HOW THE MASS MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC DISCOURSE AFFECTS INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

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Abstract

The paper explores the journey of an organization that is a small intentional community, whose objective is to contribute to the new forms of sociality as well as the artistic and cultural life of the youth in the city of Tetova in North Macedonia. For the sake of better comprehension concerning how mass media can affect the public discourse, a case study is examined of a recent incident that happened in the community. The methodology used for this study is applied anthropology as a practice, which involves a problem-solving approach that draws on the knowledge and skills of anthropology to develop culturally sensitive solutions to the challenges this community faces.

Keywords: local community, mass media, public discourse
Discipline: antropology

Absztrakt

A MÉDIA ÉS A KÖZBESZÉD HATÁSA A LOKÁLIS KÖZÖSSÉGKRE: EGY ETNOGRÁFIAI ESETTANULMÁNY

Az alkalmazott antropológiai profilú kutatás az Észak-Macedóniában található Tetova város lokális közösségének vizsgálatával foglalkozik. A tanulmány arra vállalkozik, hogy etnográfiai perspektívából mutassa be a média és a közbeszéd hatását egy közösség mindennapi életvitelére.

Kulcsszavak: lokális közösség, média, közbeszéd
Diszciplína: antropológia

In contemporary society, a "social movement" is often defined as an organized group of people who get together to promote a particular cause or issue with the goal of bringing about social, cultural, or political change. These movements or communities usually emerge in response to alleged injustices or imbalances in society, and their objectives are to raise awareness of these issues and motivate change.

Since modern social movements rely heavily on symbolic politics to challenge established power structures and create new forms of collective identity and purpose, as it is emphasized by Melucci (1996; 1989). It is important to consider the social-political reality in which these movements and communities perform. For the continuous development of the performance and operations of these kinds of communities, public discourse, which gives both individuals and groups a forum to express their concerns and promote their causes, is essential. Through it, members and activists of the community can create a feeling of shared purpose and identity by participating in conversations and debates about topics of public interest. As people learn more about the problems affecting their communities and are inspired to act, public discourse can also encourage civic engagement and participation.

In this paper, I will briefly explore the journey of an organization that is a small intentional community, whose aim is to contribute to the new forms of sociality as well as the artistic and cultural life of the youth in the city of Tetova, my hometown, in North Macedonia. Moreover, I will observe the overall phenomenon of the relation of these kinds of initiatives in the country – similar in the whole Balkan peninsula – to the local governments and their responsibilities, under-standing, actions, and support concerning this concept.

To better understand how mass media can affect the public discourse, I will examine a case study of a recent and ongoing incident happening to this community related to the physical socio-cultural space in which they perform.

The incident includes the (new) mayor of the city of Tetova, who, after intending to evict this community from their space - which they found abandoned and renovated consecutively for four years on a voluntary basis - in a press conference, among others, accuses them of conducting pornographic activities.

The occurrence, and what preceded it, went viral in every medium nationwide and regionally in a matter of hours, which on the one hand raised questions regarding the credibility of both parties, the community and the mayor, and on the other gave enormous visibility to the small community, with their publicity going up on their social media channels. With this happening, the community got a chance to be heard, and suddenly the whole country (and even region) learned about them.

The public discourse started to shape the whole inci-dent in a way that the community felt obliged to justify themselves for this accusation, in more se-rious ways in the beginning, until it started to beco-me more humoristic and sarcastic while ridiculing these accusations.

Social Cultural Space Tetova
- The Community

Social Cultural Space Tetova is, according to its members, a community of independent people who interact, create, and cultivate the natural human culture of functioning in equality. They work and act in the city of Tetova, my hometown, in North Macedonia. For a better understanding of the context, it is important to present a short background about the city, which is the second largest city in the country, only 30 minutes' distance from the capital (Skopje), with an urban population of more than 60,000 citizens according

to the last census of 2021, however, the metropolitan area extends to over hundred thousands. In the past 15 years, the city has had two emerging universities that attract a number of young students from other cities and countries in the region. Nevertheless, the city's public and private cultural institutions offer few to no alternative cultural and recreational activities.

The city's population is ethnically and culturally diverse, with predominant Albanian, mostly non-observant Muslim majority, as well as orthodox Macedonian Christians and a variety of other ethnic minorities, such as Roma and Turkish communities. Considering the constant systematic transitions in the Balkan region for the past three decades and the post-socialist era, the social realities have gone through different extremities, a process that made it difficult for the cultural reality of the city to develop normally.

The situation affects mainly the youth, who, lacking spaces for creative performances, exhibittions, studios, art museums, cinemas, etc., spend most of their free time in coffee shops, a circumstance that slows down their involvement in social (political) activism. This phenomenon forces society to de-pend more on one another than on the state or other systems, leading to the formation of collec-tive autonomous survival systems such as commu-nity built initiatives, a highly new concept of that form in the region.

The community of Social Cultural Space Tetova was created as a result of an initiative between the Belgian organization Toestand and Termokiss from Prishtina, Kosova. A group of people, myself included, from the city of Tetova, North Macedonia, who, throughout the years with their independent research, activism and work have identified a need for an alternative community and cultural space.

It will unify independent creators from the city and the region to work together towards identifying and solving issues concerning young create-ves, public spaces, ecological issues, and creating a

culture of communityled initiatives towards solving these issues.

Throughout the years, as an informal group and as part of different projects they have come to recognize the potential of young creators who live and work in the city and the need to bring together this creative force to work towards a common goal: "a better city for all".

The idea behind this community is to bring together not only individuals but also other creative organizations in the city that share a similar vision and provide facilities, human resources, technologies, and equipment for these groups to implement their project ideas; discuss and create solutions involving young people in the decision-making process on the local governance regarding problems that directly concern them - create and nurture movements of alternative culture and art.

Since its creation, this Social and Cultural space has been home to hundreds of young creatives, a high-ly diverse group of artists, workshop leaders and creatives who live, work or study in the city and have been using this space to exhibit their art, showcase their ideas, organize workshops and create healthy discussions on diverse issues that impact young people in the city and around the world, creating as such, a network of people who communicate and work together towards better function-ning communities.

Getting back to the early stages of this initiative, it is of relevance to mention that this project began by getting together around 100 people from Kosova, Belgium, and locals of North Macedonia to reconstruct and transform the old and abandoned building of Radio Tetova, the former radio station of the city, into a social and cultural space (Picture1.).

With very little funding from Erasmus+ projects (inquired by the Belgian organization as an EU member state) and no other material income, on a completely volunteer basis, the space was renovated and adapted to the needs of its members.

Picture 1. The ex RadioTetova building in 2018 – abandoned for more than 10 years (Tetova, North Macedonia)

After several years of work and renovations of the building through funding, the space and its members managed to revive the radio station, make an audiovisual production studio, an exhibition space, a small improvised cinema, and a coworking space available, easily reachable, and free to use for the whole city (Picture2). What is more important is that some of these initiatives are a complete innovation in the city; a community space functioning with a flat hierarchy like this has never existed before in the city.

Picture 2. Different activities in the Space after the last renovation (2022)
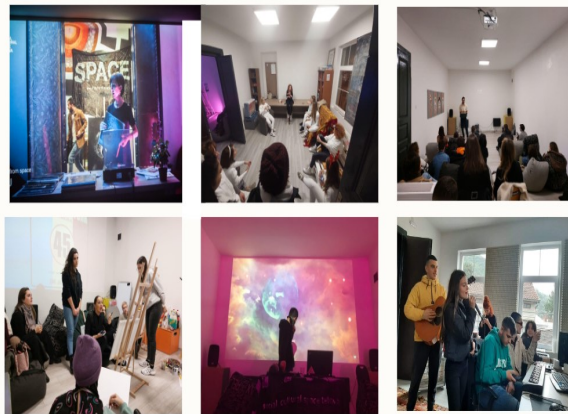
Understanding a community's self-representation is a crucial process in anthropology, as it provides insight into how they perceive themselves and their place in the world. According to James Clifford, in his book "The Predicament of Culture" (1988), the act of representing oneself is always bound up with power relations and politics. He suggests that the way a community represents itself is not only a passive replication of reality but rather influenced by external forces and an active construction of meaning and social reality. Understanding these influences is crucial to understanding a community's self-identity.

In this act of self-definition and self-representation, there's an engagement toward negotiation with the other, where, according to Foucault (1984), the concept of "the other" does not refer to a specific person or thing but rather to a relationship of difference between the self and something or someone that is perceived as different. This relationship of difference is crucial in defining the self. This developing community describes itself as: „focused on creating new standards and norms of collective functioning that permeate with the needs of the time and the operating circle. On a completely voluntary basis, new and avantgarde events and ideas are created and maintained there, which are always put to the service of the 'space' society and beyond. Public events have an educational and instructive purpose, and in some cases they also present creative forms of protest, but there is obviously also entertainment in a society that is very open to diversity. The essence of any activity is voluntary work, arising from the desire to contribute on behalf of the community and accep-ting others as equal collaborators."

The presence of this community in the city questions and challenges the meaning of the conventional institutions and structures of power and governance due to their unique and alternative method of working, which has a significant impact on their surroundings. By seeking to create

alternative forms of social organization, they introduce a more equal distribution of power and decision-making, which is often misunderstood by its surrounding social and political context, which works mostly in a hierarchical and centralized way.

Relations to the local government

The space and its community, as the product of the volunteer work of the active group that maintains it, have their genesis from a spontaneous visit to the center with a similar character in Prishtina, Kosova, 'Termokiss' in August 2016, when this center was founded. From there started the first incentives and contacts with the autonomous Belgian collective 'Tostand', which with similar projects aims at revitalizing unused and abandoned public spaces, create new spaces in different places every year, locally and internationally. Once they were in contact, the group started to look for abandoned places in the city, trying to find a public space that is not privatized and at the same time, started to reflect through meetings, about the recently discovered concept of autonomous communities that function with a horizontal structure, different from typical NGOs - a very new and unusual concept in the Balkan region. After several meetings with other collectives in the city and also the municipality of the city at the time (2018), the group managed to finally sign a memorandum with the municipality of the city of Tetova, getting in this way the permission for the revitalization and use of a space that is public property under the jurisdiction of the municipality - the abandoned building of the former radio station of the city - and in parallel create "Skatova" the first ever skatepark in the city. The agreement between the two parties, states that the space of the building is given for use by the Municipality of Tetova, to this group of people, while the organization justifies this trust with its full maintenance as well as the organization of ongoing public activities. Due to

the lack of legal opportunities to register as an autonomous collective, this group of volunteers is registered as a non-governmental organization called "Socio-Cultural Space Tetova" but the internal structure appears to be entirely on a horizontal basis with shared responsibilities. Since the facility is public property within the Municipality of Tetova, in order to use the space after revitalization, the practice of signing a memorandum of cooperation every 6 months or a year between the Municipality of Tetova and the organization that maintains the space continued.

During this period, the organized community, through applications and funding, managed to reconstruct the space twice, turning it into a fully functional space. After the completion of the works on the construction site, a complete organizational plan (35 pages) was sent to the municipality for the mode of operation and the anticipated activities that will be held in the premises of "Space Tetova," together with a document of evidence in support of the activities, signed by the residents of the neighbourhood. This fact is important and will be elaborated later on. The organizational plan was accepted and with this the memorandum of cooperation between the community and the Municipality was granted until April 2024.

In the Municipal elections of October 2021, a new (populist Islamic) conservative party won the elections and shortly after, they won the majority in the municipal council as well. Sometime after the new mayor gets accommodated in the institutional premises, the community gets a call for a meeting with him, where during the discussion he asks for the memorandum of cooperation in force that was signed by the previous mayor. After examining it, he decides that this memorandum is not entirely valid because it is not clearly written and it lacks crucial information, so the community members suggest that together they create a new memorandum and in the short term they send the draft

proposal for the new memorandum, to which the cabinet only replies that there will soon be an answer to it. In the following months there were several attempts from a group of young party militants to insert in the space through asking for a separate exclusive office to build the youth municipal council, bringing in European organizations to show them the space as their own etc.

The incident - media pseudo-events

Although there is always room to debate what constitutes a community, researchers define the term as "currently in a muddle" and "used to describe everything from plural organisms to the entire human population of the planet" (McKeown, C. T., Rubinstein, R. A., & Kelly, J. G.).

The concepts of community and the production of it appear to have different meanings in different cultures (1987). In this case, considering the social-political reality of this group, their identification as an intentional community has been widely misunderstood by the mass population, as well as the local governance administrations. This misunderstanding has shown great consequences.

After the newly elected mayor's conservative party secured the majority in the municipal council, they finally started feeling the comfort to freely bring any decisions forward. Mid-October 2022, in a vain official document and without prior warning, disregarding the tireless voluntary contribution of the community, the Municipality of Tetova issued a decision where it requires the group of youngsters within 5 days to release the premises of the Space where they have been operating for 4 years as a community at the service of citizens.

In the above-mentioned document, only the decision is conveyed that the Unit for Culture and Sports of the Sector for Public Activities is determined to be responsible for the coordination of any activity that will take place in Social Cultural

Space Tetova - the Space which was found abandoned for 10 years, revitalized, brought up from zero by renovating and intervening in several instances, and given life in the last 4 years with countless activities and "unsparing voluntary contributions for the good of society", from all members of this community and wider.

Moreover, with this decision, the Municipality of Tetova violates the memorandum signed by itself with the previous administration, whereby the Social Cultural Space Tetova holds the right to use the space until April 2024. To this, the community responded by sending a letter of awareness explainning who they are, what they do and how they function, as it seemed to them that this was not clear to the mayor and the present municipal administration. They also asked the mayor to support them, seriously consider this letter, and possibly meet them for a discussion.

The following days they were invited to two meetings with members of the municipality, whose role within this administration was not clear. Moreover, as members of the community declare "they were smoking inside the office and claiming the space as their own property".

After a week of no response, the community decided to finally go public and share their concern and issue with the wide public, not only through their social media channels but also by inviting the media to their premises and making public declarations regarding their concern (Picture 3.).

According to Elihu Katz, a pioneer in communication science, broadcasts are generally referred to as media events. However, he emphasizes that this phrase is vague and overused and he would rather refer to them as the media's "high holidays." He argues that each of these events temporarily revives a society's sense of occasion, and some of them might have had long-lasting consequences (Katz, E.,1980).

The following events had the same effects on the community in question.

Picture 3. The community of Social Cultural Space Tetova giving declarations to the media.
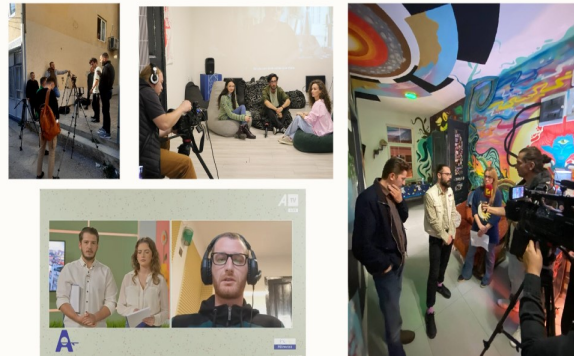
During one of these meetings with one of the country's biggest TV channels, they were invited to join virtually –on live TV- a widely well-known program where the mayor was invited for the first time to discuss his work in the city as a new mayor, without him knowing. In his examination of media event processes, Katz (1980) claims that high drama (or high ritual) must be present, including a wide range of emotional or symbolic elements, in order to capture the audience's attention and make their time sitting in front of their screens worth it. Naturally, this requires that the activities be planned beforehand. Although this 'clash' in the form of an 'element of surprise' was planned and foreseen by the media in question and the community, it was not planned by the mayor. When the moment comes for them to show up on the screen, the mayor is shocked and seems agitated for not being told about this encounter beforehand. He starts addressing the community by saying that he is wondering "who has taught these youngsters to occupy?".

This is where the social drama begins, as the program is being broadcast live on TV and simultaneously on social media, the public starts commenting. Social drama according to Victor Turner (1988) goes through several stages, such as breach, crisis, redress, and reintegration or schism, which he identifies as "a sequence of social encounters of a conflictive, competitive, or agonistic nature". To put it another way, the social drama starts when a member of the community breaks a rule; people take sides for or against the rule breaker; repairs are made, either formally or informally; and if the repairs are successful, the group returns to normal; if not, the group disintegrates. In this case, the group can be identified as a larger portion of the population - everyone who was following up on the program. If or when a group represents a larger portion of the population, its social drama can have a more significant impact on society. This is because the group's interests and concerns are more likely to reflect the needs and aspirations of a broader cross-section of society. Additionally, the larger the group, the greater the potential for collective action, which can further amplify the group's impact. This was also the impact of the TV appearance of the community as a group, in their space, vis a vis the mayor alone in the studio (Picture4.).

Picture 4. The clash between the mayor and the community live on one of the biggest national TV programs

In these moments of the broadcast, people start questioning the identity of this community that "breaks the rules" and "occupies public spaces"

that they have never heard of before. Some are defending the mayor, while others think this topic is irrelevant, as he should be talking about more important things such as the roads, the traffic and other basic problems the population faces on a daily basis. The clash of the conversation between the two pairs lasted for around 10 minutes, in a not very friendly way, during which the mayor insisted that this community has no more right than any other NGO to use a public space that is property of the municipality, and on the other hand, the community was trying to explain that they were the ones who found the place abandoned 4 years ago and renovated it by themselves on several occasions, serving meanwhile as a bridge between NGOs, informal groups and individuals, creating and maintaining a space for them to meet, function and explore their creativity.

The following two days, the community continued sending emails and letters to the municipality, asking for meetings and possibilities for an agreement, until after three days the mayor decided to do a press conference regarding the problematized issue with the community. In this press conference, where all the national media were present and it was a live broadcast event, the acting mayor of the municipality of Tetova starts the conference with slander and wrong approaches common to the community, the space, and the young people. He also shows a document allegedly signed by residents of the neighbourhood where Space is located, where they complain about noise and excessive consumption of alcohol. Later on, it will be exposed in the media that the signed letter was archived on the same day of the conference, meaning it was forged. The mayor continues to accuse the community of illegal activities within that space, including illegal activities with minors. When one reporter insists on several occasions by asking what kind of activities he is referring to, the mayor very agitatedly replies ``*pornographic activities*'' (Picture 5).

Picture 5. The moment the mayor accuses the community of illegal pornographic activities

After a short, shocking silence in the room, cameras start cracking intensively and the reporters and journalists jump in with all kinds of questions, to which he leaves the room.

The group of youngsters of the community who are listening to this declaration are shocked by this deeply offensive statement, in particular, that it came from the premises of the city municipality, according to them "the temple that should be the first aid in improving the conditions and offers for citizens and young people". They start activating by calling all the media to their premises this time, for a response to the accusations. Meanwhile, after requesting information from the police, they find out that the police reports show that until that date there was not even one complaint or any report of any alleged illegal activity at Social Cultural Space Tetova. For this serious disinformation and extreme defamation, the community starts appealing to the competent legal bodies, embassies of friendly countries, civil society and all formal and informal groups, and all free citizens to condemn this insult and accusation, which is unfortunately based, according to them "on the chauvinism and arrogance of typical medieval ignorance".

The attention of the public is completely captured. The social media channels are flooded with comments, questions from all parts of the population, among which supporters and militants

of the (Muslim) conservative party. In some of the most frequent comments they defend the mayor and his accusations of pornography by referring to the activities that are published by the community itself on their social media channels, namely two main activities: one "Healing Sounds: Meditative Concert" where people are laying on the floor meditating through guided healing meditation (people in shorts, leggings and 'exposing' clothes); and two, an event called "Peach Preach" - a gala night where women tell stories of their private or professional lives with a specific topic with the aim of breaking barriers and stereotypes in the (very patriarchal) society, while giving women voice and creating a free and safe space for the women to talk about their experiences. The two events are now being massively used to publicly harass the community (and the women involved) in the social media xenophobic campaign by supporters and militants of the party. The strong xenophobic campaigns from online pages and suspicious profiles are publicly suspected to be controlled or in line with the (Muslim) conservative ideology of the party of the mayor ("Besa"), the community declares. According to Cohen A. P. (1985), if we view communal identification as a collective fabrication, we must compare the contrasts and similarities between the community's outsiders and its internal members. The outside supporters of the com-munity also start their campaign. Some define these attacks against the socio-cultural activities of politically independent young people in Tetova as "attacks of political Islam", whose motives are based on the party's ideology, "created and supported with investments from abroad, more precisely from the eastern Islamic states like Qatar, Turkey, & Co.". Other motives of the party, stated by supporters of the community are "to attack any organization that does not touch or approximate the spirit of political Islam"; "to attack any organization within public spaces that does not come from a militant or a party close to them" and "to

use this small public space for their financial appetites". Another technique of support used as a backup to the community is people posting pictures of themselves doing an activity within the Space such as painting, reading, watching a movie, cleaning, etc., with the caption "here is me doing a pornographic activity in the space" and adding the #SaveTheSpace hashtag. This technique proved to push more people to post their pictures and the attention on the social media platform was getting bigger and bigger as newcomers to the space started showing interest in what "Space" was, what they stand for and what they do.

Some days later, representatives of the municipality came to the Space to request the delivery of the key since the extension deadline in the official email had passed. The persons in question state in a threatening manner: "this building belongs to the Municipality, and we will manage it". The volunteers refuse to give the key without an official document to break the memorandum and without a final resolution of the matter. This practice continued for several weeks until an official email from the Sector for Public Activities arrives, in which the Space community is informed by order that during the period of one week, the spaces of the former Radio Tetova would be used by the Sport and Culture Unit for a collective exhibition of the artists of Tetova for the (national Albanian) November holidays.

The community states in the returned email that, based on their principles of cooperation, it is required to fill out the cooperation form and provide information about the event in question and how Space volunteers can help in the organization. No response was received. Without prior warning, representatives of the municipality come to the premises of Space to check the space where they will hold the exhibition; they ask for a key under the pretext that the works they will bring for the exhibition are very valuable and must necessarily have a key due to responsibility and

they leave by refusing to communicate with the community coordinator regarding the exhibition in question.

The same day later, giving them a chance to cooperate and in full trust, the Space community creates a document where the organizer of the exhibition comes and takes the key and signs the document stating that the key will be returned to the community at the end of the exhibition. During the next few days, space volunteers actively help in the organization of the event - although this help was rejected, the organizers from the municipality came unprepared and necessarily needed the help of Space volunteers, starting from the physical, the use of Space tools, pasting paintings on the wall, cleaning the space, etc. The opening of the exhibition starts, and the mayor of the municipality is also present. In the introductory speech, the municipality's cooperation with the artists' association is mentioned, but at no time Space is mentioned as a community or space in which the exhibition is held. The same happens in the publication of photos from the event by the municipality (the existence of Space and the help of volunteers in the organization are ignored), to which the community responds on their social media platforms. The last day of the exhibition, around midnight, the former vice-minister of culture of North Macedonia, now member of the party (whose role in the munici-pality remains still unidentified), with several other people changes the lock of the door of the Space and immediately locks everything inside the space including the equipment, personal belongings of the volunteers, and all confidential documents and tools found in it (Picture 6).

The footage is seen through the online security cameras that the community had put there months ago. In the morning, people who had helped change the lock come to stop the security cameras, so the community's access to what is happening inside the space ends here. However, another media

scandal emerges from the camera footage (that the community posts online immediately) as it appears in front of the public as a form of 'theft' from the people, it is being done in the night time, secretly, and moreover by an ex vice minister of culture of the country.

Picture 6. The footage of people from the Municipality changing the lock of the Space around midnight

Conclusion - the outcome

The space is now occupied, and the community has already planned activities for the whole month of November that are on hold. They decide however to make some of the events happen in front of Space, where around 50 volunteers and supporters showed up.

The municipality had engaged several men to block the entrance to the space and had ordered them not to allow anyone to go near it. In an attempt to spoil the event/protest they cut off the electricity in front of the Space so that the community is in total darkness (they think it was done in case of any violent casualties). They then bought candles and stood for 3 hours in freezing temperatures, where they managed to partially fulfil the foreseen activities.

There was poetry reading, discussion, music (from a phone, as all of their equipment was trapped inside the space, including the sound system and the necessary instruments), but unfortunately, due to the street being in total darkness, not every planned activity could be

fulfilled. For a minute, they managed to go near the entrance in order to take a picture with the banner the volunteers had prepared: "Public Space (no key); Private Space (key)"(Picture 7.).

Picture 7. The community has gathered to protest outside of their occupied space.

The idea is mostly to prove their point, and some media analysts and supporters of the community understand it. One of them writes in an analytical article: „This story will not end here, but it will continue - and it will continue for the better because what the initiators of this action do not understand is that the Space is not made by the walls but by the people inside them, that a place is not made by tiles but by ideas, that a community is not held by oppression but by freedom, by independence - therefore 'Space' will find new walls and tiles, while the walls of the former City Radio facility will breathe with shame, or will be covered again by oblivion."

These countercultures, linked to postmodern civilizations, have influenced examples of contemporary occurrences that are comparable to them. In particular in the "tinderbox" that is the Balkans, this research study aims to contribute to the study of new forms of sociality in intentional community creation and the identity concerns they imply, particularly the interaction between "alternative" efforts and social activity. According to socio-political reality, autonomous community develop-

ment appears to be a tool for rethinking current social orders. However, the politically independent people are prone to political interest, and these initiatives, even through hardships, are one way for them to ensure their survival. In the region, due to the historical background, this is usually made possible mostly by foreign organizations and funding, namely European, European Union based, which tend to better understand the concept, as they usually operate in a setting where the relevance of ethnic/cultural identity in social relations has decreased in contrast to ideological identities and have usually a long history of statehood. Such has been the help the community has received from European organizations, including here from the EU delegation institution operating in North Macedonia.

Picture 8. Different communities and sister-organizations from Prishtina (Kosova), Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Brussels (Belgium) - (including the Space Tetova Community) - protesting the eviction notice of Space Tetova (some in front of the North Macedonia embassies in their respective countries).

On the other hand, the community declares that they have felt, considering everything that has happened, that not enough solidarity has been shown

from the local citizens, due to unclarity about the functioning of these kinds of initiatives (horizontal functioning and voluntary work traditions), and the masses tend to turn toward "conservative values influenced by Erdogan and 'Besa' (the party in power)" as its ideological proxy. This mix of religious political ideologies is not new in the Balkans; they are also present in Serbia, Greece, and, of course, Turkey; however, for the past decades they were absent, in part due to socialist regimes' approach towards religion.

Clearly, there is a social conflict between the two parts, mostly over ideologies. Understanding the social and historical environment in which ideas and beliefs are developed and how these ideas might contribute to the continuation of social conflict is crucial, as the link between ideology and social conflict highlights. This conflict appears to have three distinct dimensions: generational, geopolitical, and consequently cultural. The concept of conflict having multiple dimensions is a widely accepted idea in the field of conflict studies. One of the prominent theories related to social conflict is brought on by Hungarian sociologist Karl Mannheim (2013). In his book "Ideology and Utopia," Mannheim discusses how the social location of individuals and groups affects their formation of ideologies and how these ideologies are used to legitimize social inequality and maintain power structures. According to him, social conflict is brought on by the diversity of ideas among the main societal groups, which are a result of social class disparities. Regarding the generational conflict, Mannheim states that people of different generations develop their own unique perspectives and worldviews based on the social, political, and cultural experiences of their formative years. He argues that these perspectives shape the way individuals perceive and engage with the world, leading to conflicts between generations. In this case, the generational gap between the mayor and the community is not as wide as he might think

when he uses the terms 'youngsters' as well as the ways he has interacted with them so far, perceiving their counterculture movement as 'infantile' or not serious enough.

The conflictual part in this case results more from differing values, beliefs, and experiences. This fact is linked with the geo-political dimension and refers to conflicts that arise between parties not only of different countries or regions but often of 'competition' over political power, or again, ideology. Considering the mayor's party's political context, which is oriented more towards a conservative and religious ideological identity, it clashes firmly with the community's context of being aligned with 'European' and 'western values' of freedom, democracy, women's empowerment, lgbtq friendliness, and other individual and group guaranteed liberties. The cultural dimension of the conflict is evident here, and it refers to the role that cultural differences and cultural identity play in shaping social conflict.

The subjective experience of the community (including my own) concerns the difficulty to express world culture in a tight and limited social space, considering the size of the city areas and population, which heavily affects culture as such. While the overall media attempts to show the existence and functioning of our community as well as the importance of these kinds of initiatives, reaching and encouraging young population to keep the hope for an expressive space within the city and the region has been significantly increasing due to the incidents – the media narrative has clearly differed in the inner city from the one that is created from subjects from other cities and foreign states that support and understand the importance of these concepts in the core.

While the story is continuously evolving as the community is now working towards the opening of a new space in a more independent way, continuing the fight about public spaces in the city and region, the inquiry remains regarding the work of the

ethnographer (me) and the relation between the subjectivity and objectivity of the ethnographer in applied anthropology (Singer, 1994).

In the course of conducting research, advocacy and political, material, and symbolic support can play a crucial role in community building and shaping public and media discourse. Supporting and promoting such a cause as an anthropologist through research, namely collaborative anthropology (Rappaport, 2008) and feminist ethnography (Westkott, 2019), can be a powerful tool for contributing to community building around a shared goal or belief while increasing public awareness for critical consciousness and social change.

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