

Identity Shifting in Border Regions: the Case of Montenegro

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Abstract

This thesis explores the phenomena of national identity shifting in border regions within the context of nation-building project in contemporary Montenegro. It takes the viewpoint of identity, national identity in particular, as a category of practice as well as analysis that is in the constant process of change. This thesis adopts the concept of everyday ethnicity, a term borrowed from Rogers Brubaker, and examines the way national identities are being framed from the top-down perspective by analysing the official narratives of self-proclaimed representatives of these identities. This is followed by an ethnographic study conducted in border regions that illustrates the conceptualisation of national identities by individuals who have themselves changed their national identity at a certain point of their lives. This thesis shows that there is a great influence of socio-political circumstances on national identities, where the existence of borders does not play a significant role, pointing out a particular fragmentation of society in terms of national self-identification in the context of post-independence nation-building project, where less than half of the population self-identifies as Montenegrin.

Keywords: Montenegro, everyday ethnicity, national identity shifting, borders, nation-building project

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Introduction

Nationhood and identity are the two terms that are the most contested in contemporary Montenegro ever since the dissolution of Yugoslavia. This can be seen through constant public debates over what makes a Montenegrin and whether there is such a thing as Montenegrin nationality as well as through census records. As censuses are the reflections of socio-political reality in a country much of the issue of Montenegrin nationhood and identity crisis can be analysed from census records, in particular from the period when the idea of the self-determination of Montenegro came into picture¹. These records show that there was a proliferation of national identities in the border regions of Montenegro in terms of switching national identities.

The question of identity switching in the border regions is not new, especially when it comes to those countries where borders were often subject to change and large populations were found in situations where national identity became something increasingly fluid. Borders themselves represent a focus of scholarly attention particularly in the context of nationalism, given that they are the sites of contestation and symbols of power of nation-states². Border regions in Montenegro are effectively sites of varying identities, having a large population of Bosniaks/Muslims³ in the north, Croats and Serbs in south-west and Albanians in south-east of the country. These populations characterised relevant elements of statehood in terms of the independence project, and as the country has always promoted the image of a place of accommodating and welcoming diversity they had the deciding votes in declaring independence

¹ David I. Kertzer and Dominique Arel, "Censuses, Identity Formation, and the Struggle for Political Power," in *Census and Identity: The Politics of Race, Ethnicity, and Language in National Censuses*, ed. David I. Kertzer and Dominique Arel (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 2

² Hastings Donnan and Thomas M. Wilson, *Borders: Frontiers of Identity, Nation and States* (Berg, 1999), 1

³ The terms Bosniak and Muslims have become to a certain extent mutually exclusive, which will be further discussed in the third chapter of the thesis.

in 2006⁴. These populations in that sense continue to represent an important voting element in contemporary Montenegro, especially taking into account the particular political situation in the country where one political party has been the ruling party since the dissolution of Yugoslavia. This is something that is being reiterated and criticised by the opposition parties and opposition media in everyday discourse and which, according to these, does not correspond to the basic principles of democracy⁵. This is to say that the political reality of the country is closely linked to the phenomena of identity shifting in the border regions which will be shown within the context of the empirical research of this thesis.

In order to examine the phenomena of identity shifting in Montenegro, this thesis focuses on the theoretical framework of border regions and borderlands and on the issue of self-identification of people from these regions. Namely, it focuses on populations from the northern, south-western and south-eastern region of the country, as these have shown a number of people switching their identities. The ethnographic study of these regions therefore has a goal of contributing to general border theory by showing the narratives that lie behind the phenomena of identity switching. Therefore, this study focuses on the question to what extent the closeness of the border is a factor in identity switching and in which way it correlates to the political situation that has been evoked in the interviews.

The main argument of the present thesis is that identity shifting phenomena in Montenegro is the result of an interplay of specific historical and socio-political circumstances in the country,

⁴ Jelena Džankić, "Montenegro's Minorities in the Tangles of Citizenship, Participation, and Access to Rights," *Journal on Ethnopolitics & Minority Issues in Europe* 11, no. 3 (July 2012): 46.

⁵ Miloš Bakić, "DPS, 25 godina tranzicije: ravno do Dda," *1212*, January 10, 2014, Monitor, available at: http://www.monitor.co.me/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4921:dps-25-godina-tranzicije-ravno-do-dna&catid=3380:broj-1212&Itemid=4640.

where the border does not play a significant role in terms of redefining ethnic and national identities.

A short overview of Montenegrin nationhood

The identity issue in Montenegro is a poorly researched issue by foreign scholars, while in the internal public discourses there are debates over Montenegrin nationhood and statehood. The question of identity in Montenegro is closely tied to the history and historical development of the country, and what is mainly argued in the contestation of its existence as an independent nation-state is precisely the lack of a historical continuity⁶. Montenegro has been an internationally recognised independent country in 1878 at the Congress of Berlin until it has been annexed to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1919 when “the Montenegrin people did not have an opportunity to exercise their right to self-determination according to international norms”⁷. The term “annexed” is a term of dispute when discussing Montenegrin nationhood and the infamous Podgorica Assembly of 1919 that led to the loss of independence is being reiterated even today in public discourse among elites both in Serbia and in Montenegro⁸. For those contesting Montenegrin nationhood and statehood, the term “unification” rather applies as they claim there was no wrongdoing in creating a common South Slav country.

In this context, census records are crucial indicators of how national identities in Montenegro developed and have been proliferating over time particularly surrounding crucial events such as the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the 1990s and change of politics from 1997. Statistical records from 1948 show the great majority of people declaring as Montenegrin, after which

⁶ Srđa Pavlović, “Literature, Social Poetics, and Identity Construction in Montenegro,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 2003,131

⁷ For more detailed information of Montenegrin loss of independence in 1919: Srđa Pavlović, *Balkan Anschluss: The Annexation of Montenegro and the Creation of the Common South Slavic State* (Purdue University Press, 2008).

⁸ *Ibid.* 2

there has been a steady decline in numbers, with less than half of the population self-identifying as Montenegrin in the most recent census in 2011 all the while the demographic changes have not been as significant. This suggest that there has been national identity switching, which has been identified by Erin K. Jenne and Florian Bieber in their work on the theory of ‘situational nationalism’⁹. Their work suggest that the question of polarisation of identities in Montenegro is highly politicised and context specific, that the main line of cleavage between Serbs and Montenegrins was most visible when the political turbulences began in the 1990s and when there was talk of an independence referendum.¹⁰

The census records from 2003 and 2011 show a similar situation with a significant change of the way Muslim populations self-identified¹¹. These were mostly reflected in the northern part of the country, where a large number of Muslims originate from the Sandžak region, as well as in the city of Bar known for its high tolerance and peaceful cohabitation of Catholics, Orthodox and Muslims. It is precisely in these regions that a noticeable switch from Muslims to Bosniaks (*Bošnjaci*) in the census records occurred. This would suggest that there was an external influence that would have created room for these populations to identify as such. Namely, there has been an evident public debate between representatives of Bosniaks and Muslims as these two populations do not have the same definitions and conceptions of what it means to be a Muslim in Montenegro. Namely, Matica Muslimanska of Montenegro is an organisation that is promoting an identity that claims Montenegrin nationality but Islam as religion, while the Bosniak Council opts for a Bosniak identity which includes Bosniak nationality and Islam as

⁹ Erin K. Jenne and Florian Bieber, “Situational Nationalism: Nation-Building in the Balkans, Subversive Institutions and the Montenegrin Paradox,” *Ethnopolitics: Formerly Global Review of Ethnopolitics* 13, no. 5 (2014): 431 - 460

¹⁰ Ibid. 452

¹¹ The issue of Muslim as a category of ethnic, national and religious affiliation will be further explained in the following chapters.

religion¹². This fragmentation of society has been already examined in detail by Jenne and Bieber, and they argue that Montenegrin case represents an anomaly in institutional nationalism, as the ‘titular nation’ does not represent more than 50% of the overall population¹³.

The phenomena of identity shifting

Census taking policies are mostly similar in every country, they require different data on household, property, members of the family, incomes, etc. What makes censuses interesting for this thesis is the part that deals with categorisation of populations in terms of their nationality, ethnicity, language and religion. However, depending on different socio-political contexts in each country the categories provided or imposed may vary, such as in terms of having a category of race in some countries while not having it in others. The question that arises in all the cases is how to create or formulate categories for the questions regarding nationality and ethnicity. What is common in that sense is that these questions are in the end political and ‘anchored in ideology and norms’¹⁴. In the countries where ethnicity places a big role in nationalist politics, there are variations in how the ethnic question may arise, which is particularly true from the U.S. Canada, and Israel, as Goldscheider has argued. The main issue with the ethnicity question can be found in the way people self-identify in everyday life. Namely, the clear cut question of ethnicity may not always contribute for obtaining objective answers as in these countries ethnicity is not always a straightforward element of one’s identity¹⁵.

¹² “Matica Muslimanska Crne Gore,” accessed April 29, 2015, <http://www.maticamuslimanska.me/>, “Geneza Bošnjačke Opstojnosti | Bošnjački Savjet U Crnoj Gori,” accessed April 29, 2015, <http://www.bvcg.me/novosti/geneza-bosnjacke-opstojnosti>.

¹³ Erin K. Jenne and Florian Bieber, “Situational Nationalism: Nation-Building in the Balkans, Subversive Institutions and the Montenegrin Paradox,” *Ethnopolitics: Formerly Global Review of Ethnopolitics* 13, no. 5 (2014): 432

¹⁴ Calvin Goldscheider, “Ethnic Categorizations in Censuses: Comparative Observation from Israel, Canada and the US,” in *Census and Identity: The Politics of Race, Ethnicity, and Language in National Censuses*, ed. David I. Kertzer and Dominique Arel (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 71

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 83

In the case of former Yugoslav countries, as was mentioned above, the category of Muslims is particularly interesting as it reflects a politics of accommodating a new national category that is based on the religious affiliation rather than national. And this category has been the result of a national policy that has encouraged a large number of people in Bosnia to declare as Muslims since it was of the general interest¹⁶. There were numerous internal intellectual debates and disputes about the question of Muslim as a category of nationality which had a positive feedback in 1971, where this category first appeared in the census¹⁷. After the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the war in Bosnia, this category and the Islamic Community of Yugoslavia, which has dispersed in respective national Islamic Communities, in general has been subject to various modification of the conceptualisation of Muslim identity in successor states. In the case of Montenegro, the latest census of 2011 shows that the concept of Muslim identity is subject to different definitions as there are several ways people of Islamic faith identified¹⁸.

Apart from the Muslim self-identification, in Montenegro there is a phenomena of two competing nationalisms which is effectively reflected in the census, which is that between Montenegrins and between Serbs¹⁹. Namely, as the number of self-identifying Montenegrins steadily declined from 1948 the number of self-identified Serbs exponentially grew, particularly

¹⁶ Sabrina P. Ramet, "Primordial Ethnicity or Modern Nationalism: The Case of Yugoslavia's Muslims, Reconsidered," in *Muslim Communities Reemerge - Historical Perspectives on Nationality, Politics, and Opposition in the Former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia*, ed. Edward Allworth (Duke University Press, 1989), 128

¹⁷ Iva Lucic, "In the Service of the Nation: Intellectuals' Articulation of the Muslim National Identity," *Nationalities Papers* 40, no. 1 (January 2012): 34

¹⁸ The term 'Islamic faith' will be used throughout the thesis when there is no clear distinction between Muslims and Bosniaks. It will serve to denote those populations that practice Islam as their religion, but have different national affiliations.

¹⁹ Srdja Pavlović, "Literature, Social Poetics, and Identity Construction in Montenegro," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 2003, 139

between 1991 and 2003²⁰. This cleavage is still present in contemporary Montenegro and continues to make part of everyday life of its citizens as it will be seen in the empirical research.

The structure of the thesis

The first chapter of the thesis deals with the theoretical framework of border regions, border identities from the anthropological and sociological perspectives. It also analyses the sociological theories dealing with national identities and identity shifting, taking as a starting point where identities are social constructs. The main goal of this chapter is to show different aspects of borders and correlation of identity formation with the concept of borders as spaces of contestation. The case of Montenegro is to show that it fits within the framework of border identities in terms of the historical importance of the regions development coupled with specific socio-political circumstances at a given time. Also, the concept of everyday ethnicity, borrowed from Rogers Brubaker, is the theoretical base of further analysis of how top-down perspective on identity does not necessarily fit the bottom-up views²¹.

The second chapter is set to provide an overview of the correlation of the nationhood issues with identity issues in Montenegro. The main goal is to give the reader an insight into current developments of political agendas in terms of the post-independence nation-building project in order to fully understand the proliferation of national identities. The chapter is divided into three subchapters that deal with the question of different national identities that have make part of the official census record. The first subchapter sheds light on Montenegrin national identity and its emergence on political scene and in public discourse of those political structures that are

²⁰ “National Structure of Population in SFR Yugoslavia - Data on Localities and Communes” (Savezni zavod za statistiku, Beograd, 1994:

<http://pod2.stat.gov.rs/Objavljenepublikacije/G1971/pdf/G19714001.pdf>.; “Popis Stanovništva” (Monstat, 2011), <http://www.monstat.org/userfiles/file/popis2011/saopstenje/saopstenje%281%29.pdf>.

²¹ Rogers Brubaker, ed., *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

seen as its representatives. The second part offers an explanation and an analysis of proliferation of national identities within specific socio-political contexts, where fractions and disagreements among different political parties have had an influence on identitarian fragmentation and redefinition. Finally, the last part deals with the emergence of different conceptions of national identities in the most recent census of 2011, the first one after the independence referendum, where different categories of national-identities do not seem to be mutually exclusive, although in public discourse they may be seen as such.

The third chapter offers an analysis of discourse of representatives of three groups of populations, Montenegrins, Serbs and Bosniaks. These three were chosen for the reason of their representation in numbers in the most recent census, as well as for the presence of their representatives on the political scene of Montenegro. The main source of analysis are official publications of political parties, institutions and organisations, as well as news articles reporting on statements and events organised around the time of the independence referendum and the time of the census taking in 2011. These two events represent two important points in contemporary history of Montenegro, as they both were the milestones of Montenegrin statehood and nationhood, as well as the battlegrounds for the top-down identity formation. As the analysis will show, two major opinion blocs can be differentiated particularly in times of the referendum, both representing their own vision of the future of Montenegro as an independent or independent state.

The final fourth chapter deals with the empirical research conducted in Montenegro in April 2015. It includes five life-story interviews and one questionnaire conducted with people who have changed their national identities at a certain point in their life. This chapter sheds light on the bottom-up perspectives on identities, and how individuals themselves formulate their own national identities and what is the relation of this phenomena to their life in the border and in general reference to the socio-political circumstances in these regions and the country itself.

These interviews illustrate that the top-down approaches in some cases do not necessarily reflect the ideas of self-identification on the ground, while in other cases it does. However, the sample is certainly not representative of the general phenomena, but it does provide a basis for a future more in-depth ethnographic research.

Chapter 1: Theoretical framework

1.1 Border theories

Borders represent an important element of statehood in contemporary lives of nation-states. However, in the era of globalisation there is an increased economic cooperation between nation-states all over the world which includes softening border controls and rigidity in terms of market exchange. One of the most relevant example of such is that of the European Union, where member states have abolished border controls for the sake of the European internal market. This has consequently led to strengthening exterior borders of the European Union with third countries²², which is to say that borders continuously epitomise the controlling power of a nation-state or in this context a group of nation-states acting as one.

In political theory, borders are seen as essential parts of what constitutes a nation state alongside with its territory, sovereignty and population. However, as mentioned, the European Union symbolises an organisation of different nation-states that have borrowed a certain amount of sovereignty to a supranational institution by abolishing border controls in terms of free movement of goods, capital, peoples and services. Nevertheless, this does not mean that borders do not exist in a certain manner even within member states of the European Union, given that these borders still represent a weak spot for a nation-state in terms of the populations inhabiting border areas. There are multiple examples that illustrate border issues such as the Basque Country, Catalonia and Scotland to name a few. As political theories look mostly at this issue

²² Paul Nugent, "Border Towns in Comparative Perspective," in *A Companion to Border Studies*, ed. Thomas M. Wilson and Hastings Donnan (Blackwell, 2012): 564

from the top-down perspective, anthropology gives way to a different aspect of observing borders in terms of the way these borders conceptualise the lives of the people cohabiting these areas as well as the way populations perceive the nation and the state²³. It is in that sense that the anthropological account of border studies tries to explain why borders still matter for the survival of a nation-state and the need for control over its population. This thesis thus provides an insight in the narratives that follow national identity shifting in the border regions of Montenegro.

There are different layers of meanings that borders have for countries and this is something that has recently become a centre of attention for scholars of different disciplines. This is particularly true for the field of anthropology which has substantially added to do the scope researched with other disciplines which have dealt with the issue from a different perspective. What makes borders increasingly interesting for anthropologists today are the numerous case studies that can now be looked upon from a comparative perspective thus adding to the theoretical framework of the issue. Borders have gained a greater significance in terms of illustrating the importance of border populations for the nation-building processes, and this is particularly true in recently recognised states as well as in those states where certain border regions represent a risk in terms of possible self-determination of its populations. This is to say that there is a very small number of countries where the core populations represent a great majority and where minorities that quite often inhabit border regions do not constitute a risk for maintaining power²⁴. It is precisely in that context that this thesis will examine border populations in the case of Montenegro where there has recently been an increase in individual self-identification differently that its core population and particularly in border regions.

²³ Thomas M. Wilson and Hastings Donnan, "Nation, State and Identity at International Borders," in *Border Identities: Nation and State at International Frontiers*, ed. Thomas M. Wilson and Hastings Donnan (Cambridge University Press, 1998): 3

²⁴ Malcolm Anderson, *Frontiers: Territory and State Formation in the Modern World* (Polity Press, 1996): 5

When it comes to conceptualising borders there is a variety of different names for the term which has been addressed by scholars. Namely, in scholarly literature one comes across terms such as borders, boundaries, frontiers, borderlines, border regions and border zones. This indicates that there is no fixed definition of what makes a border particularly when taking into account the different disciplines that deal with the issue. As Malcolm Anderson explains, frontier has the widest meaning that has evolved from having a military connotation of a zone to representing a border region with an important population that can be disputed from all sides of its neighbouring states²⁵. He further explains ‘border’ as representing a narrow zone that can be a line of demarcation wider than the one of the ‘boundary’ that is considered to be the narrowest representing the actual line of demarcation.²⁶

Anderson’s take on the historical development of the term is particularly useful as he offers case studies that explain how the term’s use and meaning have changed over time within the context of nation-building projects. One of such examples is the one of the creation of French civilization and feeling of ‘Frenchness’ through institutional nation-building. This example sheds light on the importance of unifying and homogenising a nation through centralisation of power and closer integration of border areas through railway construction and cheap newspaper press²⁷. He observes frontiers both as institutions and as processes and argues that there is a change in how frontiers are perceived and they are constantly being modified which is why he provides a typology of frontiers as processes. The first dimension offers a view of frontiers as instruments of governments in terms of protection of state interests. Secondly, this instrumentalisation of frontiers is under the influence of a restricted amount of control as the governments are not capable to control frontiers to their full extent which ultimately changes the nature of states. Thirdly, frontiers are ‘markers of identity’ as they represent strategic sites

²⁵ Ibid. 9

²⁶ Ibid. 9

²⁷ Ibid. 24

for maintaining the uniformity of a national identity of the state and they are to a certain extent the ‘imagined communities’ that complement the desired homogeneity of the state. Lastly, frontiers are under constant process of change in terms of discourses. They are context-specific and are perceived differently by the people, by the state as well as by the outsider²⁸. Anderson provides here an interesting take on what the frontier means both for the state and the population that inhabits it and how it can be conceptualised by different actors of the state, and the particularly of his typology lies in his take on the correlation between frontiers and identities.

According to Wilson and Donnan, border studies have gained much scholar attention as in contemporary era the number of borders is greater than ever and as there has been a consensus that the most important things related to national and international political economy in fact happen in borderlands²⁹. Beside political and economic importance of borders, there is also a growing scholar interest for it in terms of national and regional identities emerging in these regions as already mentioned above. Border regions thus have cultural, political and economic relevance for a state and do not represent merely a periphery that makes part of that state³⁰. In these regions, culture is often shared with the one on the other side of the border which often makes these populations culturally distinct from the core population.³¹ In this context, culture represent an essential element for examining borders both as instruments and processes. Viewed as processes, borders and thus border populations can be instrumentalised by a state for the national interests, such as for elections, for sustaining the sovereignty and territoriality, etc.³² Also, within that context, border regions and border identities have important roles in moments

²⁸ Malcolm Anderson, *Frontiers: Territory and State Formation in the Modern World* (Polity Press, 1996): 2

²⁹ Thomas M. Wilson and Hastings Donnan, “Borders and Border Studies,” in *Border Towns in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Thomas M. Wilson and Hastings Donnan (Blackwell, 2012): 1

³⁰ Donnan, Hastings and Thomas M. Wilson, *Borders: Frontiers of Identity, Nation and State*. Berg, 1999: 44

³¹ *Ibid.* 52

³² *Ibid.* 57

of crisis of a nation-state, where a population demands for separation from the core state or where ethnic conflicts may occur³³. As it will be shown, this is particularly true in the case of Montenegro, as minorities living in the border regions were crucial for gaining independence and continue to an essential voting body in terms of ensuring electoral wins, be it on municipal or state level.

Therefore, there are multiple reasons for studying borders no matter which discipline is in question. In political science, borders or border regions represent a concept that entails international relations with bordering countries in terms of cooperation in economic field, transportation, police cooperation, immigration, regional development, etc. All these concepts are at the same time related to the cooperation between the neighbouring governments and they do involve the population inhabiting the area which is seen from the top-down perspective³⁴.

Borders also represent in some cases areas of contestation and proliferation by different actors which continues to pose a threat to countries' stabilities and unities. As border regions are most likely to be less homogenous than the rest of a nation-state, populations that inhabit them represent important factors that are quite often national or ethnic minorities. These then fall under the scope of international cooperation with the kin states as certain minority rights are certainly imposed. Or, in other cases these communities are quite often of mixed or ambiguous national identities due to proximity of the bordering neighbouring state and its economic, political or cultural influence³⁵. One of the examples that illustrates this is the example of the Hungarians living in Hungary's neighbour states, where national identities are effectively ambiguous due to mixed marriages and close relations between these populations that inhabit regions on the both sides in the proximity of the border³⁶. This suggests that actual borders

³³ Ibid. 156

³⁴ Thomas M. Wilson and Hastings Donnan, "Borders and Border Studies," in *Border Towns in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Thomas M. Wilson and Hastings Donnan (Blackwell, 2012): 10

³⁵ Ibid. 11

³⁶ Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond Identity," *Theory and Society*, no. 29 (2000): 27

viewed as institutions are unlikely to represent borders in terms of the everyday life of borderland populations.

Therefore, borders viewed as processes represents an interesting way of examining the impact they might have on the border populations and their relation to the nation and the state. It is precisely in that context that this thesis will address the question of borders. It will adopt the term of border regions as it will examine the question of identity shifting within one nation-state instead of analysing populations on both sides of the border. As it has been implied above, the question of self-identification in border regions is relevant for multiple reasons which is why case studies are important in order to shed light on different conceptions of identity that might be present. In the case of Montenegro this is particularly true, as the census data have shown a great fluctuation in different conceptualisation of national identity among border populations as well as a phenomena of identity shifting. The main focus of the thesis will be to uncover the narratives and possible factors that have influenced individuals to change their national identity. The next part of this chapter will therefore deal with the theoretical perspective of the conceptualisation of identities in border areas.

1.2 Border Identities

Identity has been examined and researched on by different scholars and given many meanings and conceptualisations. It has been observed both as category of analysis and as category of practice which would imply that it is a multifaceted term³⁷. For this thesis it will be analysed from both perspectives in order to conceptualise it in a particular case study as a category of practice within the context of border theory. As a category of analysis it will be examined through several theoretical aspects that will help conceptualise identity as a term that explains a phenomena which is context-specific.

³⁷ Ibid. 8

Frederik Barth's take on ethnic groups is essential for this thesis as it addresses multiple aspects of identity in the context of boundaries that can exist between different ethnic groups³⁸. Barth analyses different aspects and characters of boundaries that are deemed persistent which does not mean that there are no social interactions that cross these boundaries, quite the contrary³⁹. He argues that it is necessary to examine the character and nature of those boundaries in order to understand the differentiation between different ethnic units. According to Barth, boundaries that make distinct cultural identities separate are in fact the differences that are nevertheless interconnected⁴⁰. This is to say that despite the existence of these boundaries there is a constant flow of interaction and exchange between these ethnic groups. However, he also argues that although there is a strong intermingling of different cultural groups there can still be certain boundaries that can continue to exist and create a divide⁴¹. Even in the cases of non-existent boundaries the aforementioned differences can persist without ethnic groups being aware of their existence.

Barth's theoretical approach consists of examining ethnic groups as categories of self-identification that are submissive to certain processes that lead to grouping, while there are still persistent boundaries of those groups that are modifiable⁴². He assigns a dimension of culture to these ethnic groups, arguing that these are 'culture-bearing units' as the common shared culture represents the bond that keeps the groups together, but at the same time culture is not a definite character of the group but the result of this grouping⁴³. Barth's account precisely deals with boundaries that are social or cultural constructs, however there are other boundaries that can be geographical, territorial or political that can affect and cause proliferation of identities.

³⁸ Fredrik Barth, ed., "Introduction," in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Scandinavian University Press, 1994).

³⁹ Ibid. 10

⁴⁰ Ibid. 9

⁴¹ Ibid. 10

⁴² Ibid. 10

⁴³ Ibid. 11

Border identities on the other hand, are examined from the point of view of existing physical borders between populations and within the context of the nation-state. Barth's input is complemented by border theory in this context of observing border identities from the aspect of existing institutional boundaries and how these affect identities on both sides of the border. In post-modern setting the state continues to be an important actor in identity formation both despite and because of the proliferation of borders⁴⁴. This is particularly true in cases where there is a strong identity politics in place where national identity is conceptualised in such a way to conform the idea of homogenisation of a national project. The state in this cases pays due attention to border regions which are in most cases heterogeneous in terms of its populations and constitute a risk in terms of self-determination or in terms of elections or any other political agendas. However, from the anthropological perspective it is precisely these border identities that make an interesting case study as they illustrate many levels of notions of groupism⁴⁵ and differentiation among various groups that occur in a variety of socio-political and economic conditions.

From the anthropological perspective, the concept of culture is an important element for border identities as it overcomes national borders and creates different borderlands, which do not entail the meaning of sovereignty and territoriality as borders do⁴⁶. Ethnic groups rely very much on sharing cultural traits with other members and are self-ascribed to those, thus there is no sharp demarcation of what makes an ethnic group in terms of 'objective' borders. Border identities are therefore a complex system which if regarded as processes can be used as instruments of state policies⁴⁷. Donnan and Wilson provide a typology of three basic ways ethnic populations

⁴⁴ Thomas M. Wilson and Hastings Donnan, "Borders and Border Studies," in *Border Towns in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Thomas M. Wilson and Hastings Donnan (Blackwell, 2012): 2

⁴⁵ Brubaker, Rogers. *Ethnicity without Groups*. Harvard University Press, 2004, 8

⁴⁶ Hastings Donnan and Thomas M. Wilson, eds., *Borders: Frontiers of Identity, Nation and State* (Bloomsbury Academic, 1999): 15

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 57

group themselves, the first one being according to the ethnicity shared across the border, the second one being that of having a shared ethnicity with the one across the border but not with the one of the core population, and the third one encompassing ethnicity shared only with the core population, which is deemed to be the ideal type of a nation-state⁴⁸.

As Wilson and Donnan argue, the anthropological perspective on border identities gives a new way of looking at borders as important sites of contestation. The ethnographic work focuses on the narratives of the experiences of living in these regions where there is an interplay of politics, culture and economics that create boundaries that are crossed on daily basis. They argue that anthropological take is important since populations should not be analysed as mere instruments or ‘images’ as is done in other disciplines⁴⁹. This would imply that border populations epitomise an actor that should be taken into consideration when determining the scope and nature of national projects.

Wilson and Donnan further argue that the analysis of border identities requires a historical take as ‘borders are spatial and temporal records of relationships between local communities and between states’⁵⁰. The historical perspective is furthermore important as it may provide a sense of how these border identities have been developed, modified and conceptualised. Border regions carry a history of contested and proliferated identities as they have been subject to change. One of the examples in history can be that of the changing of borders in Poland which had an immense impact on self-identification of population that have been the most struck with these physical changes of the places they inhabited. Another example might be that of the unification of Germany after the Cold War, where boundary-maintenance also had an effect on how once the same people have parted ways in terms of self-identification. As Berdahl argues,

⁴⁸ Ibid. 65

⁴⁹ Thomas M. Wilson and Hastings Donnan, “Nation, State and Identity at International Borders,” in *Border Identities: Nation and State at International Frontiers*, ed. Thomas M. Wilson and Hastings Donnan (Cambridge University Press, 1998): 4

⁵⁰ Ibid. 5

the German example suggests that there are different meanings that a border area can have and how it is not something that is static and unchangeable, but it is something subject to change both from the centre of politics and from the populations living in the border regions⁵¹. It is the historical perspective that will be of high importance for this thesis, as it will provide an overview of the proliferation of identities in border regions in Montenegro and will contribute to the analysis of the phenomena of identity shifting within the context of proliferation of the border itself.

This anthropological approach to the study of identity boundaries will complement this thesis in a way that explains how boundaries can persist despite changes occurring around them. In that sense, I will argue in this thesis that border regions of Montenegro supplement Barth's argument by stating that due to internal political, economic and social changes in the country, populations in these regions changed their national identity in such a manner that it contests general theories on institutional nationalism. In the case of Montenegro, border identities do make an interesting case study as there has been research conducted that shows the phenomena of identity shifting within the context of no significant demographic changes⁵². Namely, there has been evident fluctuation of Montenegrin self-identification in censuses from that of 1948 to the one in 2011. The demographic and census data show that the decline is most visible in the border regions of the country.

However, for the purpose of this thesis the conceptualisation of border regions will contain elements of Barth's definition of social borders as well as physical national borders that separate Montenegro from its neighbouring countries. This thesis would add to the border theories by examining the phenomenon of identity shifting both in border regions as well as in areas that

⁵¹ Daphne Berdahl, *Where the World Ended - Re-Unification and Identity in the German Borderland* (University of California Press, 1999), 8

⁵² Jenne, Erin K., and Florian Bieber. "Situational Nationalism: Nation-Building in the Balkans, Subversive Institutions and the Montenegrin Paradox," *Ethnopolitics: Formerly Global Review of Ethnopolitics*, 2014: 434

are close to the border and they have been historically known as multi-religious and multi-cultural regions.

1.3 Shifting identities in border regions

The primary topic of this thesis is the phenomena of identity shifting in border regions of Montenegro. Given that the concept of identity and identity construction has been researched by relevant scholars, it will form a basis for studying the narratives that follow the identity shift among individuals that have been interviewed for this thesis. The phenomena of identity shifting is a complex issue to tackle with, given that it can be analysed from the point of view of the ethno-national entrepreneurs and institutions involved in affecting the shift, as well as from the point of view of the individuals themselves and their stance towards their position and interaction with others in their environment⁵³.

The census data of a country can give a significant insight in how identities fluctuate and the case of Montenegro epitomises a perfect example from that point of view. There was a significant fluctuation in national self-identification of population in Montenegro from 1991 to 2003 and then 2011 in the context of non-significant demographic changes or migration. From this census data it is clear that national identity categories have been subject to certain change as the “putative” nation of Montenegrins has had its zenith in 1991 within Yugoslavia in order to decrease drastically until 2003 and see a minor growth in 2011. From 2003 to 2011 there was a major shift of self-identified Muslims to Bosniaks which would suggest that there have been certain circumstances or events that have led to almost half of previously declared Muslims to

⁵³ Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Harvard University Press, 2004), 15

declare as Bosniaks in ten year time. The same goes for the number of self-identified Montenegrins that have switched to being declared as Serbs or other⁵⁴.

Another interesting aspect of the census data is that from the most recent census from 2011, where the nationality question has been open-ended and has been asked in such a way that it was equated with ethnicity. This had as a result a number of additional categories that were not present in previous censuses which would suggest that there is a certain level of lack of clarity as to what makes a certain nationality or ethnicity and how these are perceived by the individuals, as these new categories show populations declaring as Serb-Montenegrin, Montenegrin-Serb, Muslim-Montenegrin, Montenegrin-Muslim, Croat-Montenegrin, Montenegrin-Croat, etc. This illustrates the fact that framing ethnic or national categories from the top-down perspective can have an influence on individual self-identification⁵⁵. This would also imply that the way the question was asked, i.e. equated with ethnicity merely creates confusion in a society that has still not achieved the level of national maturity where categories are clearly distinct and mutually exclusive⁵⁶. This question of mutual exclusivity of categories will further be examined in the following chapters of this thesis in order to introduce the possible narratives that follow the identity shifting phenomena itself.

The question of identity, and particularly of national identity is one of the main focuses of this thesis. It will be examined from the point of view of different scholarly disciplines and it will be analysed in socio-political context of Montenegro. This is to say that the phenomena of identity shifting is subject to varying dynamics in the environment on political, social, economic,

⁵⁴ Erin K. Jenne and Florian Bieber, "Situational Nationalism: Nation-Building in the Balkans, Subversive Institutions and the Montenegrin Paradox," *Ethnopolitics: Formerly Global Review of Ethnopolitics* 13, no. 5 (2014), 435

⁵⁵ Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Harvard University Press, 2004), 26

⁵⁶ Dominique Arel, "Language Categories in Censuses: Backward- or Forward-Looking?," in *Census and Identity: The Politics of Race, Ethnicity, and Language in National Censuses*, ed. David I. Kertzer and Dominique Arel (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 94

or cultural scene. It is safe to assume that this is particularly true for the border regions in Montenegro, as the greatest fluctuations in self-identification occurred precisely there. As it has been already discussed, these border regions are places of reification by political entrepreneurs which is particularly true in terms of election campaigns and gaining votes⁵⁷. As the regions in questions are largely consisted of minority groups in Montenegro these have been subject to political campaigns following censuses and presidential and municipal elections. According to the available data, it is precisely around the time elections and census taking processes occurred that a noticeable identity shifting has been identified.

1.2 Everyday ethnicity

One of the main aims of this thesis is to analyse the way ethnicity and identity are being perceived and understood by the individuals in Montenegro. Given that the main focus of scholarly literature mostly deals with ethnicity from the top-down perspective this thesis will take on Roger Brubaker's stance that these perspectives do not necessarily match personal experiences and conceptualisations of ethnicity⁵⁸. As further chapters of this thesis will show, the matter of ethnicity in Montenegro is troublesome as it is tightly related to the general issue of nationhood and statehood which continue to be elements of dispute within polarised Montenegrin society.

In order to understand the fluctuation of self-identification among population in border regions of Montenegro it is necessary to provide a theoretical framework of identity and ethnicity, given that the identity shifting has occurred in the context of ethno-political dynamics and the top-down processes of nation-building since 1997 and particularly since the independence referendum in 2006. Rogers Brubaker criticises the way ethnicity is being analysed in social

⁵⁷ Jelena Džankić, "Montenegro's Minorities in the Tangles of Citizenship, Participation, and Access to Rights," *Journal on Ethnopolitics & Minority Issues in Europe* 11, no. 3 (July 2012), 46

⁵⁸ Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Harvard University Press, 2004), 23

science and particularly groupism as a concept where ethnicity is being reified⁵⁹. His take on ethnicity implies that groupness can be viewed as an event that is subject to various external and internal influences instead of something that is fixed and bounded⁶⁰. From this point of view, it is possible to analyse different ethnic groups in Montenegro from the perspective of their transformation according to different impact from the top-down as well as from the bottom-up perspectives. By doing so, these groupisms can explain the narratives behind emergence of some groups in certain contexts and silencing of others. It is in that sense that this thesis will address the identity shift as seen from above, questioning the ways external and internal factors influenced the transformation of the way the groups are conceptualised from within and the ways these are constructed⁶¹.

The concept of everyday ethnicity is necessary for this thesis, as it criticises the constructivist view which conceptualises groups as fixed entities. The idea is to detach from this concept and add substance to the ethnopolitical discourse of political actors that reifies ethnic groups by analysing the groupism from below. The main aim is to provide a different angle to the constructivist view and fill the gap that Brubaker criticises⁶². Following Brubaker's take on ethnicity, this thesis adopts his approach and uses it to analyse the way national identities are constructed, particularly in the context of the Montenegrin case where it seems that the idea of national/ethnic identity is not crystallised.

Together with using Brubaker's concept of everyday ethnicity, Barth's definition of the study of ethnicity will be of high importance as he focuses on the way boundaries between groups are subject to social influence in between the groups, from within the groups and from external

⁵⁹ Ibid. 11

⁶⁰ Ibid. 12

⁶¹ Ibid. 13

⁶² Rogers Brubaker, ed., *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

factors⁶³. This is particularly important as individuals conceptualise their own identity in a certain way that may not always coincide with the way other member of the group does, thus membership to a group depends on the personal individual conceptualisation of oneself, as well as the way others perceive the individual⁶⁴. This is to say that individuals within the groups are not bounded by these groups, and may create different boundaries and cross the ones imposed by the group they belong to. Therefore, this thesis will look at group membership from both the perspective of the groups, of those who claim to represent the group and from the perspective of the individual. The interviews are to uncover to what extent the individuals self-ascribe to this imposed group and how they explain their membership or non-membership to this certain group.

This thesis will analyse the way the borders affect these self-ascriptions and will argue that the closeness of the border does not affect the identity shift, but it is rather the historical development of these borders that have an influence on the way individuals self-identify. Given that the regions in questions historically have been parts of other countries, there are certain repercussions that have had influence on identity construction. However, the civic conception of nationhood in Montenegro has had as a result a national identity related to citizenship and is witnessing certain changes. It is in that sense that the theory of everyday ethnicity will shed light on the role borders play in self-identifications of identity shifters.

Chapter 2: An overview of nationhood and statehood in Montenegro

This chapter has a goal of illustrating the way nationhood and statehood have been understood and portrayed from the top-down perspective and how that influenced the polarisation of national identity in contemporary Montenegro. This part of the thesis will show the correlation

⁶³ Fredrik Barth, ed., "Introduction," in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Scandinavian University Press, 1994), 14

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 15

between nation-building and identity construction from above in Montenegro, which will illustrate the way nationalist project affects polarisation and identity shifting. In order to do that, it is necessary to examine the political dynamics surrounding Montenegrin statehood in the first place, then follow up with the question of identity politics and nation-building project in order to present the current situation with identity polarisation and eventual outcomes of it.

2.1 The emergence of Montenegrin identity in politics

Montenegrin statehood is a topic that has heavily marked the last 20 years of public discourse in Montenegro and in the region because of the contestation of Montenegrin identity and arguments stating that Montenegrins are ethnic Serbs that have due to a historical hazard lived in a separate country⁶⁵. The main line Pavlović's argumentation has origins in the history and historical development of Montenegro and Serbia and is backed with the fact that these two countries have common roots, share the same language and Orthodoxy being the majoritarian religion in both of them⁶⁶. These elements that connect these two countries are what makes Montenegro a distinct case from that of other former Yugoslav countries in terms of the way their independence and separation from Yugoslavia occurred, given that Croatians are mainly Catholics and have developed a separate language agenda early on, the Bosnians are mostly Muslims, Macedonians speak a different language, Slovenians speak a different language and were first to have a clear-cut exit from Yugoslavia, etc. Also, political and economic entanglement between the two has always been closely tied which has contributed to the situation where a separate nation-building agenda was difficult to pursue.

The historical narrative of contestation of Montenegrin nationhood has been dominant in public discourse ever since the political shift in 1997, where the now ruling Democratic Party of

⁶⁵ Srdja Pavlović, "Literature, Social Poetics, and Identity Construction in Montenegro," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 2003, 145

⁶⁶ Jelena Džankić, "Reconstructing the Meaning of Being 'Montenegrin,'" *Slavic Review* 73, no. 2 (Summer 2014), 353

Socialists (Demokratska Partija Socijalista, DPS) has parted political ways with the rest of the party that later on became the Socialist National Party (Socijalistička Narodna Partija, SNP). These two fractions had different views of the future of Montenegro and the main division line was in their affiliation towards Serbia, and continuing the common state with it, or a start of an independence project. This division line is still present in contemporary Montenegro and has represented an important factor in the independence referendum in 2006⁶⁷. The question of statehood has been introduced by the leading political party of DPS after the fall of Slobodan Milosevic's regime, although it is safe to assume that the idea of independence existed even before its official announcement. What is curious about the case of Montenegro is that in the census of 1991 the idea of Yugoslavia was still highly present. However, with the shift of politics towards separating Montenegrin politics from the Serbian one the number of self-identified Montenegrins drastically declined, which would suggest that the nationhood and feeling of Montenegriness was not robust even though the idea of statehood was strongly pursued and that other national identities resurged instead, such as the Serbian one. This is to say that the official data demonstrates the general idea of Montenegrin nationhood as not being separate from the ethnic Serb one, and that less than half of the population self-identifies as nationally Montenegrin.

From the point where Montenegrin independence became reality, the government has pursued an identity policy which included the standardisation of the language, an emphasised separation from the church officials and construction of a separate Montenegrin national identity seen

⁶⁷ In 1997 the official discourse in Montenegrin politics has shifted away from Milosevic's politics and gradually introduced the idea of independence. To see more on the discourse shift in post-Yugoslav setting in Montenegro: Beáta Huszka, "Discursive Construction of the Montenegrin Independence Movement," in *Secessionist Movements and Ethnic Conflict: Debate-Framing and Rhetoric in Independence Campaigns* (Routledge, 2014), 104–58.

within the civic concept, inclusive of all minorities living on its territory⁶⁸. The minority question has been crucial in the context of pursuing independence which can be supported with the fact that the official discourse encompassed an inclusive concept of citizenship and pursued the idea of Montenegro as a civic society⁶⁹. Beata Huszka further argues that the discourse dynamics was situational and the inclusion of minorities was in every aspect a necessary measure to detach the country from the bad image of Milosević as well as to pursue the project of an independent Montenegro⁷⁰. Therefore, Montenegrin statehood continued to develop in light of inclusion of minorities after obtaining independence but has parallelly included an identity policy that reinforced the idea of creating a robust Montenegrin identity. This included the elements of myths and symbols, introducing a flag that epitomises independence that was officially recognised in 1878 at the Congress of Berlin and lost upon annexation of Montenegro in 1918 in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, deleting two verses from the hymn that were having reference to Serbian ethnicity, and standardising the official language, erecting statues of rulers from the dynasty of Petrović - Njegoš, renaming the streets, etc. However, despite these efforts to create a robust Montenegrin national identity among majority of the population, the census data show that the nation-building project has not been entirely successful. This has been identified by several scholars who have pointed at Montenegro as a case that is contradicting the nation-building theories according to which a robust national identity can be accomplished through strong national projects⁷¹.

⁶⁸ Beáta Huszka, “Discursive Construction of the Montenegrin Independence Movement,” in *Secessionist Movements and Ethnic Conflict: Debate-Framing and Rhetoric in Independence Campaigns* (Routledge, 2014), 104–58; Jelena Džankić, “Reconstructing the Meaning of Being ‘Montenegrin,’” *Slavic Review* 73, no. 2 (Summer 2014): 347–71.

⁶⁹ Beáta Huszka, “Discursive Construction of the Montenegrin Independence Movement,” in *Secessionist Movements and Ethnic Conflict: Debate-Framing and Rhetoric in Independence Campaigns* (Routledge, 2014), 142.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 142

⁷¹ Erin K. Jenne and Florian Bieber, “Situational Nationalism: Nation-Building in the Balkans, Subversive Institutions and the Montenegrin Paradox,” *Ethnopolitics* 13, no. 5 (October 2014): 438; Jelena Džankić, “Reconstructing the Meaning of Being ‘Montenegrin,’” *Slavic Review* 73, no. 2 (Summer 2014): 347

National identity in Montenegro, therefore, is not yet accomplished and the reasons behind it can be found in the fact that the inclusive civic conception of identity prevailed within the concept of pursuing independence which, as mentioned before, led to a polarisation of society for a number of reasons. This goes line with Brubaker's conception of clusters of the way ethnicity can be categorised from the top-down and from the bottom-up perspective, which will be demonstrated in the following chapter of this thesis⁷².

2.2 Polarisation of national identities as a result of division in politics

Within the context of larger Montenegrin nationalism that has had the legitimacy to resurge after the independence referendum⁷³, there have been certain changes in the way its population self-identifies. As it has been already mentioned and shown, national self-identification in Montenegro has seen fluctuations and identity shifting particularly in the context of nation-building project. These fluctuations can be explained through the general polarisation of society that has emerged ever since the change of political discourse in 1997. Namely, the political party that has emerged upon the anti-bureaucratic revolution (AB revolution) and which replaced the communist leadership in the 1990s fractioned in the two parties in 1997, the DPS and the SNP. It is according to this internal fraction of once unified political party that the division occurred among the citizens of Montenegro.

Following Brubaker's conception of the top-down influence on personal experiences of ethnicity, this thesis does not analyse only the impact of political actors' undertakings but also of other actors, such as cultural institutions, newspapers, magazines, independent organisations, intellectuals, etc. The turbulences emerging from the dissolution of Yugoslavia had an immense impact on socio-political conditions in Montenegro and have led to certain transformations in

⁷² Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups* (Harvard University Press, 2004), 66

⁷³ Beáta Huszka, "Discursive Construction of the Montenegrin Independence Movement," in *Secessionist Movements and Ethnic Conflict: Debate-Framing and Rhetoric in Independence Campaigns* (Routledge, 2014), 122.

the elite circles as well as among citizens. As mentioned above, the general situation and feeling was that of remaining part of Yugoslavia and this seemed to have had as a result a majority of citizens self-identifying as Montenegrin. However, the census data shows a significant change from 1991 to 2003 in the way individuals perceive and experience their national identity, where the polarisation is most visible in terms of divide over those identifying as Serbs and those identifying as Montenegrins. The timespan between the two censuses is quite large, given that the most important socio-political alterations in Montenegro occurred precisely during that period. This is to say that these data are the perfect reflection of the changes in individual self-identification within the concept of the top-down influences. This period has been marked with high nationalistic overflows and fractions among political elites regarding Montenegrin statehood and future as a separate country. However, these have not included disputes over identity as the general idea of Montenegrin statehood included the concept of a collective civic identity that is inclusive, which would mean that ethnic Serbs were not excluded from this vision of national identity. As Beata Huszka argued, at this time the official discourse reflected an idea of unity with Serbia and continuation of a certain kind of Yugoslavia and the shift that led towards independence has been subject to changes. Namely, she argues that the shift in discourse occurred from economic and democratic reasons to distancing towards the actual independence rhetoric⁷⁴.

At this point, it is difficult to say to what extent the official political discourse affected the identity shifts between the two censuses and how these were conceptualised and understood by the individuals themselves, but the census data does reflect the idea of how the top-down perspectives have led to a polarisation of national identities in Montenegro. The major divide that occurred was among Montenegrins and Serbs, as the majoritarian political party divided according to the conception of continuation of unity with Yugoslavia or taking a road towards

⁷⁴ Ibid. 119

more autonomy within federation and later on independence. This would suggest that a fraction of population that has previously declared as Montenegrin understood their identity or ethnicity as a certain kind of sub-identity that is equated with the statehood of the country they live in, given that upon emergence of the idea of independence they have switched to a different category. From this point of view it is interesting to see how ethnicity and identity is understood and perceived by these individuals, and an attempt of this thesis is to uncover how these are being conceptualised in contemporary Montenegro, nine years upon independence.

2.3 Emergence of new categories in census records

As Rogers Brubaker has shown, scholarly literature largely argues that the official categorisation of ethnicity has an immense impact on self-identification on the individual level in census records and that these are complementary. However, he adds that this is usually not the case, as on the micro-analytical level individuals' self-identification mostly does not correspond to the categories offered by the census⁷⁵. The case of Montenegro represents an interesting case, particularly in the context of the most recent census of 2011 where the nationality/ethnicity question was an open ended one which had as a consequence the emergence of new ambiguous, mutually non-exclusive categories. Again, as in the timespan between previous two censuses, a major change in socio-political reality occurred in Montenegro which most certainly had an influence on the population's understandings of their own national identity.

The discourse shift that Huszka demonstrated, where the economic and democratic reasons from further separation from Serbia have developed towards euro-atlantic integrations and rule of law, happened within the context of the road towards independence⁷⁶. In the meantime, the

⁷⁵ Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups* (Harvard University Press, 2004), 68

⁷⁶ Beáta Huszka, "Discursive Construction of the Montenegrin Independence Movement," in *Secessionist Movements and Ethnic Conflict: Debate-Framing and Rhetoric in Independence Campaigns* (Routledge, 2014), 138.

opposing party continued the discourse of keeping the state union with Serbia which has been marked with ethnonationalist narrative. This is to say that within the changes that occurred in Serbia particularly upon the fall of Milosevic's regime affected and changed the way Montenegro's future has been articulated by the DPS, while the SNP continued with the same line of discourse. The fact that the DPS promoted an inclusive form of citizenship and a civic concept of identity that attracted minority votes, and given that one of the Montenegro's main features is the respect for religious and national minorities, it is safe to assume that it is precisely these factors that brought independence with some 5000 votes over the necessary threshold⁷⁷.

What is of main interest for this thesis is how these minorities and ethnic groups besides those involved in the 'us vs. them' dichotomy of Serbs and Montenegrins continued their path of self-identification upon independence. Namely, the DPS's discourse has continued within the context of European integration negotiations and democratic development of the country, adopting a new Minority Strategy according to the Council of Europe's rules and recommendations and officially following the rhetoric of inclusion. Besides that, the introduction of an identity policy has had for a goal creating a Montenegrin national identity, distinct from the concept of Serbian ethnic identity in terms of the language, religion and national symbols, which emphasised elements of Montenegro from before its annexation but also included those populations that would not necessarily relate to these concepts. However, there is a large criticism regarding all the reforms undertaken under the surveillance of the European Union which include the issue of implementation of these inclusive measures⁷⁸. This criticism seems to be overlapping with the general disapproval of the way the country has developed after 2006, where there is an emphasis on the existence of nepotism within political

⁷⁷ "Republic of Montenegro - Referendum on State-Status 21 May 2006" (Warsaw: OSCE - Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 2006), 2
<http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/montenegro/20099?download=true>.

⁷⁸ Jelena Džankić, "Montenegro's Minorities in the Tangles of Citizenship, Participation, and Access to Rights," *Journal on Ethnopolitics & Minority Issues in Europe* 11, no. 3 (July 2012): 46

elites and general dissatisfaction with the economic situation⁷⁹. Therefore, the discourse that was coloured with a sort of liberation tone, creating an independent country that would be able to stand on its own feet and continue its developing towards becoming an EU member state.

All these elements of a new concept of statehood for Montenegro had at first created a cleavage between two main ethnic categories of self-identification, but as the time went by it seems that other cleavages occurred among those categories that were crucial for gaining independence as well as votes during municipal and state elections. It is therefore safe to assume that these further cleavages took place within the context of general dissatisfaction and disapproval of the ruling party's system and that other actors claiming to represent the interests of those groups might have had an influence on their identity shift. In contemporary Montenegro the nation-building project is no longer seen through the lenses of the 'us vs. them' dichotomy, but in terms of prosperity and economic wellbeing of its citizens⁸⁰. It is therefore necessary to do an analysis of the possible impact these organisations or institutions influenced the self-identification of major ethnic groups in Montenegro.

Chapter 3: An analysis of top-down framing of national identities

In this chapter the main focus will be on the concept of the identity framing of three major ethnic groups from the most recent census in 2011. Namely, these three groups have been chosen for the reason of their representation in numbers and for their presence in the public life. The method used will be the qualitative textual analysis of newspaper articles, officials' publications and statement, campaigns of the organisations and institutions that are seen as the

⁷⁹ "Država Postaje Firma DPS-SDP Familije," accessed May 02, 2015, <http://www.vijesti.me/vijesti/drzava-postaje-firma-dps-sdp-familije-62236>.

⁸⁰ In one of the interviews a correspondent has particularly emphasized that the high politicization of every aspect of life in Montenegro, as well as nepotism and immediate connection of one's identity to a certain political party has as a consequence an opposite effect of what nation-building process is set out to have, especially in the context of a poor economic situation and high rates of unemployment in the country.

official representatives of those who claim to have Montenegrin, Serbian and Bosniak national identity.⁸¹

As it was introduced with the previous chapter, the polarisation and cleavage within Montenegrin society has occurred within different socio-political contexts and according to various transformations the society has been subject to. This chapter will focus on the period surrounding the most recent census as it has shown a variety in the way populations self-identify as well as on the discourse surrounding the independence referendum, and will try to shed light on the top-down perspective of identity formation. Therefore, the focus will be on the elements of discourse that can be related to possible influence on identity formation issues and thus will not deal with other political components of the referendum and census taking campaigns.

3.1. Montenegrin identity

As it has been mentioned before, Montenegrin national identity has been subject to changes and major fluctuations since the dissolution of Yugoslavia. From the 1990s the trend in decline in numbers of self-identified Montenegrins continued, although a certain growth has been recorded between the census of 2003 and the most recent census of 2011. Taking Rogers Brubaker's theoretical framework in consideration, the framing of Montenegrin national identity will be the focus of this part of the chapter during the project of the independence referendum in 2006 and the most recent census of 2011. Namely, there has been a shift in discourse that is particularly visible in contemporary Montenegro where the nation-building project is ongoing in terms of strengthening relations with the descendants of the royal family of Petrović, building statues of national heroes, using a flag from the time Montenegro was

⁸¹ Carl W. Roberts, *Text Analysis for the Social Sciences : Methods for Drawing Statistical Inferences from Texts and Transcripts*, LEA's Communication Series (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 1997).

independent before its annexation, using national symbols while celebrating national holidays, etc. The strengthening of the relations with the descendants of the last King of Montenegro started as a project ever since the independence referendum and has continued with adopting a Law on the status of descendants of the Petrović dynasty in 2011, by which they were given the right to use the premises of their predecessor and promote Montenegrin culture. In addition, this law has founded a Petrović Njegoš foundation that is to “promote Montenegrin culture and tradition”⁸². Article 1 of this law states: “For the historical and moral rehabilitation of the Petrović Njegoš dynasty, this law regulates the important questions of the status of descendants of the Petrović Njegoš dynasty, which has been unconstitutionally dethroned by annexing the country in 1918.”

At the time of the referendum, there were two blocs of political parties gathered around the question of independence. The main division line between the two was in fact that concerning the identity, although not implicitly stating it, meaning that those who were promoting remaining in the state union were pro-Serb oriented while the other were pro-Montenegrin. Therefore, the question of independence was intrinsically tied to national affiliation, a person was considered a Montenegrin if they voted for independence⁸³. At that time, the question of statehood was related to the economic prosperity and if the question of state union is economically necessary, as well as the question of patriotism and love for the homeland, which continues to be part of discourse as there are claims that the prosperity is very visible nine years after the renewal of independence.⁸⁴ The slogan of the pro-independence bloc was “Yes! For

⁸² Official Gazette of Montenegro, *Zakon O Statusu Potomaka Dinastije Petrović Njegoš*, 2011, <http://www.sluzbenilist.me/PravniAktDetalji.aspx?tag=%7BBEA933CF-6770-4BE5-B9F7-0E8601D1C216%7D>.

⁸³ Amaël Cattaruzza, *Territoire et Nationalisme Au Montenegro : Les Voies de L'indépendance*, Collection “Géographie et Cultures.” Série “Culture et Politique” (Paris, Harmattan, 2010), 154

⁸⁴ “Nezavisnost Donijela Prosperitet,” *RTCG - Radio Televizija Crne Gore - Nacionalni Javni Servis*, accessed May 22, 2015, <http://www.rtcg.me/vijesti/politika/92075/nezavisnost-donijela-prosperitet.html>.

Montenegro that we love” and the TV broadcasting campaigns included promoting the “yes” vote by numerous famous people from Montenegro.

The discourse on referendum included, as it has already been reiterated, the inclusion of minorities and importance of minority participation in the independence project for regaining the old glory of Montenegro. The discourse that followed this project emphasised the specificity of Montenegro and its natural right to be independent, reiterating its internationally recognised independence from the Congress of Berlin in 1878. This is supported by the usage of the term of ‘renewing’ independence in official statements during referendum campaign which has well remained in contemporary discourse. This implies that the statehood of Montenegro is an undeniable fact and that the independence claims have their origins and legitimacy in historical development of the country which has been elaborated in previous chapters of the thesis. It would be thus safe to assume that Montenegrin national identity is also legitimised by renewing independence. This can be confirmed with the post-independence politics which included a nation-building project that included language standardisation, renewal of state symbols such as the flag and the hymn, and separation from church affairs and greater Serbian nationalism. This was followed by the discourse of confirming the closeness with Serbia and Serbian people and not denying the common roots and history, while at the same time promoting the idea of a separate national identity and continuing the path towards the European Union⁸⁵.

At the wake of independence referendum, the pro-independence bloc had a strong campaign for voting “yes” which included various symbolic elements of statehood and nationhood in Montenegro. These comprised of reiterating the image of King Nikola I Petrović Njegoš who was the latest king of an independent Montenegro before the country was annexed to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, using the elements of everyday language that is

⁸⁵ “Referendum u devet slika,” *Nedeljnik Vreme*, accessed May 5, 2015, <http://www.vreme.com/cms/view.php?id=453244>.

distinguishable of the Serbian language, etc⁸⁶. Also, by the end of 2005 the state television (Radio-Televizija Crne Gore, RTVCG) issued a documentary film named “From referendum to referendum” (Od Referenduma do Referenduma) where there have been represented the political changes from the referendum of 1991 that has been depicted as a failure and the political discourse of the ruling party as always promoting the idea of independence and being separate from the Milošević’s regime.

The census of 2011 has provoked different reactions among different political parties, as it was considered that there was a certain pressure on the populations to declare a certain way⁸⁷. This came from the parties that are Serb-oriented which criticised the change in the Law on citizenship which was being implemented right before the census taking process and was intended to exclude all those holding double citizenship in order to ensure a greater number in self-declared Montenegrins⁸⁸. These news are mostly collected from the Serbian online media and by the pro-Serb party members, while at the same time there was a discourse of the leading Montenegrin Party DPS which was advocating for fair census-taking and minimum usage of pressure on self-identification of populations⁸⁹.

Numerous newspapers have been reporting on the census taking procedure, reiterating claims from the opposition blocs that the census is highly marked with unofficial attempts of the ruling party to coerce people to identify a certain way.

⁸⁶ “Popis Vaskrsnuo Kralja Nikolu,” accessed May 13, 2015, <http://www.politika.rs/rubrike/region/172462.lt.html>.

⁸⁷ “Crna Gora: Pritisak Pred Popis Stanovništva,” *Vesti.rs*, accessed May 19, 2015, <http://www.vesti.rs/Vesti/Crna-Gora-Pritisak-pred-popis-stanovnistva.html>.

⁸⁸ “Crna Gora: Pritisak Pred Popis Stanovništva,” *Vesti.rs*, accessed May 19, 2015, <http://www.vesti.rs/Vesti/Crna-Gora-Pritisak-pred-popis-stanovnistva.html>.

⁸⁹ “Sankcionisati Pritiske Na Građane,” accessed May 19, 2015, <http://www.dps.me/index.php/component/content/article/182-mikobetapoppispritisak>.

3.2 Serbian identity

As Beata Huszka has already established and analysed the different discourse shifts in the road towards Montenegrin independence. As she already argued, the pro-Serbian political parties continued their discourse on criticising the ruling party of DPS and emphasising their involvement in criminal activities and attempts of creating a private state by obtaining independence⁹⁰. Upon independence it seems that the discourse remains the same, pointing out the illegalities of the turnout of the referendum and the misuse of the Law on minorities in order to gain more votes⁹¹.

During the referendum campaigns the pro-Serb, unionist bloc of political parties, had a programme that emphasised the ideas of the “serbiannes” of the Montenegrin people, claiming the Serbian language and the tricolour flag are the most important and representative symbols of these countries. The main slogan of the campaign was “Our honour. Our name. Our past. And our future. Our love. Our faith. Our hills. Our sea. Our land. Montenegro is not for sale. There are more than enough of us to say no”⁹². The main actors involved in the unionist bloc are the Socialist People’s Party (Socijalisticka narodna partija, SNP), Peoples Party (Narodna stranka, NS), Serbian list (Srpska lista, SL), Serbian People’s Party (Srpska narodna stranka, SNS), as well as the Serbian Orthodox Church (Srpska pravoslavna crkva, SPC). These actors’ actions implied the economic and historical reasons for which Montenegro should not separate from Serbia. The framing of identity under this discourse is coloured with ethnnationalist rhetoric, implying that Montenegrin “nationnes” cannot be separate from the Serbian one, as it

⁹⁰ Beáta Huszka, “Discursive Construction of the Montenegrin Independence Movement,” in *Secessionist Movements and Ethnic Conflict: Debate-Framing and Rhetoric in Independence Campaigns* (Routledge, 2014), 112

⁹¹ The turnout corresponding to the requirements set by the international actors, with 5000 votes over the limit, which is often criticised by the opposing political parties. On the other hand, the ruling party of DPS emphasises the legality of it as the international actors were supervising the referendum and have not recorded a single irregularity.

⁹² “Kampanja bez ključnog motiva,” *Radio Slobodna Evropa*, accessed May 13, 2015, <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/content/article/666513.html>.

is one and the same ethnically, and that the independence is something unnatural, evil and illegal which is capable of making “two eyes of the same head have a fight”⁹³. This was an expression that could often be heard, particularly by the Serbian Orthodox Church official, Mitropolis Amfilohije Radović in Montenegro.⁹⁴ Their discourse included some symbolic aspects, just as the pro-independence bloc, keeping the tricolour flag which is a symbol of Yugoslavia, keeping Serbian as an official language and promoting orthodoxy as majoritarian religion.

The census taking procedure, as indicated in the previous section, was a true battleground of opinions on the legality and truthfulness of data taking activities. Those opposing the DPS were criticising the Law on citizenship, and demanding for explanations as to where is the legality in that as the procedure of taking a citizenship away was selective⁹⁵.

3.3 Bosniak identity

Muslim identity has been a topic of academic and political discussion in the Balkans ever since the Ottoman Empire dispersed. The main issue with it was that of what constitutes a Muslim and what is the ethnicity and/or nationality of these populations, whether they are in primordial terms Serbs or Croats⁹⁶. It has been an issue that was to a certain extent “resolved” upon gaining official status of nationality in 1971, where these populations constituted small nationalities (*narod*, *narodnost*) of Yugoslavia⁹⁷. However, upon the dissolution of Yugoslavia Muslims have found themselves in a particularly difficult situation in terms of self-determination claims. In the case of Montenegro this has been particularly true as one of the elementary myths of the

⁹³ Origin. “Posvađati dva oka u glavi”, is a colloquial expression quite common, used in this context to emphasise the fact that Montenegrins and Serbs are a same national being.

⁹⁴ Jakšić Boško, “Sevdalinke Za Budućnost,” accessed May 12, 2015, <http://www.politika.rs/pogledi/Boshko-Jakshic/Sevdalinke-za-buducnost.lt.html>.

⁹⁵ “Crna Gora: Pritisak pred popis stanovništva,” *Naslovi.net*, accessed May 25, 2015, <http://www.naslovi.net/2011-03-23/vesti-online/crna-gora-pritisak-pred-popis-stanovnistva/2422373>.

⁹⁶ Sabrina P. Ramet, “Yugoslavia’s Muslims, Reconsidered,” in *Muslim Communities Re-emerge - Historical Perspectives on Nationality, Politics, and Opposition in the Former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia* (Duke University Press, 1994), 114.

⁹⁷ Ibid. this category only included Muslim from Bosnia, excluding Turks, Albanians and Gypsies of Yugoslavia as well as Macedonians of Islamic faith

conception of Montenegrin “nationness” is enshrined in the concept of “extermination” of Turks (*istraga poturica*) that supposedly occurred in the 17th, 18th century.⁹⁸ However, in contemporary Montenegro, Muslims do to a certain extent enjoy minority rights according to European values and standards together with every other ethnic group or ethnic, religious, national minority as long as they officially register as such⁹⁹. However, the main issue lies in the fact that within the Muslim populations there is a cleavage in terms of conceptualising their identity, whether they should be called Muslims or Bosniaks.

The category of Muslims in official census records seems to be representing a particular issue in the case of Montenegro. Namely, there are several ways people of Islamic faith self-identified in the most recent census of 2011, as well as different conceptualisations of their identity and often disagreements between each of the groups¹⁰⁰. However, for the purpose of this thesis the category of Bosniaks will be the focus of analysis as it is most represented in numbers, it is officially recognized as a minority group and seems to be resurging in terms of demands for visibility from the top-down perspective. The analysis will include online newspaper publications, officials’ statements, representatives of Bosniak minority’s press releases and websites.

There are several important actors that are seen as the representatives of the Bosniak nation in Montenegro. These include the Bosniak Party (BS, Bošnjačka stranka), Bosniak National

⁹⁸ The term of “istraga poturica” in fact dates back at the end of 17th and beginning of 18th century, when Islamised Montenegrins have allegedly been traced and either converted back to Orthodoxy or killed under the rule of Danilo I Petrović Njegoš. This myth has been a topic of the greatest masterpiece of Montenegrin literature, *Mountain Wreath*, written by Prince Bishop Petar II Petrović Njegoš. It is impossible to prove whether these event actually occurred, although taking into account the specificity of Montenegrin position at the time it is mostly unlikely that the Ottoman Empire would have allowed such an event to occur.

⁹⁹ These are protected with the Law on protection of Minorities: Official Gazette of Montenegro: <http://www.sluzbenilist.me/PravniAktDetalji.aspx?tag=%7B9CA4613B-9871-47EF-A24A-DFEDA6E15F38%7D>

¹⁰⁰ Namely, there are disputes among Muslims and Bosniaks, where Muslims promote their distinctive identity in terms of being indigenous Muslims but at the same time Montenegrins, while Bosniaks insist on their ethno-cultural distinctiveness from Montenegrins.

Council (BNV, Bošnjacko nacionalno vijeće), Bosniak Alliance (Bošnjački Savez) as well as an independent magazine led by Bosniak/Muslim intellectuals *Almanah*. According to these institutions, they all consider themselves to be the protectors of Bosniak national being, more so the first three institutions that are political parties, while the magazine sets itself as a non-political actor that wants to preserve and present the cultural identity of Bosniaks/Muslims but not intentionally impose it to those populations that do not subscribe to a certain national identification. The BS claims to be protecting the interests of Bosniak people as well as the important interests of the overall society in Montenegro, while the BNV claims to be the highest representative body of Bosniak people in Montenegro in the area of protection of their national identity, while *Almanah* has a set goal of preserving the cultural patrimony of Bosniaks/Muslims and cultural patrimony in general within the context of non-existing bodies that would conduct such a task that they deem necessary in the highly politicised atmosphere of identity politics.¹⁰¹¹⁰²¹⁰³

As shown in the previous part of this thesis, a large majority of Muslims have shifted to self-identifying as Bosniaks between 2003 and 2011 which can be put in relation with the appearance of these political and non-political actors claiming to be representatives of the Bosniak nation. Furthermore, the denomination of Muslims is rather seen and presented as a religious category which is why the need for Bosniak denomination occurred in terms of preserving their separate national identity. This is particularly true in the northern part of Montenegro, where a majority of Muslims has their origins from the Sandzak region, which incorporated the north of Montenegro and south of Serbia, with a centre of Novi Pazar which

¹⁰¹ “Djelovanje | Bošnjačka Stranka Crne Gore,” accessed May 18, 2015,

<http://www.bscg.me/djelovanje/>.

¹⁰² “Statut Bošnjačkog Vijeća | Bošnjački Savjet U Crnoj Gori,” accessed May 19, 2015,

<http://www.bvcg.me/statut>.

¹⁰³ Husein Bašić, “Riječ Na Početku,” *Almanah*, 1-2, 1994

is now part of Serbia¹⁰⁴. The Sandzak region was one of the administrative units of the Ottoman Empire and has remained an important element of regional identification of Muslims in post-1990s Yugoslavia, and later on Serbia and Montenegro. However, upon the independence of Montenegro the regional affiliation to Sandzak diminished in Montenegro as a civic concept of society was pursued and there were no dangers of greater Serbian nationalism prevailing¹⁰⁵. This is also supported by the political agenda of the BP, where the relation to Sandzak is being promoted in terms of the discourse of European integration, decentralisation and regionalism¹⁰⁶. The BC has ahead of April 2011, when the census was in process, further promoted the idea of how the Bosniaks should declare and have emphasised the census of 2003 where the specific Bosniak national identity has taken its toll and needs to be continued in order to preserve their distinction from other Muslims living in Montenegro¹⁰⁷.

Here, we see that Bosniak identity is often put under the context of territoriality, such as is the example of Sandžak whereby ignoring the idea of having a unique region where Bosniaks are the majority they would be marginalised under Serbian or Montenegrin nationalism. The BP on the other hand, represents Bosniak identity as unique within the context of an independent Montenegro that promotes a civic and democratic society, where Bosniaks could have greater opportunities to preserve their uniqueness rather than they would were the union with Serbia to continue.

The difference in dynamic discourse occurs in the later and more recent stages of Montenegrin independence, where within the context of growing Montenegrin nationalism there was a fear

¹⁰⁴ Kenneth Morrison and Elizabeth Roberts, *The Sandžak: A History* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 5

¹⁰⁵ Amaël Cattaruzza, “La (re)construction Du Fait Régional Au Monténégro: Productions et Représentations Territoriales Entre Héritage et Idéologie,” *Revue D’études Comparatives Est-Ouest* 39, no. 3 (2008): 23

¹⁰⁶ “Ciljevi | Bošnjačka Stranka Crne Gore,” accessed May 15, 2015, <http://www.bscg.me/ciljevi/>.

¹⁰⁷ “U SUSRET POPISU APRILA 2011 – ZAŠTO SMO BOŠNJACI | Bošnjački Savjet U Crnoj Gori,” accessed May 12, 2015, <http://www.bvcg.me/arhiva/u-susret-popisu-aprila-2011-%e2%80%93-zasto-smo-bosnjaci>

of Bosniaks being marginalised. This has been largely expressed by the Bosniaks outside of Montenegro who do not agree with the way Bosniaks are being represented by the BP. This criticism lies in the fact that the BP is too entangled in politics, as a lot of Bosniaks are members of the DPS or SDP party¹⁰⁸. The rhetoric is focused on the fact that by joining the party that has been ruling the country for so long and has been involved in the killings of Bosniaks in 1990s, the legitimacy of the Bosniak people is diminished. An emphasis is also put on the fact that Bosniaks have been instrumentalised in the independence project and this has been done so in order to ensure an equal standing of this population with other constituent peoples of Montenegro.

Chapter 4: Empirical research

The first part of this thesis dealt with theoretical perspectives of border regions and shifting identity phenomena in order to introduce the facts on the ground and general discourse on nationhood and statehood in Montenegro. The historical account of the development of national feeling in Montenegro has largely contributed to shedding light on current socio-political situation and the way “nationness” is being articulated. This chapter has a goal of showing how these are being articulated by the population inhabiting border areas by presenting the research conducted in April 2015.

The empirical research has a goal of showing the narratives that lie behind the identity shifting in border regions of Montenegro. By using the life story narrative method, the interviews were to shed light on the way border populations personally conceptualise their national identity and express it in relation to others. The method itself was chosen for the very reason that it provides

¹⁰⁸ Šefket Krcić, “Ulaskom u koaliciju sa DPS-om zaboravili ste stradanje Bošnjaka u Đukanistanu,” *Bošnjaci*, accessed May 16, 2015, <http://www.bosnjaci.net/prilog.php?pid=32409>.

the interviewees to freely speak about their lives which was occasionally and according to the specificity of each story interrupted by a short question on a specific issue raised. The analysis of the interviews thus had a wide spectre of examination, as each life story carried within itself a specific way of narration and conceptualisation of one's identity and personally understood role in society.

Initially, the population concerned was that living in the border regions in Montenegro, in the North of the country where there is a large number of people self-identifying as Muslims and Bosnjak, the South-western part where there is an evident rise in regional, Serbian and Croatian identity, as well as South-eastern part of the country which is known for its multicultural setting and long history of multi-confessionalism. The questions were somewhat of psychological nature, dealing with the personal experiences of identity, the framing of it, the relation to the local or regional society, as well as the meaning of the proximity of the border. These were asked according to the specificity of each interview, and are to reflect a larger narrative of how identity shifting is being framed in personal accounts.

4.1 The Structure of the Research

This research consisted of locating the populations that have at a certain point in their lives changed their national identity. This has been done using the means of social media, contacting minority councils, using personal contacts and visits and conversations with people from the border regions in question. Given the sensitivity of the question and general reluctance of speaking about national identity for a research, the research includes interviews with six people who have shifted their identity and several people who have been willing to talk about their experience with the shifters and the phenomena in general. I have conducted these interviews in April, in the cities of Rožaje, Herceg-Novi, Kotor and Bar which all are in close proximity to the border. According to the census of 1991, 2003 and 2011, these cities have shown

fluctuations in terms of national self-identification of their inhabitants, i.e. an increase in regional and other than putative national identities (see Appendix 1).

4.2 Limitations of the Research

Before conducting the empirical research the initial goal was to find possible respondents via social media and personal contacts. The idea was to share a post on Facebook's groups related to university students, Twitter and Tumblr which would eventually have had a snowball effect. By doing so, the respondents would have been contacted and prepared for the interview before the start of the fieldwork. However, the response was either negative or negating the fact that finding the shifters was doable. The main concern of some of the responses was the highly politicised issue of nationhood in general in Montenegro, suggesting that many of the shifters have been coerced by political actors in a certain way to change their national identity and would most probably not be willing to make part of the research. Nevertheless, two respondents have been found via social media and the interviews were conducted at the beginning of the fieldwork. The rest of the respondents have been found thanks to the snowball effect of social media posting and sharing the research project idea by the first respondents.

The initial idea of the research was to gather interviews with minimum ten persons in order to collect a sample that would be somewhat representative for the phenomena of national identity shifting. However, as it was anticipated in the first place, it has proven difficult to find persons that would be willing to firstly openly state that the identity shifting occurred and then to talk about it in a stigma-free atmosphere. This would suggest that there is a significant stigma regarding national self-identification in the census that might be caused by the political pressures. Also, there was a lack of understanding on the potential respondents' parts of what the research's goals and means are, as many of the encounters have turned out to be highly negative, with people rejecting to have a simple conversation on the topic. This reluctance has been mostly met by the elderly, while a majority of interviews has been conducted with people

younger than thirty five. The reason behind this might be found in the fact that there are some political pressures and that the level national consciousness has not reached that point where nationality matters among the elderly, while the younger generation is much more involved in the nation-building process.

Even though there were certain obstacles in conducting the research, the existing interviews do provide certain elements that can shed light on the general national feeling in Montenegro as well as in its border regions. The case of Montenegro would show that the closeness of the border does not necessarily impact the identity shift, but rather it is the internal socio-political circumstances. These interviews have shown that there is no clear idea of “Montenegrianness” or of any other “nationness”, thus suggesting that these identities are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The road towards independence has played an immense role in national identity formation and has paved the way for minority national identities to emerge and strengthen within the context of Montenegrin nation-building process.

4.3 Methodology

As it has been mentioned before, this thesis examines nationhood and “nationness” as expressed by the populations living in border areas of Montenegro. This is being done in order to make a microanalytical study of how these concepts are being understood from the bottom up perspective and by the *common* people. The denomination of common is used in purpose, as it would mark those populations that do not take part in any decision making processes related to nation-building, but merely inhabit the area in question and lead *common* lives. This is to say that the analysis consists of the way people’s national being is being shaped by the politics that has been examined in the previous chapter

The analysis requires an in-depth understanding of general socio-political situation in the regions, as they have an impact in the way national identities are being framed. It also requires an approach that does not have strict method, as the narrative story method is relying mostly on

intuition of the researcher¹⁰⁹. Therefore, this analysis will be divided into several subchapters that have been grouped around common themes drawn from the issues that have been raised by the respondents. These subchapters will then be analysed through the spectrum of the socio-political conditions on the ground in order to get perspective of what is the narrative behind reframing identities.

4.4 The structure of the interviews

Anthropological stance on nationalism, nationhood and ethnicity has just recently started to grow but has not flourished to that point where the bottom-up perspective prevails the top-down one. Furthermore, the top-down understanding of national identity framing has received much scholarly attention and thus overwhelmed the general view on these concepts without taking into consideration its impact on the lives of those who self-identify a certain way. It is from that point of view that this thesis will deal with national identities in the border regions in Montenegro from the bottom-up perspective, in order to shed light on how these are being conceptualisation by the very social actors and thus contribute to the general theory on border identities. However, these interviews are not intended to give definitions of “Montenegrinness”, “Serbness”, or “Bosniakness”, but rather to explain what is the narrative that lies behind the construction and reconceptualization of these identities.

The life narrative method consists of asking the respondent to talk freely about their lives, related to the topic of the thesis but not necessarily dealing with their precise definition of their national identity. The idea is that the respondent presents the most important aspects of their lives that have shaped their national identity and led to changing and shifting to another. This way they would talk about everyday lives, and most important events or happenings that have

¹⁰⁹ Amia Lieblich, Rivka Tuval-Mashiach, and Tamar Zilber, *Narrative Research - Reading, Analysis, and Interpretation*, vol. 47, Applied Social Research Methods Series (SAGE Publications, 1998), 12

moulded their national identity. As the interview would go on, it would be interrupted in a specific time while the respondent is touching upon a certain topic that the researcher would like to expand more on. These would naturally be asked at different times, depending on the specificity of each life story. However, knowing that there is reluctance on the part of potential respondents, a certain number of questions were constructed in case the question of anonymity was of high importance to the interviewee. Therefore, several respondents have replied to a questionnaire that consisted of the following questions:

1. How old are you?
2. Where were you born and where do you live now?
3. When was the first time that you noticed that your nationality matters in your surroundings?
4. How important is your nationality in everyday life in interaction with others?
5. How important do you think the closeness to the border is to the process of creating and changing your national identity?
6. Have you ever had conflicts with others because of your national identity?
7. Do you consider that religion and politics have an influence on creating national identity in Montenegro?
8. To what extent have religion and politics influenced you national identity change?

4.5 Analysis of the interviews

In this part of the empirical research chapter the main focus is on the essence of national identity shifting drawn from the interviews conducted with six correspondents. The analysis of these interviews will add up to the theoretical and practical framework provided in previous chapters and explain how identity shifting is being articulated from the bottom-up perspective. These interviews will provide a general scope and a general narrative surrounding the issue, thus this chapter will be divided in several subchapters that will deal with specific topics that have been

drawn from the interview sample as a whole. This is to say that the individual narratives will be treated as part of a whole in order to epitomise some of the most relevant issues and focuses common to all the interviewees that reflect specific socio-political circumstances on the ground in contemporary Montenegro.

As it has been explained above, the limitations of this research are enshrined in the stigma surrounding the identity shifting which had as a result the request for anonymity of the correspondents. Therefore, the names of the individuals interviewed for this thesis will not appear.

4.5.1 National indifference

The phenomena of national indifference in Montenegro seems to be taking its toll within the context of post-independence nation building project. The interviews conducted for this thesis reflect this idea particularly among younger generations that have been subject to the most important structural and societal changes right before and after the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. It would seem that the idea of national indifference stems from distrust in the government and their particular conceptualisation of “Montenegrinness” which is intrinsically seen through a political lens. It is in this context that the phenomena of national indifference does reflect the idea of a political statement, whereas the relation to the family, country itself seen as a non-political actor remains somewhat important among the interviewees¹¹⁰. This however varies from one account to the other, the intensity of national indifference is not equally expressed among all the correspondents.

A young entrepreneur, aged 33, owns a café in the city of Bar where he has lived all his life with his mother, who is a single parent. He comes from a mixed background, his mother being born in Belgrade and raised in Belgrade, while his grandmother was born in Krajina in Croatia.

¹¹⁰ Zahra, Tara. “Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis.” *Slavic Review* 69, no. 1 (2010), 115

For him, nationality or “nationness” does not exist, as he considers it to be a social construct mostly encouraged by political entrepreneurship. His life story is consisting of constant changes of the way he felt in terms of national belonging, and his framing of it is rather coloured by the sense of belonging to a mass in terms of “taking an easier way out”¹¹¹. The first moment he remembers realising that his nationality mattered occurred when the war in Bosnia broke out and when he saw the news filled with nationalist rhetoric. Ever since, he states that throughout his childhood he behaved as a nationalist because the circumstances were such that he felt superior and the environment supported that as he was in majority. A very important event that has marked him for life was when he had a conflict with a fellow student from his class who was a Muslim where he swore his mother on the ground of her religious affiliation. He realised his mistake at that moment and even today the feeling of guilt and wrongness makes him greet him with utter respect and acknowledgment.

During the 1990s he felt personally bound to explore his national feeling and belonging so he also had a stage where he expressed his “Croatianness” because of his grandmother. He remembers the moment where she came back from the battlefield, fully armed and carrying a flag of Croatia which he kept for a long time in order to burn a few years later when he realised how much damage nationalism causes to society. Now he relates nationalism to politics and by refusing to have a nationality both officially and personally he sees it as a political statement, as the divide created by politics is too great.

A young student from Bar aged 22, who studies abroad has the same approach to national identity. For her, national identity was always an issue that she related to politics and political attempts to impose a certain kind of identity. She also comes from a mixed background, her father being a Montenegrin and her mother from Kosovo. The first moment she realised that

¹¹¹ Orig. “to je onaj generativni sindrom mase”

national identity is a phenomena that is important for an individual in Montenegro was during the times of independence referendum, while she was still in high school. The children from her school were having arguments and fights over the facts who is a Montenegrin and who is a Serb. She resented the idea of being put into a box by external actors and being seen a certain way if your parents voted yes or no in referendum. For her the refusal to be of a certain national identity comes together with the general dissatisfaction with the education quality in her school, where she felt she could not thrive enough and where the school did not offer much of extracurricular activities as well the general economic and political situation in the country, where connections and nepotism can take a person anywhere. She emphasises the fact that she had friends of different religion and nationality, and expresses her shock where she recently heard that a friend of hers was not allowed to date her boyfriend who was a Muslim. The fact that this is happening in Bar, where multi-confessionality and tolerance where always the main attributes of the city, is appalling to her and she relates it to political propaganda. Her national indifference thus stems from the political entrepreneuring and serves as a political statement.

As it can be concluded from these testimonies, politics has had an immense influence on identity shifting among these individuals. Furthermore, it has led them to rather choose not to have a national identity whatsoever. This in fact goes in line with the testimony I have come across while trying to find identity shifters, where people were telling me that the 25 years of rule of DPS has deteriorated the country in such a way that the fact the independence was finally achieved means absolutely nothing¹¹². They further emphasised that the discourse on independence sounded like there will be so much more prosperity for the people in terms of employment, travelling and opportunities to develop and grow personally.

¹¹² The person was met in Tivat, he was of Montenegrin nationality and was pro-independence in 2006.

4.5.2 History and religion as reference points of national identity

In almost all the interviews conducted history and religion appear to be an important factor in defining one's national identity. For some, history and historical continuity of statehood represents the very core of the nation with which they identify. Religion on the other hand appears as something intrinsically related to their identity, particularly in the context of the Serbian nation, where Orthodoxy implies their "Serbness".

For the third correspondent, aged 31, also from Bar, history represented the very essence of his national being. He sees it precisely in terms of defining his existence in the collective society. He considers culture to be an element that ensures the survival of the nation, where literature, theatre, music and religion are those components that unify a nation and ensure their progress and survival in the world. The moment the interview started he started reiterating Yugoslavia and the glory ages when it was very powerful in the world political scene. He laments the fact that Yugoslavia fell apart and considers that if it were to survive it would have still been the most powerful country in Europe and the world in general. In this context, he speaks of successor states as artificial nations that have been created by politicians who did not take into consideration the wellbeing of the populations their politics was affecting. He insisted on comparing Yugoslavia to Germany, stating that Germany as a strong nation survived because of its strong cultural policy that made it recover after the Second World War and thus become the most powerful force in the European Union today. In this context,

‘‘Serbia as a hegemon should have been the leader of Yugoslavia, it is only natural that the nation that prevails in numbers of its population should be in charge.’’¹¹³

When asked about the religion and to what extent it is important to him in everyday situations, he states that he sees it as something very personal, as well as his "nationness", he does not see

¹¹³ Translation: author's own

it fit to impose it to other people around him. However, he emphasised the fact the contemporary politics in Montenegro as well as the very referendum of 2006 served merely in the context of the personal agenda of the current government. He found the referendum to be an unnecessary move which only deteriorated the socio-political situation in the country, which would have been better off if it were to stay with Serbia.

For the second respondent history also represent the crucial component of his national identity while he actually had one. He loved history and geography as a teenager, he drew maps of medieval Raška according to a historical atlas that he owned and at the same time found comfort in being same as the others.

“At that moment where you could not come across a different opinion, the environment was such that you were surrounded with people who think alike. The thing was that at that time, it was the Radical Party that was mentioning the history the most, especially the medieval times. Back then I was learning so much about it, and I got hooked on it. It wasn't until later, when I was 18, that I realised that it was all coloured with intense emotions, that nothing is that black and white.”

He emphasised that at the same time he was strongly religious, but he now realises it was purely phenomenological, he enjoyed the ceremonies and all the symbols surrounding rituals. It was at the same time when he stopped being religious that he realised that the nationalism he was subscribed to was overemphasised, and that once he entered the essence of it and the real meaning of it nationalism stopped being an important element of his life.

“Still today, I don't understand the people who believe all that narrative. I do not get the point. But I realise that is the pattern that you learn while you're very young. Even though I am over it, I would still say a bad thing if I saw a car crossing the pedestrian area... I would say ‘Look at this idiot’, but if the car had the registration plates of someone from Rožaje, I would say ‘Look at this undereducated bad Muslim’... so I automatically have

that... I tie it to... I don't know... But I do know it is completely unnecessary, and irrational thing to do, but we are too much into it to be able to distance from it. We were raised in that social conflict... I do not resent the Serbian tradition, I did not break it off with it... I just don't want it to have that much influence on my everyday life.”

As it can be seen from this subchapter, history and historical continuity of nationhood is strongly related to the identity formation. Also, religion, in this case Orthodoxy falls under the scope of Serbian nationalism, where if a person is Orthodox they are automatically Serb. This goes in line with the top-down approach, as the appropriation of Montenegro and Montenegrins by the Serbs was often seen through religious lenses. History goes in line with ethnicity in religion, as one of the correspondents reiterated an often used argument that Montenegrins are Serbs because its rules prior to creation of Kingdom of SHS declared as such¹¹⁴.

4.5.3 Regionalism, tribalism and strong family cult defining identities

Several interviews have shed light on the importance of belonging to a certain region and to a certain tribe in terms of national self-identification. This has been mostly reflected in the interviews conducted with persons originating from the region of Boka Bay, situated in southwest of the country, where there are significant Croatian and Serbian populations which can be seen from the censuses¹¹⁵. These interviews uncover an ‘otherness’ in certain circumstances that are mostly those of socio-political nature and strongly reflect the idea of what Tara Zahra raised of political statement¹¹⁶.

¹¹⁴ Srdja Pavlović, “Literature, Social Poetics, and Identity Construction in Montenegro,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 2003, 145

¹¹⁵ “Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in Montenegro” (Zavod za statistiku - Monstat, December 10, 2003), <http://monstat.org/cg/page.php?id=222>; “Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in Montenegro” (Podgorica: Zavod za statistiku - Monstat, December 7, 2011), [http://www.monstat.org/userfiles/file/popis2011/saopstenje/saopstenje\(1\).pdf](http://www.monstat.org/userfiles/file/popis2011/saopstenje/saopstenje(1).pdf).

¹¹⁶ Tara Zahra, “Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis,” *Slavic Review* 69, no. 1 (2010), 96

The interview conducted with the English language professor, aged 26 from Herceg Novi, coming from a mixed background, uncovered a very interesting case of national indifference but also strong relation to the region. Namely, his mother is Montenegrin, coming from the region of Old Montenegro, while his father is Macedonian and his grandfather is a Hungarian from Vojvodina. For him, living in Herceg Novi included constant defending of his identity in school, particularly in the times where referendum was taking place. As he noted, his last name presented an issue on everyday basis as it is clear to everyone that he is Macedonian, but his personal feeling and relation to that country has nothing to do with his “Macedoniannes”. He reiterated the moment when the most recent census was taken, when he self-identified as Montenegrin, which he considered to be only natural as that was the country he was born into and grew up in, but also it represented a certain resistance to a strong Serbian nationalism present in Herceg Novi. However, he also feels as a *Bokelj*, which is a denomination most people from the Boka Bay would use in terms of their regional affiliation. It carries with it a certain distinction from the rest of Montenegro which has historical connotations, as Boka Bay was under the Austro-Hungarian rule before it was officially part of Montenegro upon the Congress of Berlin in 1878. For him, lately being a *Bokelj* means distancing himself from the current strong Montenegrin nationalist politics, as he does not find himself comfortable in the country where nepotism is largely present and where the economic situation is not beneficial for young educated people such as himself.

“What bothers me the most is that politics is creating an atmosphere where people are being put in boxes. Everything that happens in politics on everyday basis affects people’s behaviour around me which bothers me. To a certain extent, being a *Bokelj* has a cultural connotation... It implies a certain lifestyle, but nationally I would feel more Montenegrin if the “Montenegrinness” were not expressed in such a bad manner by the ruling party.”

In his case, national identity is context-specific, as depending on the environment he is part of, he would be seen as a Macedonian or simply as an anti-Serb, as he is not religious and he does not part of any of the political parties, thus politically not fitting. Having a mixed background, for him personally, does not represent an issue for his everyday life, but during the years of his schooling he found it very difficult to fit it, particularly when the change of politics from 1997 started to occur. He strongly felt his “otherness” in terms of Serbian nationalism in Herceg Novi, and he found it difficult to deal with other children from his class that saw him as the second class citizen not worthy of living in that city. Therefore, his shift of national identity is largely coloured with the political situation in the country that had an immense impact on his surroundings and thus on him, as he was always seen as the “other”.

On another note, an interview conducted with a student from Kotor, aged 22, who is studying abroad has shown that being a *Bokelj* is strongly related to the symbols and rituals from that regions. She emphasised her relation to the region in terms of festivities that have origins and relations to Croatian ones, while stating that nationality for her is not limited to the frontiers of the country she was born into. She was born into a Montenegrin family, but is still keeping her regional identity as to a certain extent she feels different from the rest of region. For her, living in Boka Bay, and particularly in Kotor, means being free of any nationalist feelings while feeling more close to the region reflects her openness towards others, no matter what their religion or nationality might be. She also reflected the idea of her otherness in terms of the Northern region, as her boyfriend is a Muslim from the north, in terms of everyday life and relation to environment.

The correspondent from the third interview reflected similar ideas of nationality, but also emphasised her relation to the family. She stressed that the cult of the family is very strong in Montenegro, for her particularly, as she does feel her “Montenegrinnes” is mostly related to her family, the region they come from and family traditions.

The tribal consciousness is something that is very present among populations in Montenegro. This has roots in its history, and the transition from a tribal country into an official contemporary democracy happened in a very short time-span, as the tribes had a very powerful voice even within the Kingdom of the latest King Nikola. The legacies of a tribal consciousness thus do reflect everyday lives, and as Pavlović argues these have made it difficult for a strong national consciousness to develop¹¹⁷.

Conclusion

The shifting identity phenomena in Montenegro is not a lone case in the world, but it represents an interesting case study as Montenegro is the youngest independent country in Europe and the last one to secede from Yugoslavia. It is also interesting from the aspect that it is a very small country both in geographical terms and in terms of its population size, counting only 620.029 people and having major identity issues. The fact that the independence was internationally recognised did not appease the debates on the legitimacy of its statehood and nationhood, as well as the debates on national identity. The census records do show the discrepancies in terms of national identity self-identification as less than half of the population declared as Montenegrin in the most recent census of 2011. However, what was the main interest for this thesis were the border regions where the major shifts occurred.

Border regions are important in the case of Montenegro in terms of the mixture of its ethnic composition and their historical development. In terms of politics, these have been of high relevance for the purpose of gaining votes, particularly in the independence referendum, which is one of the reasons why a civic concept of society has been adopted by the ruling elite. Also, this thesis has shown that the biggest shift that ever occurred in the census data of the category

¹¹⁷ Srđa Pavlović, “Who Are Montenegrins? Statehood, Identity and Civic Society,” in *Montenegro in Transition: Problems of Identity and Statehood*, ed. Florian Bieber (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2003), 85

of Bosniaks from 2003 to 2011 has been influenced by the political changes. This has been shown through analysing the data and the emergence of representatives of Bosniaks as a category of national identities, but also through doing a qualitative textual analysis of newspaper articles dealing with the emergence of this particular category. This has shown that Bosniaks from the region do not agree with the politics led by these representatives as they consider them to be too entangled in the politics and not truthfully representing the desires of Bosniak people. The limitation of this research is the fact that it was difficult to locate identity switchers from the category of Muslims to that of Bosniaks and this politicisation might be one of the reasons why these populations were difficult to trace.

Even though there were limitations to the ethnographic research conducted in Montenegro, the results have been revealing of the initial assumption that the political entrepreneurs' ideas of national identity do not necessarily reflect the perspectives on the ground. Also, the closeness of borders do not necessarily have an impact of identity shifting or identity formation, which is rather related to the overflow of general discontent with the socio-political situation in the country. It would be interesting to expand this research further, which would include a large-scale ethnographic study particularly including populations self-identifying as Bosniaks and Muslims, as the discrepancies of the conception of these identities are highly present. However, given the high level of stigma surrounding identity shifting, a different approach would be required together with a different methodology that would provide a better insight into identity shifting phenomena.

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Appendix 1.

Year	Population	Montenegrin	Serb	Bosniak	Muslim
1948	377.189	342.009 (90.7%)	6.707 (1.8%)	/	387 (0.1%)
1953	419.873	363.686 (86.6%)	13.864 (3.3 %)	/	6.424 (1.5%)
1961	471.834	383.988 (81.4%)	14.087 (3.0%)	/	30.665 (6.5%)
1971	529.604	355.632 (67.2%)	39.512 (7.5%)	/	70.236 (23.3%)
1991	615.035	380.467 (61.86 %)	57.453 (9.34 %)	/	89.614 (14.57 %)
2003	620.145	267.669 (43.16 %)	198.414 (31.99 %)	48.184 (7.77 %)	24.625 (3.97%)
2011	620.029	278.865 (44.98 %)	178.110 (28.73 %)	53.605 (8.65 %)	20.537 (3.31%)

City	Year	Population	Montenegrin	Serb	Bosniak	Muslim
Bar	2003	40.037	18.919	11.084	919	2.575
	2011	42.048	19.553	10.656	2.153	3.236
Rožaje	2003	22.693	440	904	18.628	1.510
	2011	22.964	401	822	19.269	1.044
Herceg Novi	2003	33.034	9.447	17.470	79	220
	2011	30.864	10.395	15.090	74	160
Kotor	2003	22.947	10.741	7.094	16	106
	2011	22.601	11.047	6.910	29	64
Bijelo Polje	2003	50.284	8.936	20.275	11.377	7.936
	2011	46.051	8.808	16.562	12.592	5.985
Plav	2003	13.805	765	2.613	6.809	788
	2011	13.108	822	2.098	6.803	727
Tivat	2003	13.630	4.082	4.796	37	156
	2011	14.031	4.666	4.435	96	114

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¹¹⁸ “Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in Montenegro” (Podgorica: Zavod za statistiku - Monstat, December 7, 2011),

[http://www.monstat.org/userfiles/file/popis2011/saopstenje/saopstenje\(1\).pdf](http://www.monstat.org/userfiles/file/popis2011/saopstenje/saopstenje(1).pdf).

¹¹⁹ “Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in Montenegro” (Podgorica: Zavod za statistiku - Monstat, December 10, 2003), <http://monstat.org/cg/page.php?id=222>

¹²⁰ “Statistical Guide - 2000 Elections Yugoslavia” (Medija centar, Beograd, 2000), http://www.mc.rs/upload/documents/izdavastvo/STATISTICAL_GUIDE.PDF.