kosovo is struggling in its attempt to develop into a liberal democratic state. The rule of law has yet to be consolidated, and corruption is connected to the lack of economic growth and is hindering domestic progress. The political system in Kosovo is comprised of "hierarchal, close-knit structures of power, and lacks clear ideological basis" (Interview #7). These domestic obstacles hinder a real democratic process as well as Kosovo´s path towards the Union. Kosovo also faces multiple external challenges as the country has struggled in achieving full sovereignty. This has created a hindrance to participation on the international scene of sovereign states. Kosovo has therefore entered a grey zone in international politics rather than assuming a recognized place in the community. Additionally, Kosovo is currently the only country in the Western Balkans that has yet

to gain visa liberalization. Kosovo has remained in political limbo since 2015, with the national assembly unable to function effectively due to an opposition boycott. Since the boycott began, opposition supporters have repeatedly interrupted parliamentary proceedings, releasing tear gas in the chamber in tandem with increasing street protests. As also mentioned earlier, the government of Kosovo collapsed due to a motion of no confidence as recently as May 10th.

The EU has exerted pressure on Kosovo, using the "carrots and sticks" approach to improve Kosovo's relations with Serbia as part of being able to join the EU in the future. The EU is also exerting pressure on Kosovo to finalize the demarcation agreement with Montenegro as well as enhance human rights and democracy. The reward for improving these obstacles is ultimately accession.

To promote the ambitious reform agenda, the European Commission has relied on top-down methods and instruments regarding Kosovo. The Union has focused on enhancing the effectiveness of state institutions and the promotion of human rights, however one could claim that the emphasis has been on keeping the country stable regarding security issues. Its emphasis on output-related reforms reflects a preference for stability over democratic change. Still, making institutions more effective implies a strong emphasis on the fight against corruption, entailing huge costs of adoption (Börzel, 2011).

While the EU *push* has been visible, the domestic *pull* is evident but not extensive. The importance of NGOs/CSOs in fighting corruption in transition countries is widely recognized. They play an important role in monitoring government actions and making sure that the reforms respect both national and international laws. Lacking state capacity, NGOs/CSOs may provide an alternative source of knowledge and expertise (Demidov & Panfilova, 2001). However, despite signs that NGOs in Kosovo have been benefitting from external capacity in the form of funds, their role in public life and policy seems to be rather minimal. It appears as though the idea of an autonomous civil society is still a foreign concept in Kosovo. Many NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo are small-scale organizations with limited personnel that are not equipped to deal with essential technical details (Interview #5). Consequently, most NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo do not have sufficient organizational resources to mobilize larger parts of society. This lack of capacity has often served as a pretext for government actors to deny NGOs/CSOs access to policy processes. In addition, the channeling of resources for civil society in Kosovo has often given rise to short-lived mushrooming of

NGOs/CSOs. Given the misfit between Kosovo/EU policies and lack of domestic pressure for adaption, the extent of policy impact observed is minor. Therefore, the hypothesis contains the right assumption. Although the EU pull is observed, the domestic push should be more evident for NGOs/CSOs to effectively impact policy-making and institution building.

Hypothesis iii. assumes that: *NGOs'/CSOs' ability to impact policy making and institution building is dependent on the coherence of EU policies. Therefore, in order for NGOs/CSOs to have an impact on policy making and institution building, the EU needs to be more coherent with its policies towards the country.*

When analyzing the interviews, it becomes evident that several respondents have the perception that EU policies are incoherent and lack coordination, which in turn "hinders NGOs'/CSOs' capacity to impact policy-making" (Interview #3). The environment in which NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo operate can therefore be claimed to be uncoordinated. The EU is present in Kosovo not only through the CFSP but also its enlargement policy. Additionally, multiple international actors are present in Kosovo with the same aims. EU enlargement and Europeanization focuses on the transformative power of EU accession. Subsequently, the situation becomes complicated when the aim of EU policies is focused on both enlargement as well as foreign and security policy initiatives. It can therefore be argued that horizontal incoherence is taking place, where policies with external repercussions pursued by different parts of the EU are inconsistent with each other (Nutall, 2005). Additionally, the EU and other international actors don't seem to communicate with each other. The observations from the analysis indicate that NGOs/CSOs are to a degree frustrated with the EU for not coordinating projects and initiatives because it hinders their capacity to impact policy making and institution building.

Hypothesis iv. is drawn from the perception of EU credibility and is based on the following assumption: *The EU´s lack of credibility regarding its enlargement policy weakens EU integration in Kosovo. Lack of credibility therefore limits NGO's/CSOs' capacity to impact policy making and institution building.*

EU credibility has long been an area of discussion among EU scholars, where perceptions of the EU as a global actor largely determines its success in third countries. Bengtsson and Elgström (2012) suggest that the successful promotion of normative values in third countries not only relies on positive and negative incentives or domestic and external factors, but it also depends on the

EU´s identity and credibility among its partners. In the case of Kosovo, the absence of credible promises of e.g. accession and visa liberalization leads to the EU´s repeated assurances that it will be a partner for state-building processes becoming mere rhetoric and lacking credibility. Although NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo can benefit from several mechanisms of diffusion, the general observation is that the Union lacks the proper tools to address the challenges emanating from Kosovo. Therefore, empowering NGOs/CSOs to impact policies and institution building will not help without fixing the root of the problem.

EU legitimacy and credibility are closely linked. As also mentioned earlier, Hurd (1999) offers three reasons as to why an actor may follow the policy advice from another actor: because they fear the consequences, because of their own self-interest, or because the other actor is perceived as legitimate. This implies that the greater legitimacy the EU has, the easier it will be to persuade Kosovo into accepting its policies. In the case of NGOs/CSOs it can be argued that one of the reasons as to why they follow the policy advice from the EU is due to self-interest. This is of course not a blanket statement for all NGOs/CSOs but rather an observed disturbing effect of EU funding driving NGOs/CSOs to become donor driven.

The positive perception of the EU has begun to change, leading to increasing euroscepticism. The reason for mentioning euroscepticism is because it affects the credibility and legitimacy of the Union. EU literature has examined the well-rehearsed reasons for the enlargement fatigue within European institutions and member-states (Belloni, 2016). However, the citizen´s views have frequently been neglected or marginalized in the analysis of EU enlargement processes. Local views are typically treated as domestic constraints stemming either form the presence of authoritarian political structures or opportunity costs of adopting reforms requested by Europe (Belloni, 2016). While Kosovars are known to be supporters of EU-integration, it could be claimed that Euroscepticism is to a degree rising in the country. Belloni (2016) using Taggart and Szczerbiak (2002), distinguishes Euroscepticism as ´soft´ and ´hard´ Euroscepticism. ´Soft´ Euroscepticism is defined as "a position where concerns on one (or a number of) policy areas lead to the expression of qualified opposition to the EU, or where there is a sense that "national interest" is currently at odds with the EU trajectory" (Belloni, 2016, p.532), whereas, `hard´ Euroscepticism involves outright rejection of EU integration. `Soft` Euroscepticism would be a more appropriate phrase to describe Kosovo´s opposition to the EU. One EU foreign policy towards the country which has caused confusion among Kosovars is the rule of law mission (EULEX). The EU in this

regard is perceived as having double-standards. "The Union pressures Kosovo to reduce corruption, while corruption is evident in its own mission" (Interview #4). This reduces the EU´s credibility in the country and could be a reason as to why people are skeptical. It could therefore be claimed that this hypothesis to a degree entails the right assumption.

After assessing the hypotheses, the fundamental problem appears to be that the Commission lacks alternative tools and strategies. Despite the extraordinary challenge, the Commission frames its intervention and objectives for Kosovo, in terms of Europeanization and eventual membership. As though the goal of building a functioning and legitimate state was not great enough, the EU´s objectives and strategy is designed to create a state and civil society capable of following the demands and costs of European accession (Fagan, 2011). According to the EU´s most recent opinion on Kosovo´s progress, there has been very little success in augmenting state capacity to, for example, decrease corruption, to collect taxes, and to ensure the basic functionality of state institutions (Kosovo Progress Report, 2016). Additionally, with a contested statehood and without a final status in near sight, it is rather difficult to discuss the future of Kosovo.

It appears as though stability in the region is vital and sadly undermines progress and democracy. If the EU ultimately wants civil society and the citizens of Kosovo on its side, it must not only be more vocal in defense of its values but also, and more importantly, hold the government of Kosovo accountable. NGOs'/CSOs' ability to impact policies and institution building, especially in ´high politics`, is largely influenced by this accountability. The government lacks credibility and legitimacy among both NGOs/CSOs and citizens, and it has rightfully been accused of corruption and crime. Members of Kosovo´s political elite "are sacrificing the best interests of Kosovo to protect themselves from criminal prosecution" (Interview #3). By holding the government accountable, the EU will not only be able to transfer norms, ideas, and rules through NGOs/CSOs, but it will also be able to eventually gain credibility in Kosovo. For NGOs/CSOs to have a greater impact on policy making and institution building, the EU should stop seeing Kosovo as an adjunct to its Serbia policy. When analyzing the interviews, it becomes evident that the hot topic in `high politics` is the Kosovo-Serbia relations. Although it is an important issue, Kosovo has other pressing matters such as corruption and a weak economy. For the EU to be successful in Kosovo, it needs to focus more on these areas and then effectively use civil society as a facilitator of EU rules, norms and values.

The way the EU has handled e.g. the visa liberalization has further enhanced euroscepticism, as the population of Kosovo feel as though they are being locked out from the rest of Europe. As trust in the EU´s enlargement policy is declining everywhere, including the WBs, the Balkan illness does not seem to have a cure, the symptoms being paralysis, a devastated economy, and lack of perspective. The EU remains engaged in Kosovo through e.g. funding NGOs/CSOs and in using them as facilitators of EU norms and values through political dialogue and conditionality, though this engagement is not at a level necessary to put the country firmly on track toward membership.

This whole process ultimately affects the EU´s credibility among its partners. There will perhaps not be a new war in Kosovo, but is that enough? As long as Kosovo remains stable, the EU looks at issues that hit closer to home, and therefore one sees an increase in skepticism toward the EU´s ability to promote democratic principles in the country. Additionally, the fact that the EU has not fully recovered from its internal problems, e.g. Brexit, the economic crisis, and EU integration, has a negative effect on its foreign policy and legitimacy. If the EU cannot solve backyard problems, how can it claim to be a geopolitical player? However, the relationship is ultimately about both the credibility of the EU and the ability of Kosovo to live up to its declared commitments to democratic reforms. In other words, NGOs'/CSOs' impact capacity depends both on EU pressure, domestic pressure and the environment in which they operate.

6. Concluding remarks

The main purpose of this thesis has been to assess the role and impact of EU-funded NGOs/CSOs on policies and institutions of state building in Kosovo, through a qualitative study using both interviews and document analysis as methods. The hypotheses draw from the analytical framework based on (External) Europeanization and EU credibility, legitimacy and coherence. After assessing and discussing the hypotheses, it remains clear that although NGOs/CSOs can draw from various diffusion mechanisms, they are still to a degree dependent on domestic and external pressure, coherence, credibility, and legitimacy to successfully impact policy-making and institution building.

It appears as though the hypotheses form a circle of interdependency: it could be argued that NGOs/CSOs draw from several instruments and mechanisms of diffusion, however if these are to be successful in Kosovo, NGOs/CSOs need to exert domestic pressure, and for NGOs/CSOs to be able to make impact on the ground, the EU needs to be coherent regarding its policies. This ultimately impacts the Union's credibility in Kosovo regarding both its enlargement policy and state-building processes. The environment in which NGOs/CSOs operate plus EU credibility and coherence can therefore be claimed to be important factors regarding NGOs´/CSOs´ impact capability. When combining all these aspects, it could subsequently be claimed that NGOs´/CSOs´ capacity to impact policy-making and institution building in Kosovo remains extremely uneven. The general observations are that EU-funded NGOs/CSOs have minor impact on issues that are important in ´high politics´, whereas some impact can be observed in the area/field of human rights and democracy. However, most NGOs/CSOs work with promoting EU rules, norms and values.

It could very well be argued that the EU needs to reevaluate its civil society policy towards Kosovo and come up with better solutions as how to enhance NGOs´/CSOs´ capability to impact policy-making and institution building. The fact that NGOs/CSOs can draw from mechanisms of diffusion will not generate results if the root of the problem remains unfixed. The general observations from the analysis seem to be that NGOs/CSOs struggle most regarding their cooperation with government institutions and working in an uncoordinated environment with evident domestic obstacles. Therefore, it may be an idea for the EU to advance its role towards holding the government accountable and utilize more coherent policies, so that NGOs/CSOs can generate desirable change and eventually bring Kosovo closer to Europeanization.

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Europeanizing Kosovo?
Role and impact of EU-supported NGOs on policies and institutions of state-building

Description:
Since the end of the NATO operation in 1999, the European Union (EU) has assumed an important role in 'stabilizing' Kosovo – in particular in the aftermath of Kosovo's independence. In addition, the prospect of future EU membership constitutes a key element in the process of state-building. According to the European Commission, non-governmental and civil society organizations (NGOs/CSOs) are key factors to state-building efforts in Kosovo. However, NGOs and CSOs have been accused of establishing parallel institutional structures rather than supporting the establishment of autonomous and functioning Kosovo institutions. How does the EU ultimately deal with this dilemma?

Purpose:
The purpose of the MA thesis is twofold: first to establish a comprehensive picture of the NGO and CSO activities in Kosovo; second, drawing in the analytical concept of Europeanization, to assess the effects of NGOs and CSOs on both policy-implementation and institution-building – using Kosovo as a single case. Experts tend to disagree on the role and effects of EU-supported NGOs on policies and institutions of state-building. Whereas Ketola (2010) claims that the EU's civil society funding 'links to a perception of NGOs as potential agents of domestic change', others emphasize the disturbing effects of NGO and CSO activities in general and Kosovo in particular.

Methods:
The thesis draws from qualitative methods, such as semi-structured interviews conducted with NGO and CSO stakeholders active in Kosovo as well as representatives from EU and Kosovo institutions. Key questions focus on the typology of NGOs and CSOs as agents for change, NGOs and democracy promotion, positive and/or negative effects triggered by EU funding, EU monitoring, expectations in the context of Europeanization and democratization policies, and the essentiality of NGOs in state-building processes.?

Interview guide, Kosovo

1. What does the EU want to achieve in Kosovo by funding NGOs and CSOs?
2. How would you describe the relationship and cooperation between NGOs/CSOs and the EU institutions (e.g. European Commission Liaison Office, European Union Office etc.) in Kosovo?
3. Could you describe EU funding application processes for NGOs/CSOs?
4. How are NGOs/CSOs' projects monitored and by whom?
5. What are the main challenges for NGOs/CSOs with regards to project implementation?
6. Does donor interest shift? If so, how do NGOs/CSOs readjust in order to compete successfully for EU funding?
7. *The EU often views civil society as an alternative provider of public services and as an important constituent of both democratic and economic development.* To which degree do you think that NGOs/CSOs are able to contribute to this view?

8. Could you mention one or two positive effects of EU funding to NGOs/CSOs?
9. Could you mention one or two negative effects of EU funding to NGOs/CSOs?
10. Could you point to problems you may come across while introducing/initiating new projects?
11. What kind of changes do you observe (institutional, societal, governmental etc.)?
12. Where do you think EU funding to have triggered substantial change?
13. *Europeanisation refers to both (primarily) the effects of European integration in member and partner countries and the ways members and partners can shape policy-making at EU-Level.* Would you agree that NGOs/CSOs manage to implement EU norms, rules, ideas, procedures in your specific area/field of work?
14. *State-building is often described as the establishment, re-establishment, and strengthening of a public structure in a given territory capable of delivering public goods.* Would you say that EU funding of NGOs/CSOs in Kosovo is essential in state-building processes?
15. Kosovo faces domestic obstacles such as corruption, challenges in the progress of democratization, human rights etc. How do NGOs/CSOs contribute to reducing or augmenting these domestic obstacles that are present today?
16. How could NGOs/CSOs contribute to bringing Kosovo closer to the EU?
17. Is there anything you would like to add?