Constructing the Neoliberal Subject: The rhetoric of women's empowerment in the post-war Kosova

by

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Abstract:

This dissertation examines the gendered neoliberalization in Kosovë through an analysis of the usage and meanings of the rhetoric of “women's economic empowerment" by the international actors and local NGOs. Locating the international intervention that followed the end of war in 1999, as a turning point to market economy, this thesis analyzes the discursive work that was undertaken to build the new human capital necessary for this new regime. In this line, I explore how gender was used as a governing code (Calkin, 2018) in moulding these new subjectivities in post-war Kosovë.

Adopting Calkin’s (2018) feminist critique of human capital theory, this thesis argues that human capital theory has dictated the dominant discourses that surround the rhetoric of empowerment in post-war Kosovë. The thesis undertakes a Critical Discourse Analysis of key documents produced by international actors between 2000-2022 that concern women’s economic empowerment and development. In addition, it utilizes interviews with local NGOs to explore the local understandings of women’s empowerment and entrepreneurship. In combining these two research methods, the thesis examines what conflicting and shifting ideas about women have developed throughout years and for what purpose. I argue that the tension between the construction of women as victims and as locus of “entrepreneurial potential” has been instrumental in developing a gendered market citizen (Schild, 2002). In line with Calkin’s reading of Foucault’s analysis of the formation of human capital, the thesis analyzes what assumed innate and the voluntary qualities have been deployed to invoke the women’s desirability for entrepreneurship. In so doing, I propose that the discovery of women as untapped human capital has been used to facilitate the transition from the controlled economy to neoliberal capitalism through the seeding a new form of agency. This thesis adds empirical data to the gender and development scholarship and argues that gender has been of a central importance in development policies in post-war Kosovë. In a broader context, this thesis aims to enrich the literature in post-socialist and post-conflictual studies by providing a case study of the application of gender and development paradigm in such contexts.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

I further declare that the following word count for this thesis are accurate:

Body of thesis (all chapters excluding notes, references, appendices, etc.): 26,805 words. Entire manuscript: 30,2395 words

Signed: Liridona Sijarina

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List of Abbreviations

AGE -the Agency for Gender Equality

D4D -Democracy for Development

EU -European Union

EULEX -the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo

ESDP -European Security and Defense Policy

GAD -Gender and Development

ILO -International Labour Organization

KGSC -Kosovar Gender Studies Center

KFOS -Kosovo Foundation for Open Society

KWN -Kosova Women's Network

KWI -Kosovo Women's Initiative

K-W4W -Kosova -Women 4 Women

NATO-The North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NGOs -Nongovernmental Organizations

OSCE -the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

OHCHR -the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights

UNDP -United Nations Development Programme

UN -United Nations

UNWomen -The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

UNIFEM -United Nations Development Fund for Women

UNMIK -The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

UNHCR -the UN High Comissionier for Refugees

NRAEWO -the Network of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Women's Organizations of Kosova

USAID -United States Agency for International Development

WID -Women in Development

1 Introduction

In 2019, I I worked as a Research Consultant for Kosova Women's Network as part of a research titled: "Where is the money for Women's rights in the Western Balkans?". Part of my role was to interview several women's NGOs throughout Kosova[1], some of whom were barely functioning due to the lack of funding. I spoke to women who had been working in the field of women's economic empowerment, some of which were expected to empower women by delivering training, awareness raising campaigns and supporting other women to start their businesses with a total budget that goes up to 1-3000 EUR annually. I remember leaving the interviewees frustrated and exhausted, partially due to the experiences that they shared with me, and partially because what I was asking them did not make much sense for their situation. These women were working under precarious conditions, expected to achieve measurable results with the crumbs they were getting from donors. Following this experience, I became interested to see how does this "empowerment in the blink of an eye" works. After this experience and many encounters, I had with NGOs and donors throughout my work experience, I became more interested to explore how the precarity and self-governance which came along with the "empowement paradigm" in Kosovë is disciplining the female body and is seeking to create new ways of being that is dependent on the market.

Women have constituted a special target of empowerment and entrepreneurship incentives in Kosovë. Since the international intervention in 1999, women's economic empowerment, along with their political inclusion, has become a buzzword among donors and the civil society sector. Surrounded by market driven ideas of what empowerment means, it has gained prominence in policies and projects that seek gender equality in the last decade. Notwithstanding this investment, women's participation in the labour market remains low, with approximately 17,9% of them employed (ASK, 2022). What initially began as empowerment through entrepreneurship as a tool for reconstruction and economic transition has now become a vehicle of expanding the market logic in the gender equality agenda. More and more, the discourses on empowerment centralize the emancipatory role of the market, promising equality and independence from the traditional roles through the market. In Kosovë, gendered

[1] In this thesis, I choose to use the term Kosovë/Kosova instead of Kosovo as a political statement and an act of resistance and distancing from the colonialist usage of the name during Yugoslavia, which later became internationalized. In contrast to English, in Albanian definite and indefinite articles are put in the endings of the word, thus Kosovë stands for the indefinite article and Kosova stands for the definite article.

neoliberalization included not only the privatization of the formerly socially-owned enterprises, but also a stronger focus on re-education of the labour force for the new emerging market economy. This paradigm, driven by human capital theory, has been part and parcel of the restructuring of the economy and the construction of neoliberal subjectivities in Kosovë.

This thesis combines Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1992; 1995; 2003) and interviewing as methods of inquiry to understand the underlying logic behind the discourses produced by key international actors in Kosovë between 2000-2022. My analysis builds upon Calkin's critique of human capital in gender and development, who argues that the increased attention in women in development agendas reveals not only a story of co-optation as Fraser argues (Fraser, 2013) but also instrumentalization of it as a tool of neoliberal governance in the Foucauldian sense (Calkin, 2018). The neoliberal policies that have been at the core of the institutionalized discourse on gender and development, besides from envisioning an individualized understanding of empowerment, have fostered a new subjectivity, the "entrepreneurial self" (Bröckling, 2015), which has tied being into the world with the market and labour. Additionally, I adopt Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality which allows us to see different systems of oppressions such as sexism, racism and classism intersect with each-other, producing specific experiences of discrimination (Crenshaw, 1991; Mackinnon, 2010). I analyze and trace the shifting and competing meanings that women's economic empowerment has had throughout the years in line with Crenshaw's challenge of women's homogeneity (Crenshaw, 1991).

1.1 Aim and Research Questions

This study examines the gendered neoliberalization of Kosova through a critical analysis of the use of the rhetoric of "women's empowerment" by the international actors and local NGOs in Kosovë within the gender equality and development agenda. Specifically, the study argues that the post-war structural adjustment policies pushed by the international actors relied upon and produced new gendered subjectivities through discursive work. I contend that the new emerging gender regime in Kosovë was invested in the creation of entrepreneurial subjects that are dependent on the market. First, I focus the analysis on the discursive work of the World Bank, UN Agencies such as UNIFEM (later on UNWomen) and UNDP, the European Union and International Labour Organization from 2000-2022. I analyze and track how the category of women and gender entered the knowledge produced by these entities and how the meanings

changed throughout the years. I explore these discourses through the employment of feminist analyses of neoliberal governmentality and human capital that shed light into the meanings that surround specific notions of a gendered being and the paradoxes that accompany these discourses.

Secondly, I explore how these ideas were negotiated and appropriated by local NGOs that work in the field of women's economic empowerment in Kosovë. I explore what ideas of citizenship are promoted by these NGOs, what meanings dress the concept of entrepreneurship and empowerment in their own perspectives. Here, I seek to analyze the complexity of agency of donor-based initiatives such as women's rights interventions in post-war Kosovë and the conditionality that has been the central mechanism around which the process of transition was developed in Kosovë. I examine what meanings inhabit empowerment and entrepreneurship in the discourse of local NGOs currently, what are the competing ideas and how are these campaigns and interventions are presented to women.

The intention of this thesis is to analyze how human capital has impacted the gender equality agenda and became instrumental to constructing the neoliberal subject in the post-conflictual Kosova. Such instrumentalization has been made by the neoliberal paradigm which sees women as an "empowerable" political and economic category. This thesis is driven by two main questions:

1. *How has human capital dictated women's economic empowerment and the gender equality agenda since the international intervention in Kosovë?*

2. *What kind of subjectivities were envisioned and produced through economic empowerment and entrepreneurship by international actors and local NGOs in Kosovë?*

1.2 Contribution

This dissertation aims to contribute to the existing literature in gender and development studies and post-conflict intervention by adopting a critique of human capital theory in the empowerment and gender agendas in Kosovë. In the context of Kosova, this thesis fills the literature gap that concerns gender and development, and the gendered neoliberalization of Kosovë. In a broader context, I add empirical data to the literature that analyzes GAD through

a feminist critique of human capital by examining it in a post-socialist and post-conflictual context. Employing Sydney Calkin's critique of Foucauldian undersanding of human capital and neoliberal governmentality, examine how the empowerment and entrepreneurship discourses have created specific gendered subjectivities that depend on the market and work for market growth.

1.3 Limitations of the study

This study is built upon the available documents of key international actors that administered Kosovë but also were key donors in the field of women's economic empowerment. The documents analyzed here are selected upon two criteria: One was to detect the entities that leaded in the knowledge production in gender and development in Kosovë after the war. The second criterion was their availability online. I mainly used official websites to access the documents that are presented here. When I could not find documents such as strategic documents of certain organizations such as UNWomen, UNDP and EU, I contacted the local offices of these institutions. UNWomen and UNDP who responded to my request, provided me with a partial list of the documents that I have required. However, the list is not exhaustive and I am aware that they do not grasp all the knowledge produced during this period concerning gender and development. On the other hand, concerning the varieties of NGOs, I contacted NGOs from rural areas and those who work with people with disabilities. However, they did not respond to my request. Thus, the non-governmental organizations that are subject of this study do not represent the wide varieties and nuances of the understanding and production of women's economic discourses and initiatives. Nevertheless, adopting the intersectionality as an analytical tool, I explore what remains outside the below analyzed discourses in terms of inclusion and equality.

2 Methodology

In this chapter I will present the methodology, process of data collection and analysis upon which this thesis is built. I start by discussing Critical Discourse Analysis as a method, moving into the qualitative research -interviews, coding and data analysis. In the end of this chapter I will consider my positionality as a researcher and the ethical considerations that have guided the research.

2.1 Discourse Analysis as a Method

Critical Discourse Analysis has been chosen as the key methodological approach as it allowed me to analyze the ideological rationales, bias and ideas that have informed the discourses produced in gender and development policies in Kosovë. Secondly, I consider CDA as an important tool of feminist praxis which is invested in deconstructing the gendered assumptions that underlie discourses and policies. In line with my research interest and the location of new modes of empowerment as part of the neoliberal governmentality (Foucault, 2008), I have used Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis framework to analyze the discourses produced in the texts that are subject of analysis in this thesis. As Fairclough states, CDA systematically challenges connections between the discursive practices and structures. It seeks to demonstrate how texts, practices and events are shaped by ideological power dynamics and power struggles (Gölbaşı, 2017). Fairclough's framework allows to see the discourse as part of social practices, which sheds light on the power relations, social practices and ideology (Fairclough, 1992; 1995; 2003). Here I also add a feminist lens of Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis scholars that develops upon Fairclough's contribution but focuses on how gendered relations of power are (re)produced, negotiated and contested in representations of social practices, social relationships and identities in texts and talks (Lazar, 2005 :11).

Fairclough proposes a three-dimensional model in critically analyzing the discourse which includes: textual analysis, discourse practice analysis and social practice analysis. The lingustic features, structures and patterns of a critical importance in analyzing a text and the meanings they produce. Here, Fairclough pays attention to the linguistic dimension of the structuring of the discourses such as wording, nominalization and modality. Nominalization is a crucial feature which becomes particularly important for my study to see how verbs are replaced with nouns to describe processes. Another dimension of Fairclough's analysis is modality which

comes to describe words and structures that signify authority in certain positioning of the subjects or social processes (Fairclough, 1992; 1995). Analysing the discursive practice entails delving into the social processes and practices that are part of the production, distribution and consumption of a certain text (Fairclough, 1992).

I apply CDA as a method to analyze documents produced by international actors that have shaped the gender and development agenda in post-war Kosovë. Of a special importance to my research is the relationship between the texts I analyze with the social and structural dimension of the texts and the ideology that shapes them. The scope of texts that are subject of analysis in this thesis are focused in strategic plans, policy papers and research produced by the World Bank, UNDP, UNHCR, UNSCR, UNIFEM (later replaced by UNWomen), the EU and ILO.The full list can be found in the Appendix I. The World Bank which is also self-identified as "Knowledge-Bank" (Calkin, 2018) leads in the amount of knowledge produced on gender and development, which is reflected in the analysis.

2.2 Interviewing as a Research Method

In addition to conducting a Critical Discourse Analysis, I have interviewed six women from five local organizations in Kosovë to better understand the complexities of discourse work on women subjectivies and economic empowerment. I have chosen interviews as an instrument as it has been argued to be one of the most useful tools for collecting the qualitative data from the field (Fontana & Frey 1994:361). The interview provides a wider opportunity to grasp experiences and insights from the participants of the study.

The interviews were semi-structured with open ended questions. I have chosen the semi-structured interviews as a method as they allowed me to dig deeper in the meanings that certain concepts have had in different participants. Additionally, open-ended questions also help in sharing authority during the conversation by giving the research participants the space to influence the trajectory of the conversation (Abrams, 2010). As I knew all of the interviewees from my working experience in the civil society sector in Kosovë, I decided to keep the interviews in terms of a conversation, aiming to create a comfortable environment for both parties. I have structured the interview in main themes relevant to my thesis. They included questions with regard to the history of the organization, the sentiments and thoughts about the international intervention and donor-based projects, and the understanding of empowerment,

specifically entrepreneurship. Additional questions were added according to the contributions of the interviewee.

In this study I have employed purposive sampling. I targeted NGOs that specifically deal with women's empowerment and development agenda. As I have been working in the field of gender equality for more than six years, I have already known a majority of the organizations that work in the field of women's economic empowerment. I decided to interview both organizations that are old and also those who are younger and work at the national level, covering urban and rural areas. I interviewed organizations that employ gender as a primary site of intervention and analysis, those who focus primarily on women's rights and also an organization that has gender and women's rights as a cross-cutting issue. In total I have interviewed six women from five organizations (see appendix II for the full list of the interviewees). Two interviewees are from Kosova Women's Network. Established in 1996, KWN was originally an informal network of women's groups and organizations from various regions in Kosova. Since its inception, KWN has developed into a network that advocates on behalf of Kosovar women, at the local, regional and international level. Currently KWN has 140 members, including women's organizations of all ethnic groups from throughout Kosova (KWN, 2023). One interviewee was from Kosovar Gender Studies Center. KGSC, the organization she leads was founded in 2002 by KFOS Women's Program and was the first organization of this kind in Kosovë. Two years after, based on a feasibility study, the Kosovo Foundation for Open Society (KFOS) Board decided to spin off the Women's Program from KFOS and became an integral part of the Kosovar Gender Studies Center (KGSC, 2023). The Kosovar Gender Studies Center has since become an important actor in conducting research on gender issues and developing gender studies in Kosovë. One interviewee was from Kosova-Women 4 Women (K-W4W). K-W4W is a local organization that deals primarily with the marginalized women of Kosova. Successor of Women for Women -International, in 2017, K-W4W became a local NGO, and independent sister organization that continues to work closely with Women for Women International to serve marginalized women in Kosovë. One interviewee was from the Network of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Women's Organizations of Kosova (NRAEWO). Founded in 2007, with the support of KGSC, NRAEWO works in supporting, integrating and promoting the rights of women and girls of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in Kosovo (NRAEWO, 2023). one from Democracy for Development Institute (D4D). D4D Institute was established in April 2010 by a group of analysts who were increasingly concerned that the state-building efforts

were neglecting democracy. D4D's vision is to promote an active and educated citizenry that fully participates in the public space, utilizes the public arena for representation and decision-making, and builds consensus on resource allocation that is efficient, smart, long-term, and promotes equitable development (D4D, 2023).

I contacted these organizations informally and formally between December and Februrary to ask for an interview. In February I traveled from Vienna to Prishtinë and conducted all of the interviews face to face during the February-March period. I decided on face to face interviews instead of the online interviews to avoid eventual difficulties but also to allow more comfort in the conduction of the conversation.

Four of the interviews were conducted in Albanian as the respondents have reported Albanian to be their native language. The interview with the KWN respondents was conducted in English as one of the respondents was American and I sought to approach every participant in their native language to allow them more space to express their opinions. As there were two participants who wanted to be part of the interview, the other respondent who was Albanian felt more comfortable in continuing the responses in that language. All of the interviews were recorded and have been transcribed verbatim. The sections that were selected for the analysis from the interviews conducted in the Albanian language were translated in English. The length of the interviews lasted from 57 minutes to 2 hours and 5 minutes.

2.3 Ethical Considerations

The main ethical considerations for this research project are informed consent, the freedom of choice, their right to protect their identity, and protection from any harm that might occur as part of this research project (Fontana & Frey, 1998). In terms of informed consent, I provided all the information to the interviewees concerning the purposes of the research, procedures, and the terms of usage of the interview before starting the interviews. The informed consent gave special attention to their right to privacy by providing different modalities of usage of their identity. The names and details of the interviewees are all presented with their consent.

2.4 Coding and data analysis

The texts that I have used for analysis and the transcriptions from the interviews have been coded using the software for qualitative data analysis NVivo. To interpret the data I have used

both inductive and deductive approaches. After finishing the literature review, I created a new project in Nvivo where I put initially the documents I have selected for analysis and started creating nodes while I was reading the texts. In the first round, the nodes were very close to the actual texts, resulting in a total of 25 nodes. After finishing the first round of the coding, I recoded the material using an inductive approach to derive the main themes as informed from the literature review. In total I developed 6 themes: *agency, victimization, empowerability, flexibility, innate qualities and voluntary qualities.* Then, I added the transcripts of the interviews, and coded them accordingly to the existing themes. In some cases, such as with the usage of the term empowerment I have utilized word frequency queries to track the trends throughout the years.

The themes were then used as a framework to develop the two analytical chapters that concern the discursive construction of women's entrepreneurial subjectivities. I have allocated the meanings and qualities ascribed to women in two chapters: one the meanings derived from the material produced by international actors/donors in Kosovë. In the second analytical chapter, I have identified and coded meanings that were traced in the interviews with women that participated in this project.

2.5 Researcher's Positionality

My research politics is informed by feminist approaches to doing research that reject positivism as a position of harnessing knowledge and acknowledge one's positionality in the process of knowledge production. I am aware that my interpretation and knowledge production is partial and situated as Haraway (1998) argued. Therefore, my research and the interpretation of the findings are built through a dialogue between my social, ideological locations, and my encounter with the subject of this study and my theoretical scholarship.

This thesis is an attempt to do what Lather (1986) and Wickramasinghe (2010) call "research praxis" which seeks the infusion of theory with the practice of feminist research activism (p.8). My positionality is informed by my personal experience as an activist of gender equality and social justice and as a professional who has worked in the civil society in Kosovë for more than six years. On the one hand, I have been an "insider" to the implementation of gender and development policies as a civil society worker in several women led NGOs. On the other hand, I have been an "outsider" to them by engaging in radical social initiatives that pose critiques to

neoliberal solutions for gender equality, worker's condition and racism in Kosovë. My specific position and the interplay between my identities have informed my research interest for this specific project which blur the boundaries between insider/outsider, forming a specific location for me as a researcher (Subedi, 2006). It was in my discontent in how donors approached women's economic empowerment, gender equality in Kosovë and the precarity of NGOs that I became interested in critically approaching this field. Additionally, being a Kosovar Albanian woman, I try to reflect on my intersecting identities that constitute my social position (Crenshaw, 1991) and directed the concerns that preoccupied me.

My positionality in this research is also informed by my ideological affiliation, which positions this research as a critique of the neoliberal approach that has dominated gender equality and women's economic empowerment. I subscribe to this position, aware of it and engage in a continuous attempt to pay careful attention and allow for the fieldwork to guide the analysis, without compromising the validity of the findings. I do not subscribe to any idea of objectivity in research as I, using critical discourse analysis as a methodological approach, am aware of the interpretative power that lies on my shoulders. Nonetheless, I should note that I do not make direct moral claims on the rightness or wrongness of the discourses that are the subject of my thesis. I rather focus on analyzing and understanding their underlying rationality, what they represent and what they seek to create as a social reality.

2.6 Chapter Overview

Next chapters are organized as following: Chapter 3 presents the key debates and contribution in gender and development agenda from a historical perspective, with special attention to Sydney Calkin's feminist critique of human capital. Further, the literature review also covers debates that analyze the emergence and role of NGOs within the gender and development agenda. Chapter 4 will provide background information for the context of Kosova, focusing in the post-war period. Here, I map the key actors that came after the intervention in 1999 as part of the reconstructing of Kosova, the spread of NGO sector and gender mainstreaming within the UNMIK administration.

Chapter 5 analyzes the discourses produced by key international actors in Kosovë regarding gender and economic empowerment. Foucusing on discourses around women, I analyze the dominant assumptions and the ideological rationales that fed certain definitions, arguing that

right after the intervention women were presented heavily as victims. Such definition shifted towards the empowerability approach that sought to construct women as entrepreneurial beings. Chapter 6 analyzes how local NGOs bargain with certain donors agendas and how they understand women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship in relation to their gender equality agenda.

3 Literature Review

This study seeks to understand what subjectivities were envisioned and simultaneously produced within the gender equality and development agenda in Kosovë by the key international actors and local organizations since the international intervention. In line with this research aim, I review the literature that discusses the effects and rationales behind the key paradigms on women's role in development since the 1970s. I focus on scholarship that traces the rise of the term empowerment within these paradigms, the shifts, and the implications of such change through reviewing debates that arose amongst scholars these past decades. Since most of the studies on gender and development consider the role of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) within this agenda, I will then turn my attention to discussions on the relationship between NGOs, in gender equality, women empowerment and development. Building upon my scope of research which centralizes NGOs as actors in the development agenda in Kosovë, I concentrate on the debates that position these agendas within the neoliberal and international governance in post-socialist and post-conflictual contexts.

3.1 Women's economic empowerment within the Development Paradigm

Women's economic empowerment and gender equality has gained significant recognition in the development agenda, becoming a buzzword through which development policies are designed. Despite marking a victory for feminists and women's rights advocates, since the 1970s these two concepts have become an institutionalized discourse since the 1980s surfacing more and more in development discourses and actors (Chant & Sweetman, 2012; Calkin, 2018; Michaeli, 2021). The concept of empowerment, in its institutional usage by the international development organizations became a rhetoric on the poverty reduction discourse by international development organizations (Calvés, 2009). Nonetheless, the history of bringing women and gender into attention reveals the history of resistances of women advocates to perceive women as passive recipients' development and to put them in analysis and policies. Most of the scholars associate the emergence of the discourse on Women in Development (WID) with the UN Decade for Women (1976-1985). It came out as an opposition to the "Top-down" models in development programs designed by international entities of the time. WID has predominantly been linked with participation advocating for inclusion of women into the existing development structures and processes (Buckley, 2000; Sirodenko, 2006). Deriving from liberal stances, the WID paradigm emphasized the need for integration of women in the labour market and the

equal opportunity approach and targeted them as means of development (Razavi & Miller, 1995). By doing so it introduced women's participation in the formal economy to be of a positive effect in terms of economic growth and productivity. Of a central influence was Ester Boserup's book, Woman's Role in Economic Development (1970), which was the first book to systematically show how the structural transformation in agriculture and industry and economic development affected men and women differently. From a modernist approach, her gendered analysis of market-oriented reforms undertaken by so-called developing countries, which called for greater inclusion of women in policies targeting economic development, later inspired institutional attention on women's role in development interventions (Boserup, 1970; Calkin, 2018). In its institutionalized form, WID advocated for more integrationist policies in favor of women in development. Such an approach would mark a paradigm shift in women's role presenting them as utilizable resources of development in contrast to which previously was included in passive terms, perceiving women as recipients of welfare provisions and in reference to their reproductive labour (Moser, 1993). Nonetheless, the WID approach received numerous critics by scholars that pointed out the narrow and essentialist approach on gendered dynamics as tackled by the proponents of WID. Irene Tinker criticized the reductionist approach of the WID approach, stressing out that focusing in the integration of women into the development process overlooks the complexities of gender inequalities, by essentializing the category of women and neglecting other intersecting identities such as race and class that influence gendered subjectivities (Tinker, 1990). Another critical contribution has been provided by Sylvia Chant and Caroline Sweetman who have highlighted that the WID approach misses to recognize the care labour in its analysis (Chant & Sweetman, 2012).

Women in Development was later transformed into the Gender and Development (GAD) framework as a result of broad criticisms that it received from feminists and scholars. Concerns have addressed the issue of essentialism and co-option of feminist causes for other purposes, such as the interests of the market (Prügl, 2009; Calkin, 2018). In revising WID, GAD moved from emphasizing women as a category of subordination towards employing gender as an analytical tool in analyzing and articulating development policies. Caroline Moser emphasized the contribution of GAD in mainstreaming gender in development programs (Moser, 1989). Similarly, Raewyn Connell and Karen Brock argued the importance of using gender as an analytical tool instead of women as a category in recognizing the diversities amongst women and a broader understanding of the gender dynamics, leaving space for acknowledging the role

men play in such dynamics (Cornwall & Brock, 2005). These contributions offered a broader understanding of power relations, defining gender as a social construct and underlining the need to tackle patriarchal norms and structures in order to combat gender inequalities. In addition, GAD puts more emphasis in empowerment and collective participation. By doing so, GAD puts a stronger emphasis in the involvement of civil society, namely NGOs in this process. GAD aimed to advance women's education, enhance their access to credit, and improve their ability to navigate the legal system. In the long run, the focus was on addressing deep-seated gender ideologies and institutions that perpetuated subordination, which were entrenched in prevailing norms and structures of development governance (Parpart, 1995). Some proponents of WID have expressed concerns about the shift from a clear focus on women to the more ambiguous concept of gender. Meanwhile, others have pointed out that the two frameworks are often conflated, treating women and gender as interchangeable concepts (Baden & Goetz, 1997; Harrison, 1997; Sardenberg, 2007; Jackson & Pearson, 1998).

Notwithstanding their contributions, both WID and GAD attracted a lot of criticism that mainly voiced out the concerns on the co-optation and reduction of radical potential of empowerment within the neoliberal frames which constitutes subjects of empowerment as rational economic actors. Koczberski (1998) discusses the inclusion paradigm as one of the main flaws of Women in Development, which aimed to integrate women into the existing development paradigm, which was Western-centric, male-biased, and otherized the "Third World" subjectivities. Mohanty (1988) criticized the victimization of women in these contexts and denied women their agency, portraying them as oppressed victims. This has become a discussion since the institutionalization of women's economic empowerment has brought about increasing discourse that women play a fundamental role in economic development, which puts women's rights in relation to economic growth, moving away from the feminist cause, which sees empowerment as an end itself.

A branch of critics has perceived this as a co-option of feminism by neoliberalism and market logic (Powell, 2005; Razavi, 2017; Orgad, 2018; Arruzza et al., 2019; Orgad, 2019; Berlanga & Robles, 2020). Critical theorist Nancy Fraser goes on to trace the cultural turn in feminism in the 1990s and the abandonment of structural critique as the gate for this co-optation (Fraser, 2013). Others have argued that it is exactly through co-option and commodification that the globalization of women's economic empowerment was enabled (Berkovitch & Kemp, 2010).

Consequently, women's economic empowerment and gender equality exceeded feminist agendas, and growingly became relevant for economic purposes. This expansion of the dominant discourse on women's economic empowerment has marginalized other non-capitalist alternatives to empowerment (Michaeli, 2021). The neoliberal turn has been denoted as one of the key factors of commodification of women's empowerment. Micheali (2021) notes the neoliberal turn in the women's economic empowerment agenda. For her, this is distinguishable in some key shifts, such as the shift from the collective to the individual, the isolation of women's economic condition from broader feminist causes and demands for the transformation of sociopolitical relations and systems of power.

3.2 A feminist critique of Human Capital in Gender and Development

Further, other post-structuralists such as Sydney Calkin have employed a Foucauldian analytical framework of neoliberal governmentality in interpreting women's economic empowerment and the institutional usage of gender equality as a tool of governance within the current discourse and policy agenda of Gender and Development (Calkin, 2018: 31). They argue that, similarly to the WID and GAD, gender equality as smart economics utilizes gender equality as economically beneficial, but in addition to it, is also used to discipline and create new subjectivities (Peck & Tickell, 2002; Sharma, 2008; Calkin, 2018). They argue that the globalization of women's economic empowerment entails globalization of discourses and practices that do not only respond to women's economic needs; rather, they participate in the articulation of their needs and in the construction of their subjectivities (Ferguson, 2014; Michaeli, 2021). According to Calkin (2018), analyzing gender as a "governing code" through human capital theory enables us to see the ideological source that legitimized new forms of intervention to "develop" women into idealized entrepreneurial subjects, which now go beyond development agendas. Calkin operationalizes human capital developed by Foucault with the figure of homo economicus - a subject of neoliberal governmentality which fundamentally is conceptualized as entrepreneur of oneself. The transition from classical liberalism to neoliberalism, according to Foucault signals a shift between the relations of capital and labour which imagines labour power as capital (Dilts, 2010). The neoliberal homo economicus is "the person who responds systematically to modifications in the variables of the environment, appears precisely as someone manageable, someone who responds systematically to systematic modifications artificially introduced into the environment. *Homo economicus* is defined as someone who is framed as governable. As Foucault states "from being the intangible partner of

laissez-faire, homo oeconomicus now becomes the correlate of a governmentality which will act on the environment and systematically modify its variables" (Foucault, 2008: 270). Foucault claims that human capital theory operates through the relationship between two categories: "innate elements" and other "acquired elements" (Foucault, 2008: 227, cited in Calkin 2018: 56). The inborn qualities that inhere within the laborer are dormant in that they cannot be fully realized without appropriate investment and promotion by external forces; they are "specific attributes, abilities, and natural endowments" that predispose homo economicus to particular kinds of economic behavior (Dilts 2011: 138). The second half of the human capital model, what Foucault refers to as the more "voluntary" aspects that contribute to human capital formation, constitute "acquired elements' '. These investments include education and training that will cultivate the abilities of the "abilities-machine" (Foucault 2008: 229 cited in Calkin, 2018: 56).

In different accounts, human capital theory has been identified as the rationale of biopolitical management of subjects at the level of population, managing the conduct of conduct to elicit behaviors rather than repress them (Repo 2016; Oksala 2011; 2013 cited in Calkin, 2018). The constitutive power of neoliberalism through deployment of gender is of a significant importance for my study as I seek to understand what subjectivities were envisioned and produced through the gender equality and women's economic empowerment agenda in Kosovë from the international actors. Centralizing discourses over women's empowerment, I seek to examine how women are envisioned as self-disciplined individuals (Kunz, 2011), converting them from "rights-bearing subjects" to " talented, and potentially productive agents" (Bexell, 2012: 400). In doing so, I see how entrepreneurialism exceeds its most common association with entrepreneurship as a mechanism of self-employment and is being used as a way of being and way of feeling in the world (Freeman, 2014).

3.3 Nongovernmental Organizations as agents of development and empowerment

As mentioned above, NGOs became specifically important for the role they played in pushing forward development agenda in developing countries. The scholarship on state, international intervention and neoliberal governance extensively pays attention to the role of NGOs in the new aid architecture. Although they are very diverse and complex, including a wide scope of fields, issues and causes they pursue, they are perceived as a unified phenomenon and widely a consequence of the neoliberal governance and international intervention (Bernal & Grewal,

2014). There are several definitions of NGOs that focus on their structure and function. Nevertheless, according to Bernal and Grewal (2014) they can be understood through "an articulation of a negative form: it is defined by something that it is not—in other words, it is assumed to be not the state" (p.7).

Different scholars have paid attention to how NGOs have become significantly important as part of the development agenda and their spread, linking their actorness with the international intervention and aid (Sharma, 2008; Michaeli, 2021). In relation to gender equality, as Bernal and Grewal (2014) argue, it was at the Bejing conference that NGOs emerged as an institutionalized form of representing women's interests. Others have argued that this linkage of NGOs and fostering of the gender equality agenda has been enabled by neoliberalism through the gendered austerity measures which has created a gap in the welfare that NGOs are called in to fill (Bernal & Grewal, 2014). Vis-a-vis the spread of NGOs, authors such as Alvarez have been particularly interested in the "NGO bloom" and the NGOization of the feminist movement (Alvarez, 1999). However, an opposite narrative is surfaced by Elissa Helms's analysis of the women's organizing in Bosna-Herzegovina which argues that the emergence of NGOs have fostered the feminist organizing in Bosna-Herzegovina, claiming a " movementization of NGOs" (Helms, 2014).

Some authors discuss the ways NGOs have become normalized and legitimized as entities in the field of human rights, democratization and development (Fowler, 1991; Kudva, 2005). NGO proponents see them as catalysts of social change as they focus on the disadvantaged groups of society, bringing empowerment, democratization and development. Naila Kabeer for instance has stressed the huge potential of NGOs to be vehicles of promoting gender equality, given their grassroots nature and abilities to work with the communities in articulating and addressing their needs (Kabeer, 1999). Others have argued that NGOs might be of a significant importance in organizational and transformative work and providing the services that the state or the private sector fails to do (Bernal & Grewal, 2014). In the context of developing countries they are also seen as a "critical third or middle sector fostering development of marginalized segments of the population" (Makoba, 2002).

Others have argued that NGOs are new mechanisms through which international agencies push their neoliberal agendas (Petras & Veltmeyer, 2001; Ghodsee, 2004). Despite their role and

power, that as argued, sometimes surpasses that of the state, NGOs are often portrayed as vulnerable entities that rely on funding in order to exist (Powell & Seddon, 1997; Bernal & Grewal, 2014). Such dependency on funds has raised questions and concerns on their ability to push grassroots agendas, as NGOs are perceived to be primarily to be held accountable by the donors, who are at the same time entities that push forward neoliberal agendas (Kligman, 1998; Edwards & Hulme, 1996; Pupavac, 2006). Kligman (1998) further notes that such dependency on foreign aid pushes NGOs to learn and produce whatever is articulated from the donors. Pupavac on the other hand highlights how the dependency has given birth to a sense of competition between NGOs, which has resulted in what she calls the emergence of NGO entrepreneurs in the context of Bosna and Herzegovina (Pupavac, 2006). Similarly to Pupavac, Ghodsee argues that the role of NGOs in the post-socialist contexts has been in favor of development and modernist interventions from the West (Ghodsee, 2004). She contends that the NGO sector has not emerged in a natural way in these contexts, but as a result of external demands. In contrast to such opposition to NGOs' role, Julie Fisher (1998) has argued in favor of NGOs stressing the significance of their contribution in addressing the gendered transition and advocacy for gender responsive policies in all fields.

In contract to liberal approaches that draw a distinct line between the state, market and NGOs, post-structuralist approaches rely on contested state boundaries, transnational connections forged through the globalization of finance and corporations, ambiguous and dynamic constructions of public and private, and a more Foucauldian idea of governmentality that sees continuities between the state and civil society (Bernal & Grewal, 2014). In this line, scholars have argued that the NGOization can be read as products simultaneously new regulatory mechanisms of neoliberal governmentality (Schuller, 2007; Sharma, 2008; Michaeli, 2021).

The rich body of scholarship that is drawn in this literature review informs critical insights that I will take as a departing point in my analysis. I locate my research in Calkin’s understanding of human capital usage within the gender and development paradigm. Nevertheless, in relation to NGOs' role in this new aid architecture, I do not wish to make any conclusions that situate NGOs merely as passive recipients of Western-developed agendas. Rather, analyze their agencies through the deployment of Kandiyoti’s concept of patriarchal bargain. Kandiyoti sees women as subjects with agency that actively employ strategies to position themselves within the system via continuous negotiations (Kandiyoti, 1988). I contend to understand how they

conceptualize and use empowerment, what ideas of women accompany them and to what extent they appropriate or/and negotiate the international development agenda.

4 Introducing the post-war context in Kosovë

In this chapter, I will provide a historical overview of the gendered international intervention and the spread of neoliberal ideology in Kosovë. I will focus my attention on the key actors that came to Kosova, the privatization process that has started and the inclusion of gender into the reconstruction and development policies. In so doing, I visualize power dynamics and priorities that accompanied the interest of the donors, which sheds light on how gender was incorporated into such policies. Also, I will draw attention to the gender governance that was envisioned by international actors and its outputs in terms of policies, focus, and legal mechanisms.

4.1 Kosova under the international administration

As part of Yugoslavia, Kosova enjoyed the status of an autonomous province and occupied the least developed part of the Yugoslav Federation (Héthy, 2000). The autonomy was revoked by Serbian leader Slobodan Milošević in 1989, placing Kosova under the Serbian government. This was met with resistance from Albanians in Kosovo and state violence from the Serbian state, which would escalate after the disintegration of the federation in the 1990s. During that period, in addition to ethnic cleansing and conflicts, Albanians were expelled from jobs, resulting in the emergence of a parallel system in education, healthcare, and the "grey economy," which employed approximately 24,500 people (Héthy, 2000: 10). This situation continued until the start of the war in 1998-1999, which deteriorated the whole social and economic life.

The war in Kosovë ended in June 1999, after the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) bombing of Serbia and the signing of the Kumanova agreement. Following NATO's intervention, Kosova became under direct UN administration through the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovë (UNMIK), which was mandated by UN Security Council Resolution 1244 which defined Kosova as a self-governed territory (Corrin, 2000; Papadimitriou et al., 2007). Characterized by an unprecedented level of power and responsibilities, the UN Mission in Kosova was given the tasks of a state. Its mandate meant the power to exercise administrative functions and reconstruct the social and economic life of a society devastated by war (Korhonen, 2001; Muharremi et al., 2003). With the shifting of intervention into governance in the name of (re)building the state, the UNMIK Administration in Kosovë was focused reconstructing the economy, peacekeeping, spreading the liberal

democracy, and neoliberalism (Chandler, 2010). In 2000 UNMIK set the Joint Interim Administrative Structure which would share the governing responsibilities with the locals (Demekas et al., 2002). Initially, UNMIK was set up with four sections, or "pillars", as follows:
Pillar I: Human Affairs - led by the UN High Comissionier for Refugees
Pillar II: Civil administration -led by the United Nations
Pillar III: Democratization and institution building -led by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE Mission in Kosovë).
Pillar IV: Reconstruction and economic development -led by the European Union (EU).

After the humanitarian emergency ended, the humanitarian affairs pillar ceased to exist as a formal component of UNMIK, reducing the number of pillars to three (Demekas et al., 2002: 2). Through these three pillars, UNMIK paved the path for the new Kosova by reconstructing institutions, introducing a new economic and political system. UNMIK was responsible for the governing of the country until the independence of the Kosova on the 17th of February 2008. After independence the tasks of UNMIK were transferred to the EU who is the biggest donor in the post-war Kosovë, and the EU office in Kosovë (Danielsson, 2016). In September 2012, international supervision ended, and Kosovo became responsible for its own governance, but UNMIK, KFOR, OSCE, and EULEX remained active in the country (Papadimitriou et al., 2007). Also, after the independence, Kosova became a member of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (Danielsson, 2016).

Notwithstanding the pivotal role that the international intervention played in stopping further genocide in Kosova its subsequent governance until the declaration of independence was byzantine and uncertain in its implementation. Despite the widespread support the intervention had among the majority of Kosovars due to the war situation, its mode of governing would be contested in the following years. For some, the international administration and its inner workings were problematic in the sense that the mission in Kosovë had little or no prior knowledge of the context and did not include the community in its policies, failing to communicate their actions and intentions to the local populace, all while enjoying immunity from legal and political accountability from local authorities (Muharremi et al., 2003). Visoka (2012) has argued that the UN mission in Kosovo has institutionalized and legalized unaccountability. Also, others have argued that local communities have little say in designing the policies that will affect their lives, especially in the early stages of governance (Muharremi

et al., 2003; Bickerton, 2007; Barbara, 2008). For instance, Vjosa Dobruna, an Albanian human rights activist, who became part of the UNMIK administration, resigned from her position as the internationals were disregarding the concerns of the local community and the expertise of local experts regarding the new Kosova constitution (Mertus, 2001). Other scholars, such as Piro Rexhepi, (2022) argue that the Euro-American mission in Kosovë was not meant to generate self-governing entities or sovereignty but a subordinate and dependent polity (p. 34). By removing the prerogative of economic self-determination from newly established representative institutions, neoliberal statebuilding undermined the integrity of those institutions, limiting their capacity to contribute to the building of cohesive and stable post-conflict states.

4.2 Privatization as statebuilding

One of the main objectives of the international administration in Kosovë was restructuring the economy (Pugh, 2004; Knudsen, 2010; Jakurti, 2015). This would be translated into the designation of the massive privatization program as the primary strategy for reconstructing Kosova's economy and building the state (Knudsen, 2010). This "international statebuilding" (Pugh et al., 2008) signified the wide range and depth of UNMIK's state powers and its 'top-down 'approach to governance (Richmond, 2011). With regard to privatization, the EU and USAID were the key actors to lead the process (Knudsen, 2010). UNMIK and the Kosovar Provisional Institutions of Self Government shared responsibility for the administration of Kosova, with the local government gradually assuming greater responsibility over various policy areas and UNMIK slowly releasing their own state-building powers. The Ministry of Trade and Industry and its Kosova Business Registration Agency took on the responsibility of registering private businesses (Knudsen, 2010). Pugh (2002) argues that the corrupted elites, various crime dynamics, and a promise for international support for Kosova's independence, enabled the precondition for the spread of the international neoliberal agenda amongst Kosovar institutions and policymaking.

In May 2003, the United Nations issued Regulation No. 2002/12, which established the Kosova Trust Agency under UNMIK to serve as the landlord and trustee of all socially owned property in Kosova (Jakurti, 2015). While privatization is intended to stimulate job creation within a neoliberal framework, it was unlikely to fully compensate for the closure of outdated industries and the loss of industrial jobs, such as coal mining. As a result of having their livelihoods risked,

many workers migrated towards small and medium-sized enterprises in the retail sector, small-scale agriculture, or employment with UNMIK or international NGOs (Pugh, 2004).

4.3 Facilitating self-management through NGOs

In addition to economic reconfiguration, the international administration in Kosovë characterized by an expansion of the presence and importance of NGOs in this process. Encouraged by international actors, NGOs became a central entity that would facilitate the socio-political and economic transition designed for Kosova. In line with the discussions presented in the literature review, such boom-ing can be interpreted as consequence of neoliberal aid regimes and development agendas (Gal & Kligman, 2000; Ghodsee, 2004; Pupavac, 2006; Sharma, 2008; Michaeli, 2021).

The civil society, as was widely conceptualized, was an important actor of the national resistance in Kosovë under the Yugoslav regime. Not necessarily formalized, the civil society was organized on different fronts before the war, focusing on the national liberation of Kosova and the human rights of citizens, and in the late 1980s and 1990s, increasingly addressing women's issues and women's rights (Maliqi, 2001; Farnsworth, 2008). However, after the war, the civil society sector underwent vast changes, becoming increasingly formalized and expanding rapidly towards the current form, as demand and opportunities for their involvement increased. In the absence of a state, NGOs were utilized as the means to recover human capital through education and training and assist in democratization. Very quickly, international actors developed the necessary infrastructure that would normalize NGOs as agents of development and gender equality in Kosovë. They were framed as playing a crucial role in education, women's empowerment, the promotion of entrepreneurship, economic growth, improvement of health, and democratization (World Bank, 2001a). To legalize and regulate their mandate, in 1999, the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG), Bernard Kouchner, signed the first legislation for the registration and functioning of NGOs - Regulation 1999/22 (UNMIK, 1999). The environment created would also influence the nature and scope of activities the majority of organizations would develop and implement, concentrating mostly on reconstruction, peace, democracy, and state-building (Vllasaj, 2020). According to the most recent Index by Kosovar Foundation for Civil Society (KCSF), from 97 NGOs registered in 1999, the number vastly expanded to 775 in 2000, a trend that continued growing almost exponentially, resulting in 9,545 NGOs registered in 2018 (Puka, 2018). Nevertheless, the study

suggests that the number of active organizations (i.e., organizations that are actively engaged in implementing projects and/or activities) is approximately 1,000 (Puka, 2018). In the beginning, the nature of the work of these organizations was focused primarily on social issues, including humanitarian aid, democracy, ethnic minority rights, gender equality, and later, on youth empowerment (Vllasaj, 2020).

In the context of Kosova, I argue that international organizations have had a bigger influence in shaping civil society by giving it unprecedented governance responsibilities due to the lack of a state and the previous decade of parallel structures in Kosovë. The idea of self-governance was not new in the context of Kosova, as it was promoted even within Yugoslavia by its constitution with a social and economic model of self-managing economies, that later was extended to the self-management of the republics and autonomous regions (Bockman, 2011). However, the ideological reasoning behind it has changed greatly since that time. After the international intervention, the promotion of self-governance took on a more neoliberal and capitalist shape to fit the purpose of those promoting it. As Ghodsee argues, self-help and community-based projects in such areas as health care, education, social work, and child and elder care allow the neoliberal state to dismantle its social programs and shift the responsibility for these services to the grassroots (Ghodsee, 2004: 734). Therefore, as I will further argue in the following chapters, they were crucial in developing ideas on women, empowerment, development, and neoliberalism. The dynamics that are evident in terms of what is included and excluded in the practices of NGOs unravel the dynamics of state-building and development policies that were pushed by international organizations in Kosovë after the war.

Illustrative is the investment of international actors in knowledge production that would support the transition into a neoliberal ideology, the promotion of a new economic system, and centralizing Civil Society's role, with a special focus on NGOs, as part of this neoliberal project. Such investment is evident in the book *Anthology of Civil Society* by KCSF, and supported by the EU. Edited by Shkelzen Maliqi (2001) the book, which consisted of ten papers featuring local intellectuals, addressed different aspects of the civil society sector and argued in favor of civil society and NGOs towards a democratizing transition of Kosova. In one of the papers that are featured in the book, Lulzim Peci, a Kosovar intellectual and activist of the civil society discusses the role of the civil society in the economic development of Kosova. He argues in favor of transitioning the economy to a free-market economy that emphasizes entrepreneurship

as a means of such development. Affirming entrepreneurship as a driving force behind economic development, he suggests that civil society organizations can advocate for such a framework, and provide input into its development, and thus engage directly in molding this process and promoting this framework to the local populace (Peci, 2001).

4. 4 Gender under International Governance

Gender has been peripheral to international governance in Kosovë. It rather focused in terms of victimization of women subjects that were victims of wartime rape and patriarchal norms or as gender-mainstreaming attempts undertook by special bodies within UNMIK bodies (Corrin, 2003; Krasniqi, 2007). A similar trend would continue even after the declaration of independence. Eli Krasniqi (2014), an Albanian feminist scholar, interprets the history of legal progress in women's rights in Kosovë as a history of the EU's conditionality. In her account, Kosova has made significant steps in advancing the legal architecture, but those steps did not come voluntarily and from below, but more as a response to EU requirements after the war (Krasniqi, 2014).

Framing the gender and development agenda as a matter of emancipation, it is important to reflect on Kosova's socialist past, the state-socialist emancipation of women, and its specificities in Kosovë. After 1946, women in Yugoslavia were granted full citizenship and perceived as equally representative of the working people (Zaharijević, 2015: 95). Under the socialist regime, the woman's question was treated as integral to the class struggle, and consequently a resolved issue after the victory of socialism (Sklevicky, 1989; Zaharijević, 2015) The international actors installed a different approach to emancipating women in Kosovë, if comparing it to the state-socialist Yugoslavia, particularly in terms of employment. While the methods used by international actors to channel the emancipation of Albanians, such as reducing their fertility rate and illiteracy, resembled the racializing policies of Yugoslavia (Reeves, 1990; Krasniqi, 2021; Rexhepi, 2022), the approach to women's economic activation was slightly different. Emancipation through labor held primary importance in the state socialist regime, while care labor was recognized and socialized (Fodor, 2004; Ghodsee & Mead, 2018). The Yugoslav model emphasized job security, welfare services, and social contributions as crucial features of the system (Potkonjak & Škokić, 2013; Bonfiglioli, 2015). However, in the post-war context, international actors, with firm advice from the World Bank, introduced austerity measures in exchange for radical marketization (Mustafa, 2020: 97). In contrast to the

job security and other social benefits provided through the workplace, international actors promoted women's empowerment in a precarious market economy, which required flexibility and the re-privatization of certain care services.

Right after the end of the war, the attention of internationals was focused on the survivors of wartime rape, women's education and their political and economic empowerment within emergency actions (Corrin, 2000). One immediate effect of the international intervention was the establishment of the Kosovo Women's Initiative (KWI) in 1999 by the UNHCR, which was managed during that time by Oxfam (Kalungu-Banda, 2004). The U.S. Department of State granted initial funding of US$10 million to the UNHCR, which was used to support the KWI (Baker & Haug, 2002). The goal of the KWI was to mobilize and empower women, particularly those affected by war, to rebuild their lives and become agents of change by raising awareness, building networks, and promoting gender equity in government and civil society - all with KWI support (Baker & Haug, 2002).

After the end of the emergency state, gender gradually entered the rhetoric of UNMIK within the gender mainstreaming agenda. Divergent and sometimes conflicting agendas and perspectives highlight the ongoing tensions between international and local needs and interests, as well as between short-term crisis aid and long-term development planning. Various official international actors, including those associated with UNIFEM, KWI, and UNMIK (Gender Affairs), grappled with these tensions to different degrees of success. One of the main challenges in relation to gender was the isolation of the gender agenda within the UNMIK administration.

One of the main focuses of UNMIK in Kosovë was the development of a legal architecture that would comply with their vision for the future of Kosova. In 2000, UNMIK started drafting a new Criminal Code which would include sexual, domestic violence, and juvenile justice (UNMIK, 2000). Nonetheless, the poor functioning of courts would not result in favour of women (Corrin, 2000). As part of UNMIK, the Gender Advisory Unit was established to advise UNMIK structures on gender issues (Corrin, 2001: 86). This later became the Office for Gender Affairs and a focal point for gender mainstreaming within the UNMIK structures. In response to the lack of coordination and integration of local women's groups in the reconstruction process, the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) initiated the Gender Taskforce as

a multi-agency group to mainstream gender in the programs that were being implemented (UNIFEM, 2000; Corrin, 2001). Through forums and programs, UNIFEM effectively integrated its initial mainstreaming mandate, bringing together UNMIK pillars and agency leaders (UNIFEM, 2000). With the enforcement of the Constitutional Framework for Provisional Self-Government, signed by the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations in May 2001 (UNMIK, 2001), gender became a requirement for institutions with the introduction of gender quotas.

In line with the gender mainstreaming agenda, in 2004, the Assembly of Kosova adopted a a Law on Gender Equality, which presented gender equality as a fundamental value for the democratic development of Kosova (UNMIK, 2004). Along with the Law, the Ombudsperson Office established a specialized unit on gender equality. In the same year, the creation of the Office for Gender Equality (later renamed the Agency for Gender Equality, AGE) took place within the Office of the Prime Minister. Additionally, both national and local institutions established a Gender Equality Officer.

After gaining independence in 2008, Kosova continued on its path to advance the legal foundation that promotes gender equality by incorporating international legal instruments on human rights into the Constitution. As part of the Stabilization and Association with the European Union, Kosova has committed to advancing its legislation and aligning it with that of the EU (European Commission, 2014). Notable to mention is the adoption of the Labour Law in 2010, a new Law on Gender Equality and the Law on Protection from Discrimination in 2015 (Official Gazette of RKS, 2023). However, criticism arose regarding the insufficient implementation of the Law on Gender Equality, particularly concerning women's political participation, leading to a demand for a national program that aligns with the EU Gender Equality Acquis (Zymberi, 2017). In 2014, under the leadership of the Agency on Gender Equality and in collaboration with civil society, UN Women (the successor of UNIFEM), and the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR), the government of Kosova approved an Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325. This plan was designed for the period from 2013 onward (Injac et al., 2014).

However, it is important to note that despite the legal progress, women still do not enjoy equal treatment in practice as prescribed by law. In terms of labour and non-discrimination, women

continue to occupy lower positions in the labour market and be subject to multiple forms of discrimination (Banjska et al., 2022). It is estimated that women's participation in the labor market remains low, with only 17.9% of them participating (ASK, 2022). The number is even lower for women business owners, who comprise approximately 10% of all owners (Mehmeti et al., 2017). Furthermore, the number of women willing to start a business is also low, at 28% (Luzha, 2023).

To conclude, Kosova has undergone significant changes following the international intervention. After installing the UNMIK and putting Kosova into autonomous self-governance, international actors invested in importing the market economy system and building the necessary environment to foster the transitioning process. A large part of this investment included the privatization process, the setting of a new Western model of democracy, and the stimulation of the NGO sector, which were instrumental to constructing a new human capital. In this process, gender did not receive much substantial attention in terms of advancing gender equality. As I will argue above, gender issues were either used to otherize the Kosovar population or to promote market growth.

5. Kosovar Women under the gaze of International Actors: From Victims to Entrepreneurs

In this chapter, I trace shifts in the discursive work of international actors in constructing women's subjectivities in post-war Kosovë. After identifying the key actors in the previous sections, I map the common threads of discourse employed by them to understand how Kosovar women were portrayed, the underlying assumptions, and the purpose behind these portrayals. Although there were conflicting meanings in these representations, I argue that initially, women were predominantly portrayed as victims. However, a competing portrayal of women as empowerable subjects emerged over time, presenting them as having the potential for entrepreneurship. I argue that investment in women's economic empowerment was initially seen as a means to ensure post-war stability. Nevertheless, as reconstruction work took precedence, development and economic growth became priorities. Despite these changes, the common denominator in both discourses is the relationality of women's economic empowerment, constructing women as catalysts for something external to them and making their empowerment a means rather than an end of these policies.

The first years after the international intervention were focused on emergency measures, such as security and preventing potential conflicts in the territory of Kosovë. The key international actors were focused on rebuilding the political and socio-economic life that was destroyed during the war. Although the transition from intervention to governance is not clearly defined, I use strategic documents, policy papers and research produced after the end of the war in the second half of 1999 to signal the beginning of international governance. The documents analyzed in this thesis suggest that this process was built upon a male-centric approach that marginalized and othered women, defining them through their passivity and vulnerability. I do not claim that all actors had a uniform approach. There were nuances and changes in different actors' approaches to the issue of women and gender analysis, which will be highlighted throughout the analysis. Nonetheless, all the documents point to a similar path, ultimately portraying women as self-governing, entrepreneurial subjects.

I divide this chapter into four sections, which present specific, distinguishable features of the portrait of women and the changes throughout the years. The chapter starts by introducing the emerging discourses over productivity and growth after the war as a pathway to reconstruction

and democratization. I discuss here how the victimhood of Kosovar women is constructed in the knowledge produced by international actors, producing them as the losers of the war and a monolithic group. Then I move on to discuss how women became increasingly perceived as untapped human capital and as capable of being activated for the development and reconstruction of Kosova. Next, I see what kind of traits and bargains were employed to mobilize the desire for entrepreneurship amongst Kosovar women. Finally, I locate the modernist discourse as an underlining approach to the whole discourse that was imported by international actors.

5.1 Emerging discourses on the market citizen

I start the analysis by pointing out some of the emerging discourses in 2000 that informed the human capital approach in development work in Kosovë. I explore how international actors introduced a new understanding of subjectivity and the linkages they built between education policies, development, and economic growth. The identification of the emergence of a new definition of citizenship sheds light on the gendering of this citizenship and shapes the gender equality agenda in post-war period.

International actors, along with the production of a new vision for Kosova, generated the necessary discourses to facilitate the transition to a market economy. By the beginning of international governance and the signal of the transition, the production of strategic plans, policy papers, and research in Kosovë flourished. This material was mainly authored by international experts and researchers, with little involvement of local community and experts. Key actors that produced gendered analysis and gender-sensitive policies were UNMIK, with UNIFEM as the focal point for gender issues, UNDP, UNHCR, the World Bank, the ILO, and the EU. Some of the foundational ideas relevant for the purposes of this thesis are presented and analyzed throughout the chapter.

The key strategic documents that guided the trajectory of Kosova announced privatization and stimulation of entrepreneurship as key vehicles that would enable the successful establishment of a market economy and rebuilding of human capital. The first major document to set the guidelines for this reconstruction is the technical paper titled "Kosovo: Economic and Social Reforms for Peace and Reconciliation", published by the World Bank (World Bank, 2001). In it, the World Bank outlines a set of institutional, economic, and social changes and policies

necessary for the transition of Kosova. The paper assesses the post-war situation and highlights key reform areas on the economic and social policy agenda. In the field of economic reforms, an immediate need for reforms that promote the growth of private, small, and medium enterprises, and facilitate the transfer of viable public enterprises into private ownership is presented (World Bank, 2001). The social policy section of the paper stresses the critical role of addressing human capital for the new market economy through a reformed educational system. The World Bank sets the goal for Kosova to achieve prosperity and progress similar to other countries that have transitioned to a market economy. Notably, education emerges as a strong factor in the paper, which goes beyond the reconstruction of the destroyed education system and underscores the need for education that prepares future generations for the emerging market economy (World Bank, 2001). This correlation establishes a positive relationship between education and economic revival and introduces a new vision of the new labour market.

> *Education and political authorities in Kosovo and the donor community should not lose sight in the short term of the unique opportunity that is being presented to build a modern and responsive educational system that is compatible with a new economic environment and with European legislation, policies, governance and institutions, as well as content and performance standards (World Bank, 2001a: 112).*

In the above quote, the devastation of the economy caused by the last war is presented as a unique opportunity for international actors to rebuild a new and transformed system that resembles European Union standards. Plainly, the World Bank seeks to draw a clear distinction between the old and new systems, yet to be built. The picture entails a multisectorial intervention that puts economic interests at the forefront, centralizing the need to rebuild denuded human capital (World Bank, 2001a). The paper activates the human capital paradigm to shift the focus to human bodies as the resources that need to be harnessed for development. Here and throughout the whole paper, education is utilized as a means to activate the underdeveloped human potential for production in the service of the new market economy. By doing so, the World Bank manufactures standards for what is developed through the experience of the European Union standards, which entail certain “developed countries”. By using its discursive power (Escobar, 1995) the World Bank, in concert with the European Unionm hegemonized the discourse, posing modernization and privatization as pathways for the reconstruction of Kosova.

In line with the imagination of this new system, the discursive work and the praxis redefined public space through the reproduction of male normativity, which centered the male *homo economicus* while positioning women at the margins of the economy and political life. This is evident also in the use of the image of women as victims and mothers in the campaigns that promoted new the standards that international institutions designed for Kosova (Krasniqi, 2007). The new emerging Kosovar *homo economicus* is what Foucault understood as "an entrepreneur, an entrepreneur of himself... being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of [his] earnings" (Foucault, 2008: 226). This new subject is represented in gender-neutral terms, authorizing a gendered analysis in relation to victimhood, rape and poverty. Furthermore, this is done through a strict division of the functions of productive and reproductive labor for development and growth. What comes to be recognized as the productive force of the economy is the labor performed in the labor market. Reproductive labor was not perceived as part of active participation in the economy. Importantly, the male-centric approach was evident not only in the envisioning of the economy but also in the fact that those who designed the state-building of Kosova were mainly men, at the local and international level (Farnsworth, 2011; Holzner, 2021). In the discourse of the World Bank, Kosovar citizens appeared in terms of human capital, with references made directly to their productivity in economic growth.

In slight contrast to the World Bank, the approach offered by UNDP in its *Human Development Report: Building Bridges to a Better Future* offers a broader understanding of the relationship between humans and development. UNDP's approach attempts to not reduce citizens *verbatim* to economic vehicles, but attempts to see how development works for humans. In its Human Development Reports, UNDP considers a broader conceptualization of development, allowing for a more meaningful inclusion of the betterment of the livelihoods of communities as part of the picture (UNDP, 2002; 2004). Notwithstanding its claim to centralize people's experiences, what is evident in this text is the othering and assumed passivity that surround the Kosovar. For instance, the Human Development report named "The Rise of the Citizen: Challenges and Choices," published in 2004, is problematic. In its title, the report suggests that the citizen is being constructed through and along with the intervention, erasing the political consciousness of Kosovars prior to the war. Such perspective accompanies the whole text, which fails to

encompass a broader understanding of Kosovar's experiences and falls into the human capital approach, which envisions citizens in relation to their productivity.

> *Investing in education is important to the future of Kosovo. This is especially true given the young age of its population. Although there already is strong potential that can be tapped for Kosovo's growth, at the same time such capacity should not be over-estimated or taken for granted (UNDP, 2002: 7)*

The above extract speaks of a similar vein as the language employed by the World Bank. Here, a stronger emphasis is put on youth and its "untapped" potential for economic growth. Following the similar tone of urgency that can be traced in the World Bank's discourse, it recognizes specific groups as engines for the growth of Kosova. Utilizing the human capital lens, UNDP warns of the labour potential that can be harnessed but nonetheless remains cautious about how these capacities are governed. Linking human abilities with governance, UNDP assumes that these potentials are underdeveloped and need to be cultivated in order for them to be productive for development. The qualities that described here are what Foucault (2008) called "acquired elements" of the human capital formation that are dependent on external investment.

The above analyzed documents, in concert with other parallel discourses, suggest that a new vocabulary linking citizenship with productivity was introduced through the importation of institutionalized conceptualizations developed in the West. In doing so, they relied upon and developed certain gendered imaginaries of citizenship, which were becoming increasingly linked with the market, evoking what Schild (2002) calls "market citizen". Reconstruction and recovery became increasingly linked with economic benefits, and the individual surfaced more and more. I argue that the promotion of self-regulation was not merely linked with the lack of a state but mirrored the post-Washington era and the consolidation of neoliberalism as the hegemonic ideology in the West. The post-Washington Consensus marked an expansion of the marketization of development agenda with the promotion of privatization, of state enterprises, efficiency of the free market, and austerity measures (Babb, 2013; Calkin, 2018). Governed by neoliberal thinking, the interventions that developed from these became market-oriented, presenting employment as the solution to all other structural problems, such as inequality.

5.2 The discursive construction of Kosovar women as victims

In this section, I focus on analyzing the key features that constitute Kosovar women in the knowledge produced in the early years of intervention. I examine how international actors' post-war content identified and produced women through their victimhood, vulnerability, and exclusions. As I argue below, the construction of their vulnerability has contributed to the marginalization of Kosovar women in the process of state-building. Nevertheless, such conceptualization was not hermetically closed, which has allowed the possibility for women to expand their identity through the incentivization of entrepreneurial potential.

Kosovar Albanian women played a critical role in the political resistance against Serbia and the organization of political life (Krasniqi, 2007). They have also been key players in civil society, informing grassroots intervention and different forms of civil resistance (Farnsworth, 2008). Nevertheless, despite the active participation of women in important political and economic phases prior to, during, and after the war, international governance pushed them aside discursively and in the official state-building process (Krasniqi, 2007; Farnsworth, 2011). Such othering permeates the key strategic documents produced during that time through the marginalization of women's issues and their portrayal as vulnerable and victimized. Despite the fact that gender-mainstreaming has been circulating within UN since the Bejing Conference, gender equality and women's rights were largely treated as separate sectorial matters under the UN Administration. To illustrate this demarcation, the documents that guided the four pillars of international governance serve as an exemplar in the production of gendered agency and citizenship. What I observe in the strategic papers of the World Bank and the European Union is an envisioning of a male-dominated public sphere. Such an encounter is distinguishable through the usage of gender-neutral language around the issues that appeared to be of high political importance. Gender entered the documents only when discussing exclusion, victimization, and passivity, all of which were attributed to women.

The process of constructing women as an identity group in post-war Kosovë was characterized by several key features. When used interchangeably with women and equated with female bodies, gender came to signify others and victim subjects, presenting them as the absolute losers of the war and victims of Albanian culture. Such othering is illustrative in the documents that captured the socio-economic dimensions of the war and post-war reconstruction. The first report by UNIFEM in 2000, titled "No Safe Place: An Assessment of Violence Against Women

in Kosovo" offered a multidimensional portrayal of women as victims. The report collected and interpreted data that spoke of a worryingly high level of violence against Kosovar women before, during, and after the war. Notwithstanding that the report mainly focused on Albanian Kosovar women, excluding other ethnicities and making Albanian women the face of violence, the report drew conclusions for the whole of Kosovar society. In the sections that tackle domestic violence, the report brought to the forefront traditional gender roles and the normalization of violence as the main causes of domestic violence against women. Despite the findings, the title itself is problematic as it collapses any possibilities of non-violent spaces for women in Kosovë. By doing so, it presented women as the absolute victims of society, resulting in the formation of an emphasized victimhood as a key feature of Kosovar women's identity. Comparably, the International Labour Organization (ILO) in its magazine identified women as the "vulnerable group" in Kosovë, and consequently as a group that is in severe need of help (ILO, 2000: 23). In doing so, these institutions constructed a homogenizing idea of Kosovar women that failed to recognize how different identities and systems of oppression (Crenshaw, 1991) define multiple identities of women.

In contrast to its technical paper introduced earlier, the World Bank made modest gendered analyses in terms of poverty, education, and health in its first poverty assessment produced in 2001. This time, the term "female" was used 15 times in the whole report, and it was used to illustrate poverty, lack of education, and poor reproductive health. The paper was built upon the theory of human capital, which draws a direct link between the economic profits of education and good health. In other cases, gender issues equated with women were addressed mainly within United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Kosovo Women's Initiative, and were guided by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security. UNIFEM, who carried out its initial mainstreaming mandate through various forums as well as through its programs (Corrin, 2003), notwithstanding its broader understanding of gender inequality, falls into the same essentialist, viztimizing discourse. Associated with poverty and violence, gender soon became ascribed to women as a homogeneous group, detaching men from their gendered identity.

Following the findings of UNIFEM, the 2005 World Bank Poverty Assessment used violence against women as an indicator of wellbeing. This marked an increase in women's association

with victimization in the World Bank discourse, which reinforces a dichotomous language where women are portrayed as inherently victimized and men as perpetrators.

> *Domestic violence against women is a serious safety issue. Violence against women by known men is expressed both physically and psychologically. The occurrence of violence within the family may include battering, the sexual abuse of female children, dowry related violence, and marital rape by either a spouse or non-spouse. It is perceived that the incidence of violence may have increased since the conflict and the breakdown of traditional family structures (World Bank, 2005: 43)*

Illustrative of such presence is the above quote, which captures the state of violence against women in Kosovë. In addition to being informative, the inserted quote locates the traditional family as a site where violence against women occurs. The family that is presented here is the heterosexual family, which is conceptualized as an institution where men are inherently the violators and women the victims.

In addition to situating women as victims of domestic violence and rape, with the publication of assessment reports conducted by international experts, Kosovar women, especially Albanian Kosovar women, increasingly became the faces of poverty. While women were taken as a unified category, gender became the key determinant factor of their poverty.

> *The higher incidence of poverty among female-headed households is mostly due to gender differences in sources of income and educational attainment (World Bank, 2005: 61)*

In this quote, as elsewhere in its report, the World Bank gives gender difference a leading edge in explaining the poverty scale among women. The gender difference is used here as a totalizing concept that eclipses nuances and *intra-group* differences between women. In adopting gender difference as an explaining concept, intersections of race, class, religion and other individual or group identities were shadowed. Further, the nominalization becomes important as the agency of women is silenced through the underlining of the effect of gender inequality, which appears as a fact and not a process. As Ghodsee argues, "such an essentialist concept of gender constructs, which has been exported to post-socialist countries constructs women as the natural

and inevitable group of victims in the economic transformation period" (Ghodsee, 2004: 734). Kosovar women were analyzed and invested in through their vulnerability. Their poverty and low levels of education made them vulnerable and hence, more likely to be violated in their families. The centering of poverty as an indicator, tied to the fate of women, is inherently bound up with the development agenda, whose reduction is set as an indicator of economic growth, liberalization, and stability. Such concentration on the woman-victim served to amplify the notion of "Third World Woman" in Kosovë, which is in severe need of saving (Mohanty, 1988). The picture that appears is that of a single face of Kosovar woman, who is essentially poor, uneducated, and victimized by the family and tradition, leaving no space for other modes of being. In so doing, other identities of women collapsed to a large extent in the eyes of the internationals, informing the practices of exclusion of women from decision-making.

In addition to poverty, another indicator that was used to illustrate women's vulnerability in the documents produced by international actors was their poor reproductive health. The reports that captured women's situation in Kosovë and the fields of intervention gave women's health special attention. Linking women's reproductive health and high natal mortalities was highlighted as a key indicator of underdevelopment and poverty in the previously introduced reports produced by the World Bank, UNIFEM, and UNDP. In them, women's reproductive health is linked with low levels of education, and gender difference, with a pale analysis of the racialized experiences of Kosova the Albanian and Roma population under the Former Yugoslavia.

> *Kosovo also exhibits one of the lowest percentages of ante-natal care in pregnant women, and in births attended by a professional. In 1999, 15 percent of pregnant women did not see a health care worker and 20 percent gave birth at home without professional help (World Bank, 2001: 45).*

Through the use of gender difference in the analyses, international actors make gender essentialism and heteronormativity a key guiding approach in their texts. An important dimension of the construction of victimized bodies is the assumed heteronormativity and gender essentialism that guide the analysis. The oppression of women is seen only within heterosexual families, which later translates into policies that reinforce the heterosexual subject. For instance, reports by UNIFEM (2000) and the World Bank (2001b) (2005) construct women's

vulnerability and victimhood in the capacities of heterosexual bodies. In their work, victimhood is tied to reproductive labor, which is seen only in heterosexual relationships. Furthermore, gender is used interchangeably with sex, assuming that all females are women and all women inhabit female bodies (Human Rights Watch, 2000; World Bank, 2001a, 2001b, 2005).

Indeed, the vast majority of Kosovar women suffered disproportionately from the war and occupied a second-class position in comparison to Serbian women and Albanian men (UNIFEM, 2000). This construction of women as victims limits their agency and portrays them as suitable for intervention. Kosovar women are often portrayed as victims, with different sources underscoring the same victimhood narrative, such as wartime rape victims and displaced individuals. Despite assessing the situation of women, which was indeed worsened by the last war, the dominant discourse erases all the differences between Kosovar women, portraying them as a single, collective other (Mohanty, 1988). The victim's identity is explained through neoliberal lenses that reduce the analysis to statistics and participation in a context that is not familiar with this neoliberal rationale.

The work dedicated to including women, primarily as victims, within the development agenda in Kosovë, has been done in a Women in Development (WID) fashion. This means that even though there were incentives and demands to activate women in what counts as public life, perceiving them as beneficiaries of the interventions persisted. This speaks in favor of the construction of a particular portrayal of women whose agency is not formed, and whose problems and needs are identified by international experts (Koczberski, 1998). The positioning of women as powerless subjects feeds the aim of interventions that give those women agency and voice and legitimize them with moral ideas of rightness (Cornwall & Brock, 2006). Ultimately, the discourse surrounding poor and uneducated Kosovar women can be situated within the colonialist discourse that renders them unable to produce their own development knowledge themselves (Mohanty, 1988). In return, they enable a docile subject that is more easily to be constructed as empowerable through new Western-developed standards.

5.3 Positioning women as empowerable subjects

One of the biggest tensions that accompanies the portrayal of Kosovar women in the analyzed documents lies in the contradiction that sees women as the ultimate victims of society, with no illustrated agency on one hand, and as empowerable subjects on the other. Such tension, I argue,

permeates most of the texts that were analyzed, producing women initially as victims but empowerable at the same time. What I trace in the discourses is a diffusion of gender analysis, which is then translated into an increased emphasis on women's potential and a call to utilize their abilities for development. I argue that the discourse on women's empowerability in the first decade served the international mission to reconstruct Kosova on their own terms. In the longer term, empowerability is used to seed the entrepreneurial beings, by appealing to new ways of gaining respectability (Freeman, 2014).

The human capital theory structured and dictated the vast majority of interventions in the socio-economic reconstruction plans early in the 2000s in Kosovë. This is best illustrated by the inclusion of women and a gender perspective in the development agenda. For instance, despite women's ascribed passivity, international actors who served as the main donors tested entrepreneurialism through women immediately after the war, presenting it as a fast injection for reconstruction. In ILO's magazine *World of Work* titled "People on the move: Globalization's impact on migration" published in 2000, a journalistic article declares that after the war "Kosova goes into '*biznes'*" (emphasis mine) (ILO, 2000). The article, authored by journalist Juan Pekmez invokes hope by showcasing the ILO's program, "Start Your Business". Following the story of one of the beneficiaries of the enterprise training program, the article identifies women as a vulnerable group:

> *Knowing what "business plan" means, she will impart this knowledge to others – other women probably, since most of the NGOs have established programmes to help this vulnerable category of the population. (ILO, 2000: 23).*

This quote illustrates the mentality that has been core to the empowerment and training initiatives in post-war Kosova—an assumption that entrepreneurialism is contagious. For the text, it seems to be sufficient to equip some with the adequate, transferable knowledge, and the vulnerable category will get empowered through entrepreneurship. Transferring knowledge about what a "business plan" means, which in the text is clearly presented as something not familiar and external to the subject, is seen as the way to seed entrepreneurialism. Using the pronoun "this" to signify women as a vulnerable group, in addition to implying another solidarity through the market amongst women, activates pity. This becomes even more acute with the tone that permeates the text, which presents vulnerability as a fact and not a process.

Returning to the World Bank, as illustrated earlier, its approach towards women has shifted throughout the years. However, it is important to see how it changed, what enabled this change, and what ideological rationales it signaled. What appeared to be gender-neutral language in World Bank reports in 2001 became increasingly gendered in the following years. Such a shift, I argue was partially marked by the spread of the mainstreaming gender agenda in international governance, and the local resistance from women activists mentioned above. What is interesting to note is that that in the World Bank reports from 2000, empowerment does not appear as a word, although empowerment was already consolidated in World Bank's discourse by the 1990s (Calkin, 2018). It was after the publication of the "World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty" that the institutionalization of "empowerment" entered the reports (Calvés, 2009). Following this publication, in the 2005 "Poverty Assessment: Promoting Opportunity, Security, and Participation for All", empowerment takes a leading role in the discourse. The language becomes explicitly gendered in the following reports that introduce empowerment interventions as a vehicle for transforming women's subjectivities from passivity to productive actors. The report, as illustrated below, builds upon the idea that women's potential is underutilized, which consequently results in gender inequality.

> *This report has shown that not only women in Kosovo are disadvantaged in terms of lower education achievements, high maternal mortality, worse labor market outcomes, and a greater exposure to domestic violence and human trafficking, but also that despite increased representation in formal state institutions, their effective involvement in decision making remains at stake. A legal framework already exists at both elected and non-elected government that promote gender but equity, other direct public measures may need to be considered to raise women's empowerment, including: (i) using public resources to subsidize girl's education and/or tightening links between social assistance and school attendance; (ii) supporting microfinance schemes for women; and (iii) working toward a better representation of women in government leadership positions (World Bank, 2005: 82).*

The quote sees empowerment as increased participation of women in structures that otherwise exclude them. Entrepreneurship and inclusion of women, in addition to being promoted as the new path for the reconstruction of social and economic life, were also presented as a means to

overcome the status of victimhood for women themselves. Their empowerment is used vis-a-vis the powerlessness of women, urging the World Bank and other stakholders to be more responsive to the disadvantaged. The quote and texts illustrated here heavily invest in the idea that women can be empowered if the right skills, education, and opportunities are provided to them. As Barbara Cruikshank has argued, these "empowering" technologies of citizenship regulate specific modes of citizenship (Cruikshank, 1999). According to her, such a logic identifies the untapped capacities of those who are established to be "powerless" and transforms them into vehicles of empowerment, building up new "self-sufficient, active, productive, and participatory citizens" (Cruikshank, 1999: 69). By generating a particular subjectivity, that of a potentially empowered subject, these documents emphasize the need for this subject to be productive, self-maximizing, and a rational entrepreneur who cultivates their own skills in accordance with the needs of the market. Guided by neoliberal thinking, this empowerable subject is consolidated by passing the responsibility for their well-being from institutions to individuals. According to Calkin (2018), such an empowerment discourse reveals the disciplinary functions of human capital theory, which is central to neoliberal governmentality, and relocates empowerment to self-governing subjectivities. This approach transforms the imaginary of human beings, blurring the distinction between labourer and labour, and making the body the capital that needs to be invested in through the acquisition of new and adequate skills (Robeyns, 2006). By investing in skills and training desirable behaviors, women laborers can be transformed into a type of capital.

> *Investments in girls and economic opportunities for women may also improve the efficiency allocation of resources within the economy as well (World Bank, 2005: 62).*

When envisioning the potential groups that would cost less, the key international actors discovered youth and underprivileged groups as bodies to be skilled in, as the above quote illustrates. The capacity-building of these groups is justified by the ideological work that such investment will benefit these groups as well as economic growth, which will inevitably translate into gender equality. In doing so, the international actors share a consensus in how they imagine the woman subject in post-war Kosova and its role in society. Through the rhetoric of empowerability, they suggest that there is agency on the other side, and thanks to the opportunities created by donors, they can be empowered. Such an approach responsibilizes women, implying that those who recognize their own potential constitute the right citizens.

These responsible subjects not only have purposes but also might be loci of desires, a dimension which becomes part of the discourse in the following years. Such purposefulness evokes a world of opportunities where each person has the chance to participate and transform their own realities (Cornwall & Brock, 2005). In addition to being beneficial, women's empowerment seeks to produce subjects that are willing to be marketable (Griffin, 2007). In the context of development, human capital becomes the central focus and the rationale behind other social interventions, such as demands for education and health reforms. This investment does not project women and girls as the primary beneficiaries, but rather the market. In the eyes of the World Bank, and other key international players, economic benefits appear to legitimize the inclusion of women in the formal economy. The integration of "human development" in development policies in Kosovë reflects the consolidation of the post-Washington era, which marks the marketization of the wellbeing and education of the population for the purposes of economic growth (Mahon, 2010).

The concept of empowerability, as employed in the analyzed texts, refers to empowerment through participation in what is presented as productive spheres (Calvés, 2009). This approach reinforces the dichotomous division of the public and private spheres, linking women with the private sphere and, therefore, with passivity. Additionally, the texts invoke an individualized understanding of empowerment, which becomes associated with individual capacity, the maximization of self-interest, opportunity, and economic mobility (Halfon, 2007; Calvés, 2009). Comparably with the Women in Empowerment paradigm, the mainstream development discourse in Kosovë situates women as distant from the labor market, not recognizing care and social reproductive labor as labor. Further, it legitimizes women’s empowerment through the rationality of growth, which would alleviate poverty and contribute to development.

5.3.1 Women as Entrepreneurs

One of the key features of the constructive work in the documents is the close relationship built between women's inactivity and their potential for entrepreneurship. By defining women as having deficient abilities to compete with men in the reconstructing labor market, international actors construct them as entrepreneurs. Even though the empowerment of women becomes increasingly part of the developmental discourse of international actors, economic empowerment dominates the discourse on women. UNIFEM documents present a one-dimensional understanding of empowerment as economic independence. In the shift towards

neoliberalism and a market economy, entrepreneurship is presented as the means to achieve economic empowerment in all the documents, with a stronger emphasis on women. The terms "empowerment" and "economic empowerment" are often used interchangeably, with a focus on economic solutions for women to increase their personal and family wealth. Organizations like UNIFEM and UN Women promote gender equality and women's empowerment, but in their literature, they primarily explore the concept of "economic empowerment" in depth. Women's empowerment, as referenced in their materials, is largely framed in policy terms as removing obstacles to women's economic opportunities (UNIFEM, 2000; UNHCR, 2000; UN Women, 2012). This narrowing of empowerment's meaning and its association with economic participation reflects a neoliberal conception of empowerment that is detached from political, social, and economic power relations.

The neoliberal hegemony that took over the developmentalist discourse on structural adjustments in Kosovë is evident in the promotion of entrepreneurship. In all texts, entrepreneurship eclipses other ways of economic empowerment. Such employment of entrepreneurship is not merely opening small businesses, but rather a process of shaping one's self with the right skills, which, in Foucauldian terms, is the construction of the entrepreneur of the self (Foucault, 2008). Women's entrepreneurship, while presented as the path to empowerment, is only gained through a process of "skilling" that women in Kosovë had to undergo. This entrepreneurial spirit extends to other forms of behaviour.

> *The contribution of women's labor income to family budgets may equip women with opportunities to influence expenditures in ways that are more beneficial to children compared to spending patterns influenced exclusively by male-controlled income (World Bank, 2005: 62)*

It is important to note in this quote that women's economic empowerment is assumed to directly benefit the family, projecting women in relation to their families. As Ghodsee observes, entrepreneurship and microcredit might help women during the transition, but what is crucial here is how these documents legitimize a system that individualizes the responsibility of care, putting it on the shoulders of women (Ghodsee, 2004). Additionally, entrepreneurship is often presented as a way to empower the family, reinforcing the stereotypical portrayal of women's interests in service of something external to them, starting with the family. Such portrayal lies

upon and reinforces the association of women with care, presenting it as inherent in women's biology. In some cases, family is used as a validation of women's motivation to pursue entrepreneurship. Thus, for Kosovar women, becoming entrepreneurial subjects means being trapped within the same existing roles and putting them within the context of the family (Pupavac, 2006; MacKenzie, 2009).

In the aftermath of the war, entrepreneurship in Kosovë can be considered a form of compulsory entrepreneurship. Strategic documents, such as those of the Kosovo Women's Initiative and other actors, presented entrepreneurship as the key alternative for recovery for Kosovar women who had just experienced war. Instead of psychotherapeutic rehabilitation and other familiar forms of support, women were presented with a whole new way of becoming an active, self-governing citizen. This goes in line with the neoliberal governmentality, which serves as the driving force behind such a turn to individualism and governing by market rationality (Isserles, 2003).

5.3.2 Entrepreneurship for Rehabilitation and Peace

Women's subjectivities were inevitably produced in concert with strategies to build and maintain peace in Kosovë. As discussed above, women were initially constructed as victims of the war. Nonetheless, with pressure from activists and gender mainstreaming policies, women were also presented as actors in achieving rehabilitation and peace. Their wellbeing was also considered as an indicator of the lack of stability, as women's entrepreneurship was introduced as a tool to help them rehabilitate themselves and their families. With this in mind, in this section I analyze how entrepreneurialism for women was also presented as a means to rehabilitate and maintain peace.

Strategies informing projects on women's empowerment saw women's activation in the labour market as a quick response to their traumatic experiences and stabilization. Women were targeted directly after the war via the creation of the Kosovo Women's Initiative (KWI), a program funded by a $10 million grant from the US government through UNHCR. The idea for KWI originated from the Bosnia Women's Initiative (BWI), which was created in late 1996 by the UNHCR, and the Rwanda Women's Initiative in 1997 (Kalungu-Banda, 2004). The program was developed to provide humanitarian and emergency assistance, with the intention of spending the money very quickly. Such planning dissatisfaction among existing women's

groups in Kosovë that would argue that some NGOs came into existence simply in order to gain access to funds (Corrin, 2003; Kalungu-Banda, 2004). The strategic document of the Kosovo Women's Initiative, for example, highlights that through the provision of microfinance and entrepreneurship opportunities, it aims to:

> *"To help mobilize women throughout Kosovo, with a specific focus on returnee, displaced and war affected women, to assist them and their families in rebuilding their lives and livelihood" (UNHCR, 2000: 3)*

Through its announced objective, as illustrated above, the KWI sought to turn victims of the war into agents of reconstruction. The text builds a direct link between women and their families, reinforcing women's stereotypical role in relation to their families. By presenting women's mobilization as a legitimizing means not only for improving women's livelihoods but also those of their families, KWI naturalizes the link between women's agency and the wellbeing of the family. In addition, designed to be implemented right after the war, training, entrepreneurship, and microfinancing are seen as alternatives to therapy for overcoming the dramatic changes and traumatic experiences of those affected (Baker & Haud, 2002). The document also seems to align with other documents produced around that time, which focused on the prevention of further conflict and reconciliation. This is also reflected in the memories of Agnes Kalungu-Banda, who worked as international staff for the Kosovo Women's Initiative and mentioned that women's economic empowerment was not the primary rationale (Kalungu-Banda, 2004: 32). These entrepreneurial initiatives continued to be used as a tool to enhance women's capabilities to engage in reconstruction and peacekeeping efforts (World Bank, 2005). The usage of entrepreneurship speaks of a similar tone to what MacKenzie (2009) has argued in the case of Sierra Leone where the micro-credit initiatives were designed as a way to "go back to normal" by providing women with financial support. As she argues, such initiatives are built upon the assumption that women are inevitably situated within the nuclear family structures, hence by assisting them, families would be recuperated after the war.

Comparatively, the UN Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace, and Security Agenda (UNSCR 1325) was quickly integrated into UNMIK governance in the field of human rights and peacekeeping, at least rhetorically. UNSCR 1325, passed in 2000, and its subsequent resolutions, such as UNSCR 1820 (2008), UNSCR 1888 (2009a), and UNSCR 1889 (2009b),

not only recognize the gendered consequences of war but also underscore the importance of investing in women's economic empowerment. With the increase of a gender mainstreaming agenda in UN agencies, the EU, and the World Bank, UNSCR 1325 and its subsequent resolutions actively transformed women's role in post-conflictual contexts, linking them increasingly with the economy. Adopted in the Beijing Platform for Action from the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, gender mainstreaming means assessing the gendered implications of any planned action in all areas and at all levels. It aims to ensure that gender is not treated as a separate issue but is mainstreamed at all levels and through all initiatives (UN, 2002).

> *The economic empowerment of women greatly contributes to the effectiveness of post-conflict economic activities and economic growth and leads to improving the quality and social outcomes of economic recovery measures and policies as well as to sustainable development (UNSCR, 2013: 4).*

This quote illustrates how women's economic empowerment is integrated into the peace and women agenda, illustrating the benefits of such empowerment. Following the establishment of gender mainstreaming, women's empowerment and their role in peacekeeping and reconstruction spread within the UNMIK administration, also in response to criticism that women activists in Kosovë expressed to the UN Headquarters. However, they remained in the shadows if mainstream institutionalized discourse and practice. Notwithstanding their presence in the policy recommendations, the representation of women's roles remained problematic and inherently tied to the family (UNSCR, 2000; 2008; 2009a; 2009b). The documents continued to reproduce ideas about womanhood as biologically nurturing and caring. Such a linkage fed the assumption that women's participation in economic life is tied to the betterment of the household economy and society as a whole. Also, using this one-dimensional approach to empowerment as a tool for rehabilitation and peacekeeping ignores other forms of empowerment, such as the psychological and social dimension that are pivotal to be addressed in post-conflictual contexts (Wong, 2003). Assuming that by giving resources automatically empowers women, which in turn helps in activating women's agencies for the good of the community, illustrates the gendered assumptions that feed the neoliberal rationale that permeates the gender, peace, and security agenda.

5.4 Signalling changes: Introducing new (gendered) skills for the new economy

The construction of women's subjectivity in the eyes of international actors is evident through the detection of what can be harnessed from women's abilities. In this section, I argue that since the activation of entrepreneurial women subjects in Kosovë, discourses have focused on harnessing women's innate and voluntary qualities to produce income (Foucault, 2008). The first period of knowledge production that is addressed here concentrates on how "voluntary" qualities were sought to be cultivated through the employment of gendered assumptions about women's capabilities and skills.

The documents produced in the early 2000s signal dramatic changes in the economic system and consequently, in the social and political lives of Kosovars. The texts are surrounded by a panic over discrepancies in the new emerging market demands that were being constructed and the lack of appropriate human capital. Such panic is especially evident in parts that address women's education. Alarm over the low level of women's education is not presented solely as an illustration of women's condition but also to emphasize the need to fill the gaps and activate women as a labor force. Having identified women as lacking the proper skills to respond to the new labor demands, equipping them with these skills becomes a focus of investment for international donors (UNHCR, 2000; World Bank, 2001b; 2005).

While denouncing traditional norms that discriminate against women in Kosovar society, international actors did not present any structural alternatives that would alter the gendered organization of economic, social, and political life. When scanning the problems that explain the post-war situation, they do so by reinforcing a male-centricism in economic life where male skills are seen as the norm around which the economy is reorganized, identifying women as the deviation from such norms. Illustrative is the World Bank's Poverty Assessment in 2005, which states that:

> *One reason for the female labor market disadvantage is the difficulty of women to keep pace with men on earning academic credentials that translate to valuable workplace skills (World Bank, 2005: 64).*

Following this statement, which is also reflected in other analyzed documents, the neoliberal lenses that scan the economy attribute gender inequality in the labor market to women's lack of adequate skills. In doing so, they articulate women as something they are not yet. In order for these women to enter the market, which is seen as the most celebrated way to empower them, they must be equipped with the right market skills and mentalities. Following Foucault's critique of neoliberal human capital, this works through the recognition of certain qualities and the activation of them through skilling once they have been identified as productive (Foucault 2008).

In the case of women's abilities, donors tended to rely on what were perceived as “traditionally” women’s work, to design training programs. The novelty of the skills promoted by the strategic documents and projects implemented does not necessarily translate into escaping stereotypically feminized skills. When the vocational training proposed in these texts is identified, it is dominated by hairdressing salons, knitting and embroidery traditionally performed by women (UNHCR, 2000). Also, the education and skills training of women actively invest in constructing a new rational subject that is pushed towards economic productivity and activity. Such an incentive is built upon a clear division of the private/public which does not recognize the value of reproductive, care, and other labor that women perform within the "private sphere." Such assumed passivity, which is ascribed to women, is used as the starting point that defines it as non-productive and inherently unprofitable. By doing so, women are trained to think differently, not only about their position in society but also about economizing their abilities through their shaping for the purposes of the market. In this way, women are equipped with a fundamental skill, which is to become the entrepreneurs of themselves, capable of turning their abilities into productive assets. The skills also mean that women need to adjust to the market. As they are presented as newcomers in the labor market, they need to adjust their behaviors and rely on specific understandings of their role in the economy. As Calkin argues, here, gender functions as a "governing code" (Calkin, 2018: 4). Here, the interest lies in certain assumptions that inform the approach to how to activate women within the labor market.

Acquiring the right skills became not solely a way to construct the human capital, compatibile with the new market. Skills training has been used to illustrate the progress of women in the labor market and simultaneously construct the entrepreneurial, flexible self. It also came to

present an ideological vehicle that embeds the neoliberal rationality among Kosovar women labourers and aspiring entrepreneurial beings.

5.5 Shifting the paradigm: Mobilizing the desire for entrepreneurship

In this section, I argue that governance by the market logic marked a significant turn after the independence of Kosova, following the greater emphasis on "gender equality as smart economics" agenda promoted by the World Bank, initially in 2007 and then in 2012. Shifting from the injections that dominated the first decade after the intervention, the following years were concentrated on consolidating more of an individualist notion of empowerment. The investment in women's empowerment shifted from what seemed to be an *ad hoc* fashion of peace and state-building, to a clearer focus in pushing women towards entrepreneurship. The entrepreneurial neoliberal subject was to be engineered via continuous discursive and material investment and through the promotion of what Carla Freeman calls a neoliberal respectability (Freeman, 2014). Entrepreneurship is no longer directly linked with the reduction of poverty. Alternatively, it is progressively becoming linked with the empowerment of women individuals and as an integral part of their identity.

After the 2010, there was an increase in the production of strategic plans, policy recommendations, and research that targeted women's employment and entrepreneurship. I have analyzed strategies, policy papers, and research reports produced by international actors in Kosovë that tackle women's entrepreneurship and gender equality in the labour market. It is important to note that during this decade women as a separate category dominated the discourses concerning activation in the labour market and entrepreneurship. Such inflation in knowledge production is concerned primarily with the low participation of women in the labour market and the lower level of women's entrepreneurship (World Bank, 2012; 2014; 2015a; 2015b; UNDP, 16). Thus, I argue, the investment in this part is directed towards mobilizing the desire for entrepreneurship in women. A technical note named "Active Labor Market Programs (ALMPs) in Kosovo Mapping of Non-Public Providers", Technical by the World Bank in 2019 has shown that the promotion of entrepreneurship is the most common type of intervention, followed by skills training (World Bank, 2019a). In these texts, women are no longer portrayed merely as the group that needs to enter entrepreneurship in order to escape poverty. As most of the documents notice, there has been progress in advancing women's rights, and it is implied that through the implemented projects, the poverty amongst them has been reduced. They are

to an increasing extent coming to be portrayed as heavily entrepreneurial potential, turning business as a tool to shape themselves and their community. The expansion of the emphasis on individuals was made in a fashion that tells women that they can become more.

A report from a workshop called "Improving the integration of women in Kosovo's labor market" by the World Bank in 2018, which presents the ongoing preoccupation with the low participation of women in the labour market, projects an interesting understanding of women's agency. As the report diagnoses, women's courage, which is inherently linked with the market, is damaged by external environmental factors. Therefore, it needs to be recuperated. Here, women are constructed as lacking self-esteem, and this is the direct link between them and their low potential to head towards entrepreneurship. The self-help techniques that are invoked in the text speak of an individualized understanding of entrepreneurship.

> *Enhance women's decision-making capacity and self-esteem (e.g., through soft skills training, coaching) (World Bank, 2018: 9).*

Another element that explains the panic over women's inertia towards entrepreneurship in Kosovë is detected in the need to promote role models, which becomes more frequently part of the discourses on women's economic empowerment. The report "Kosovo: Gender Gaps in Education, Health and Economic Opportunities", produced by the World Bank in 2012, cites the shortage of role models as one of the causes of the low number of women in the private sector:

> *Securing women's property rights, establishing skill building programs, and strengthening access to credit will improve women's chances to start up a business while showcasing women's success stories in the media may combat the influence of stereotypes and provide positive example to potential female leaders (World Bank, 2012: 7)*

As the quote pinpoints, working in an enabling labour market is not enough. Women need to have role models to show them the path of success, so it makes it more tangible for them. In so doing, they need figures as illustrators of the class mobility and success. Similarly, the ILO, UNDP, the EU, and UNWomen have focused on the promotion of success stories that would

encourage women to start their entrepreneurship on the promise that they can do it too (ILO, 2010; EU, 2014; 2020; UNDP, 2016; UNWomen, 2017; 2022). The model offered here further individualizes the nature of the structural barriers that organize the gender regime in Kosovë. The entrepreneurial subjects are canonized and turned into sources of inspiration. By doing so they seek to manifacture a logic of comparison and competition between women. Equally important to note is that successful women are called on in this text as the referrals of the promised success through the market. The intention to reconstruct women's subjectives into brave beings, which is posed here as antonymous to their present state of being. However, the majority of Kosovar women are not yet in the seats of business leadership, which as the text suggests, is a goal. Lastly, it is important how success becomes framed in business terms, devaluing other forms of success that are not necessarily gained through the market.

5.5.1 Using strategic flexibility to invoke women's activation in the labour market

> *Promote flexible working arrangements for young women of reproductive age. An ample amount of research shows that flexible working arrangements such as part-time work and working from home contribute to women's attachment to the labour market after childbirth. Extra hour allowances for breastfeeding up to a specific age of the child have also proven to be highly beneficial for both women's participation in the labour market and children's early development. The introduction of such measures in the Labour Law that is currently under discussion, and in other relevant legal provisions, could have a significant impact in reducing the inactivity of young mothers (UNDP, 2016: 44).*

This is one of the key recommendations that repeatedly echoes in the Human Development Report named "Making The Labour Market Work for Women and Youth" produced by UNDP in 2016. One of the key elements that accompany the discourses on women's empowerability is the direct link between their care labour, essentialized with their reproductive abilities, and market work. In its report, UNDP invokes the idea of what Calkin (2018) calls "maternal altruism" which bonds women with their families and naturalizes their care. The above quote seeks to marry women's abilities into translating them into productive ones, without making women sacrifice their care for the family. Care for the family is assumed to take a central role in women's lives, and as something women do not sacrifice. Through it, they reinforce the idea

that women have their primary roles as care providers, which naturalizes the gendered division of labour. Narratives of the "good mother" are not innocent of their political contexts but perform an important legitimizing function for particular economic agendas (Hart, 1997, cited in Calkin, 2018). Such employment of care labour sees women's productive labour just as an extension of their care instinct which is to primarily care for the family. Additionally, representing care labour as a matter for women, collapses the gendered identity of women who is absent in the family portrait. Such division serves the dichotomization of women's and men's natures, whereas men are portrayed as irresponsible and women are perceived as giving and responsible (Cornwall, 2000). A similar approach is evident also in the publications of the World Bank, the EU, and UNWomen, which advocate for the promotion of flexibility as a means to ensure increased participation of women in the labour market (World Bank, 2015a; 2018; 2019a; 2019b; EU, 2014; 2018; UNWomen, 2022). The World Bank's publication "Why Should We Care about Care? The Role of Childcare and Elderly in Kosovo" is an additional illustration of why care labour has become important in the discourses of international institutions (World Bank, 2015a). Framing care labour as a barrier to women's activation in the formal labour market, the report calls for management of it in order to increase women's productivity in the market. Care labour becomes thus a buzzword that permeates a great deal of the documents analyzed. As the below quote exemplifies, its usage is usually in the service of incentivizing women's productivity.

> *Provide schedules that accommodate household and care responsibilities to foster women's participation (The World Bank, 2018: 8).*

The logic of flexibility, which comes to the forefront when referring to activating women in the labour market, has several consequences. Besides being a key mode of neoliberal mentality, as Bourdieu (1998, cited in Freeman, 2014) claims, flexibility signifies the instability of women in the labour market and attributes this to women's innate maternal and care instincts. Another immediate effect of this approach can be detected in the making of female bodies as the faces of flexible jobs, pushing them more towards precarity. Also, crucial for this project is to see how this model is essentialist and exclusionary and hence works to reinforce new hierarchies. By framing women as a stable and unified category, this enterprise fails to consider how intersecting identities and systems of oppression (Crenshaw, 1991) create specific, and yet unstable identities and subjects. The inclusion of race, education, geographic belonging, and

class is rather made in a superficial fashion or to construct a docile, victimized other (Mohanty, 1988).

5.6 Catching-up with the West: Modernist discourse on women's empowerability

The women's empowerability paradigm in Kosovë has been employed to shape a subject that resembles the ideas of empowered women embedded in liberal Western thought. As such, it has produced an antagonistic meaning of Kosovar women's agency, visualizing the woman entrepreneur in advanced neoliberalism as the role model. Consequently, gender and the "progress" of women have been gradually posed as indicators of Kosova's progress towards the "West".

Predominantly, women's passivity is attributed to traditional practices that denied women the ability to express their agency. As such, the traditional values that were identified served as the baseline against which progress had to be evaluated under international governance. The cause of gender inequality is found in Kosovë Albanian culture, and distancing from and embracing new modern values is presented as a safeguard. A large part of the research and assessments produced by the World Bank, UNIFEM, UNDP, and the EU followed a similar paradigm. This put Kosovar women in a transitioning phase, turning them into maneuverable indicators of progress. As Sörensen argued, the term "transition" itself implies that one knows the direction or end state, and a problem here is that since democracy and a market economy are seen as the normative goals, they also set the direction and frame for interpreting the actual political, economic, and social processes, thus mixing the normative and the empirical (Sörensen, 2006: 318). Here, the transition comes to illustrate a state of possibilities. Kosovar women and society as a whole are seen as directed towards progress, which meant abandoning the traditions that kept women inactive and violated. Their empowerment is therefore premised on a modernist discourse that turned women's empowerment into an indicator of progress and, more specifically, of Europeanization. Vjollca Krasniqi (2007) illustrates how international actors have used gendered images about nation-building and development. Through the analysis of the posters that were used to legitimize the new-imposed values, Krasniqi examines how women were portrayed as mothers that nurture the baby-symbolizing Kosova under the governance of international actors. Notably, she argued that international actors invested not only in seeding the desire for Westernization but also in internalizing their inability to govern

themselves without international guidance (Chandler, 2002; Krasniqi, 2007). Such a mentality also permeates gender equality and women's economic empowerment. Notwithstanding the evidence that privatization worsened women's economic situation, privatization was praised as a path for catching up with the West and was presented as unavoidable (Pupavac, 2006).

The linearity proposed in the development language sought to invoke hope and make the neoliberal reforms appealing. How these documents visualized the future, integrating women within the labor market, will inevitably contribute to reconstruction and economic growth (World Bank, 2005; 2008). In such a vision, economic growth is inseparable from progress, claiming that approaching Western models of organizing the economy will advance gender equality.

The language of Europeanization has intensified and became a buzzword that has governed public discourse, especially after the declaration of independence in 2008, both as a conditionality from EU's side and an aspiration articulated from the state of Kosova. In 2014, Kosova signed the Stabilization-Association Agreement with the EU, in which gender equality and women's economic empowerment became important indicators of progress (European Commission, 2015a; 2015b; 2021). The language that described the improvement of women's rights in country reports was simultaneously used as a measure to close the gap between Kosova and becoming European. In each stance, the condition of women's rights and gender equality is mentioned as work in progress, with the EU standards being the norm, and the current condition as a transitional phase to them. In positioning Kosova and its people as work under construction, the gender equality agenda promoted by the EU and other international actors is premised on a modernist approach.

Concluding remarks

To summarize, in this chapter I have identified and analyzed some of the key themes that have accompanied the discursive construction of women as entrepreneurial subjectivities. I have argued that when intervention happened, women were extensively perceived and discursively produced as victims. I argued that the interest in activating women's abilities for production was guided by human capital theory, which used gender assumptions to maximize harnessing women's labour abilities. As I argued, in the first decade of the intervention, women's entrepreneurship is closely tied to reconstruction and state-building. In the decade that followed

the independence, a great deal of the discursive work was accompanied by a panic over women's low levels of entrepreneurship. This, in turn, has resulted in an intensification of policies and incentives that sought to incite a desire for entrepreneurship. This was done by appealing to assumed "inherent qualities" of women. Women's entrepreneurship has not envisioned them as the end beneficiaries, but has reproduced women's relationality with family and community through the market. The approach of gender equality as smart economics portrays market citizenship as a logical and necessary aspect of development, in which market-oriented initiatives can generate equal opportunities and benefits for both women and business (Roberts & Soederberg, 2012). Lastly, the language that is used in these texts, essentializes women, attempting to produce stable subjects, crucial for manufacturing the idealized neoliberal subject.

6. Local bargains: Local NGOs negotiating with the international agendas

In this chapter, I examine how local NGOs understand women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurialism. I focus on examining the competing understandings of the restructuring of the economy and the way international governance treats women's economic empowerment. I highlight some of the areas of discrepancy and negotiation that can be detected in the narratives of the interviewees when analyzed in comparison to discourses produced by international actors. The subjects of this analysis are key NGOs that have played a crucial role in advancing gender equality and development in Kosovë, such as the Kosova Women's Network, the biggest women's NGO and network in Kosovë and the Balkans, the Kosovar Gender Studies Center, Kosova-Women 4 Women, and The Network of Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian Women Organizations of Kosova. In addition to these organizations, I also interviewed the Democracy for Development Institute, as their scope of work is directly linked to the development and women's paradigm. In this study NGOs become specifically important in analyzing the development agenda in Kosovë, as in the absence of the state, NGOs undertook a wide range of responsibilities instead of a state. Such responsibilities included services, non formal education, and knowledge production that are relevant for this thesis.

As argued in the previous chapter, the marketization of women's economic empowerment is a logic that was introduced in Kosovë after the international intervention by international actors in 1999. Such claims raise questions about how this discourse was not only contextualized, but also internalized through the spread of neoliberal ideology. Therefore, to understand how NGOs understand women's market subjectivity, it is important to understand how the local and grassroots are constructed through the hegemony of neoliberal governmentality. I attempt to see this by exploring how women perceive their agency in light of their dependency on external funding and also the trajectory of transitioning to a market economy. It is worth noting that the mode of governance by international actors in Kosovo has received recognition, but it has also raised dissatisfaction and resistance among women activists. Many of the interviewees expressed their concerns about the top-down approach by donors and precarity as the main issues that challenge their agentic actions. As Silliman (1999) argues, the NGOs dependency on external donors plays an important role on what NGOs push forward, sometimes risking pursuing agendas that are put forward by powerful donors.

I argue that the agentic actions of local NGOs in Kosovë depend on their embrace of the hegemonic neoliberal ideology and their level of dependency on external funding. For instance, NGOs report a higher level of independence and a less contrasting approach to neoliberal governance, which seem to express more performed agency. Nicole Farnsworth, Program Director and Lead Researcher of Kosova Women's Network (KWN), tells a story of a continuous resistance of international modes of distributing the money and imagining certain interventions. Being a key player in the field of women's rights, the KWN has progressively gained the power to resist and negotiate the terms of implementing the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda. Farnsworth sheds light on some of the key concerns regarding international governance, which not so rarely has imposed ideas that did not correspond with the vision local women's organizations had on reconciliation, development, and gender equality. In the interview, she highlighted the dynamics of resistance from KWN's side. She recalled one of the cases when Igo Rogova, Executive Director of the KWN, tore the contract because what was added to it did not correspond with their ideas.

> *We were willing to sign the contract, and when she was reading the contract, [she] saw they put three other things on our expected results. She said "these aren't ours." They said "yeah, but it's $150,000, just sign the paper." She said "no, you can't tell us what to do. This isn't in our mission." She stood there in front of the donor, tore up the contract and walked out of the office (Interview with Farnsworth, KWN, March 2023).*

The above extract is just one example of many cases that Farnsworth told me about and that speak of conflicting ideas on certain issues. Criticizing the treatment of women's rights as initially a matter of financial interest, Farnsworth explained that such an approach is because the KWN, a leading NGO and also the umbrella NGO of most of the women's organizations in Kosovë has the responsibility to educate donors (Interview with Farnsworth, KWN, March 2023). A similar approach was expressed by Iliriana Gashi, Executive Director of Kosova-Women 4 Women. In the interview, she expressed a high level of agency, which came partially because they are a well-established organization, and partially because their primary focus is closely aligned with the gender and development agenda, which aligns empowerment with the empowerment of the poor and the marginalized. The organization,which is the successor of Women for Women -International, was founded with the mission to empower these women

economically, with the aim of making them agents of change (Interview with Gashi, KWN, February 2023).

In contrast, Luljeta Demolli, Executive Director of the Kosovar Gender Studies Center (KGSC) spoke from a different position and emphasized a lower potential of small organizations to challenge the donors' approach. Especially when they are in a position of precariaty and rely on their money for survival.

> *In fact, KGSC has done a better job when it did not have any financial support. The advocacy we did for the laws that have been the key pillars in fighting patriarchy in this system was done with no financial support. It is our voluntary work. This is our strategy... what we do without the money of donors. Otherwise, donors come with their own ideas and strategies and we simply perform services for them...maybe around 90% of the work we do is service - service for the donors. There are no other options. We are a small NGO and we did not want to have much [...] It has been difficult because they do not even give you a chance to negotiate." (Interview with Demolli, KGSC, February 2023).*

In the above quote, Demolli discussed the precarity of NGOs such as KGSC which sometimes disables them from negotiating with certain agendas. According to Demolli, the mode of international donors does not see NGOs as separate identities that perform their work based on grassroots needs as identified by these NGOs. On the contrary, they perceive NGOs as outsources that are employed to perform certain services and impose their own ideas and strategies without fully considering the perspective of local organizations. Such an understanding of the power dynamics suggests that the institutionalized gender equality agenda that comes from the donors continues to be a top-down approach. Notwithstanding the limitation of their autonomy by their dependency on external funding, Demolli revealed some of the necessary paths that KGSC employees had to undertake in order to survive. She emphasized that they remained true to their own mission and their feminist values, which is why they persevered even when they went months without receiving salaries. However, she also acknowledged that their commitment to honesty and constructive criticism has kept them a small NGO, as they did not want to compromise their values in exchange for funding. What she described presents a form of bargaining that KGSC does. In the cases where they rely on

the funding, they seem to comply with the terms and agendas that come with these funds, by providing "services" for the donors. On the other hand, they seem to resist and reposition themselves when they have no donors behind their actions.

A similar perspective was also shared by Xhulieta Devolli who works as a Project Manager at Network of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Women's Organizations of Kosova (NRAEWO) Judita Krasniqi, who works as a Researcher and Project Manager at Democracy for Development (D4D). They both spoke of a limited agency of NGOs to negotiate the terms of the implementations of certain agendas in Kosovë. They contended that grassroots ideas that do not comply with the strategies and visions of the donors can be refused, even though they might generate from grassroots needs. This might be because of the way the whole project of the reconstruction of Kosova is done without taking into account the local context and its consequences.

Another important factor that was mentioned in relation to the agency of NGOs goes back to the premises of the Western colonial discourses that have surrounded the intervention in Kosovë, which continue to echo today in the donors' attitude. Luljeta Demolli gives an example of such an approach through the example of privatization that was undertaken by the UNMIK mission, under the lead of the European Union which, according to her, was harmful, especially for women. Another element that causes othering in the process of development that the NGOs feel is claimed to be the modernist approach by the international actors.

> *If you read carefully the recommendation FMN gives, you see that such recommendations are applicable for underdeveloped and poor countries. If you look at the World Bank's approach, you see that they describe Kosova as an underdeveloped and poor country. Similarly, each international organization that comes to Kosovë, in their perception and mission, see Kosova as a poor and an underdeveloped country. This first ...then they also saw Kosova as a muslim country, which has had its consequences in relation with women [...]such articulation, narration and pattern of internationals has not changed (Interview with Demolli, KGSC, February 2023).*

The above quote suggests that situating Kosova as an underdeveloped, poor, and Muslim country plays an important role in how the agency of the locals is exercised. According to

Demolli, Kosova is still perceived as the other by developed Western countries. It is in the reinforcement of othering that is associated with underdevelopment, Islam, and impoverishment that the agency is restrained, legitimizing the takeover by the international actors in the process of reconstruction.

The different perceived levels of agency amongst different NGOs reveal the complexities of the manufacturing of consent (Gramsci, 1971) that came along with the international intervention. I conclude that NGOs agencies can be interpreted as a form of bargaining with the neoliberal regime. Here I rely on Kandiyoti's concept of "patriarchal bargain", which contends that women employ strategies that negotiate, contest, or redefine their position within the system (Kandiyoti, 1988: 286). Recognizing this demonstrated capacity to negotiate, I situate these NGOs as important knowledge producers that reinforce, redefine, and construct specific, contextualized ideas on women's subjectivities and the meaning of labour in the gender equality agenda.

6.1 Gaining independence through the market: The responsibilizing of women

In this section, I will analyze some of the common threads and competing perspectives on the process of privatization and women's entrepreneurship as understood by NGO representatives. Understanding the ways in which NGOs perceive the interrelation between empowerment, women, and gender equality is critical to examining the subjectivities that were constructed following the war in Kosovë. I am particularly interested to see how these discourses resemble or differ from the discourses produced by international donors.

Despite having competing stances on women's entrepreneurship, the participants in this study shared a common understanding of the market-based norms that pervade the discourses and practices of NGOs. Of particular significance is the emphasis on the self-value and respectability of women through the market, which has become a moral stance within the NGOs and has influenced the ways in which empowerment is advocated for in Kosovë. Through an analysis of these varying perspectives, I shed light on the complexities of the post-war reconstruction process and the role of NGOs in shaping it. Building upon Calkin's (2018) feminist critique of human capital theory, I focus my attention on examining what innate qualities are invoked in NGOs discourses that surround women's activation in the labour market and entrepreneurialism.

All of the interviewees univocally centralized economic empowerment as a precondition of gender equality. In their vision, economic independence cultivates awareness and sensibilization of one's self-interests. Such an understanding of awareness through the market goes in line with the stances presented by international actors in the previous chapter, centralizing the emancipatory effect of the market.

> *Economic empowerment is one of the key factors that advances gender equality. We all know, especially us who work, that the more economically empowered a woman is, inevitably she will be more conscious about her rights because it is not the same -as one woman that stays home 24 hours, and the other that goes outside and works. A woman that goes to gatherings, training, she has access to information. She then will be, not only for herself, but will spread the information to the other women and girls as well (Interview with Devolli, NRAEWO, February 2023).*

These are the words of Xhuljeta Devolli, who is directly in charge of implementing projects that enhance Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian women's activation in the labour market. The image of the empowered woman offered by Devolli is that of a financially independent one, active in the labour market and cautious of what is going on with the labour market. In doing so, she envisions the neoliberal subjectivity, which can gain power and agency only through the market. This activation in the labour market overcomes merely the financial independence, totalizing the social aspects of one's life. Interesting here becomes the comparison in the text to invoke desirability amongst women to want employment with the promise of a domino-effect in her life. Positioning waged labour in opposition to unwaged labour, Devolli reproduced the binary that is already constructed within the dominant discourses, equating empowerment with the outside world. Such binarity appeals to waged labour as a matter of social status in addition to economic status, blurring the boundaries between social and economic aspects. This process is characterized by a naturalization of women's care for the others, which is presented as an inevitable consequence of empowerment. Here women are presented as inherently good, which is ascribed as their "innate quality" (Foucault, 2008) whose activation will make women agents of change and the empowerment of other women. Similarly, Luljeta Demolli from the KGSC situated economic empowerment as the key mechanism for women to gain power and autonomy. She linked the importance of economic empowerment with the position of women

in the family, suggesting that Kosovar women are largely dependent on their male family members, who are also in charge of the decision-making process. By highlighting the role finances play in one's life, Demolli implied that economic empowerment is positively linked with the agentic actions women may perform.

> *Aid for marginalized women, who are in fact poor, uneducated women without access to education, without access to finances. [...] Giving assets and knowledge so they can change their lives and become active citizens. Not only to benefit but to also contribute with their entire potential (Interview with Gashi, Februrary 2023).*

In these words, Iliriana Gashi, Executive Director of Kosova-Women 4 Women, repeated the importance that access to capital and education has for women's empowerment. In addition to the above quote, Gashi added the transformative potential of such empowerment, claiming that it directly enables women not only to transform their own lives but also to become active citizens that contribute to society as a whole. Locating the most marginalized as the target of their organization, Gashi follows a similar approach to that of international organizations that see women as disempowered but with the potential to activate their agency through economic empowerment. In a similar vein, Judita Krasniqi from D4D emphasized the power of economic empowerment for women in their lives and for the good of society.

> *We have done a research which tells how much does patriarchy cost which calculated how much it costs to Kosova the inactivity of women in the labour market...if these women would be activated at least in a minimal level this much would be the state benefit...and this much is the loss annually because women are not activated in the labour market (Interview with Krasniqi, D4D, Februrary 2023).*

In addition to highlighting the benefits of women's empowerment, she quantified the loss that Kosova has suffered because of women's inactivity in the labour market. Through the usage of the terms" activation" and "inactivity", the quote draws a sharp line between what is considered beneficial for the state, removing reproductive and care labour. Furthermore, she employs an approach that resembles the WID discourse, which places empowerment vis-a-vis development. The tone that follows this linkage, detectable in other interviews as well, links

such development with the process of state-building as a patriotic contribution that has dominated public discourse in Kosovë since the intervention.

It should be stated that the vocabulary of the participants bears a resemblance to that of the international actors as examined in the previous chapter. Although there is a higher stance of emphasis put in the care labour that asymmetrically burdens women, NGO representatives employ it in contrast to or relation to productive labour.

6.2 Constructing the Restless Working Woman

As argued previously, the discourse on women's empowerability that permeates the vocabulary on women's empowerment and development relies on the activation of women's innate and voluntary qualities (Calkin, 2018). In the case of women's activation in the labour market, it is important to see how NGOs seek to activate voluntary qualities through training, with an assumption that there are some inherent qualities that inhabit all women. Through a dehistoricization of women's association with the domestic sphere, the discourses that advocate for activating women blur the heterogeneity of women's subjectivities. The woman subject is a woman whose identity is shaped through gendered labour, sacrifice and family.

> *Well, I was not a fanatic of the idea that women are more honest in work, but they actually are. When I see that the private sector is more convenient to hire women because she is honest in how she works, clean, she works just like she would do for her own house (Interview with Demolli, KGSC, February 2023).*

The above quote dresses the work ethic with gendered nuances, ascribing honesty to women. Such a stance places women as responsible subjects in contrast to men. Additionally, the statement tends to naturalize women's relationship with the house, implying that women's primary concern is housework and everything external to it comes as an extension of her unpaid labour ethic. Notwithstanding its applicability in the cases the interviewee might have witnessed, such a view essentializes the nature of women, and does not take into account the structural factors that might shape the behaviors of certain women in the workplace and expectations regarding their performance. Thus, according to this logic, women appeal more efficiently to the labour market as they have some innate qualities that men do not have.

Another feature that was distinguishable in the discourses of the interviewees was the linkage of women's interests with the interests of their families.

> *...for women it would be convenient for example to work on Saturdays as their husbands would be able to look after children (Interview with Demolli, KGSC, February 2023)*

The proposed image in the above quote portrays a heterosexual woman positioned in the nuclear family, which becomes the image of the targeted women through labour activation incentives. By centralizing maternal responsibility in the life of a woman, the quote invokes the possibility that women can become breadwinners only if their care responsibilities are not put into question. Further, even when activated it reaffirms women as the margins of the labour market, whose employment is synchronized with the employment of the husband. Another effect of this statement, which was shared by most of the interviewees and was also present in the documents analyzed above, is the invoking of a restless working woman. The woman who is drawn here is a woman who dedicates even her Sundays to working. These women, that are described as having a high level of devotion to their assumed families, are in a sacrificing mode, within the domestic sphere and the labour market.

> *Look, a woman does everything and sacrifices for her husband, her children for them, for those and at the end of the day, nothing. So what I try to do is to tell women that you can do it, and if you work, you are doing this for yourself... Your engagement is much more important than just engagement in the labour market. What I try to tell women is that joining the labour market is not just for monetary reasons but has to do with her position in society because it is not just something that just a man does, and now it is a big deal, it is not. You also, as a woman can earn, invest in your family more or in yourself... you can still do the housework, or you can just leave it, or do it tomorrow... if your duty is to uplift the honor of the family, if that is the case, well this is the new type of honor -the new labour market is the new honor... you have to talk to women in terms that they understand in order to tell them what you want to say and you tell them that, hey, you have to work... (Interview with Krasniqi, D4D, Februrary 2023).*

The above quote invokes an image of the Kosovar woman who does not work for a wage yet, and therefore is disempowered. That woman is a woman who falls within the traditional gender

roles, who performs care and makes sacrifices for the wellbeing of her family. The intervention sought here is to seed a new mentality which sees empowerment not only as a financial independence but also as a way of being. In so doing, the interviewee promoted the entrepreneurial self in broader terms, linking it with social status. The quote introduces verbatim the concept of market-based honor, promoting productivity with respectability, and trying to invoke a desire amongst women to become active in the labour market. The neoliberal respectability inhabits a huge part of the discoursive work in entrepreneurialism, which is concerned with the social status of women (Freeman, 2014).

Notwithstanding the promise that surrounds the economic empowerment of women through entrepreneurship, which is promoted by most of the NGOs, a competing understanding of it sees it as a privilege for a specific group of women.

> *Something that goes unsaid is that women enter the market late, at an age when the possibility of risk is nearly impossible. A woman in her 36th year cannot risk... [women] should start earlier, try earlier, failing, trying, failing as this is how business growth works... And here, for example, a woman in her forties tries to open a small business and undertakes a huge risk, having the family as a burden on the other hand. She does not enjoy the money as she is not a model. The model is a young woman, with a new start as the model is different for women (Interview with Demolli, KGSC, February 2023).*

Locating entrepreneurship as an enterprise of high risk, this quote draws the profile of a successful entrepreneur, associated with young women. Claiming that there is a gender difference in the entrepreneurial models between women and men, the quote favors an earlier turn to entrepreneurship as the way to succeed in this field. Simultaneously, the quote genders risk-awareness, claiming that women, who are at the same time mothers, might have lower chances to risk due to their qualities linked with family life.

> *I was part of this gathering conference in [the] Sirius hotel. And you had women telling women who made it to have a successful business as entrepreneurs. Yeah, success stories. And trust me, that was the most I was about to cry at some point, but then I switched because I have this ability to actually go angry about it instead[...] you cannot*

have someone who had her family's support, her very rich dad, her very open minded whatever, we don't know what goes on on the bedroom, husband telling women that were there, miners 'wives from Mitrovica, that were in front of me. We were listening to them there. They were almost falling asleep, listening to the bullshit of this woman who had the opportunity to study abroad. And what she was telling these women that fight so hard to find a stand and are the wives of miners. [...] They could not connect at all to what she was saying to one of them who was almost falling asleep. And of course, they had to leave early [...] Like, kudos to you, but no, because most of them also hide every step of how they got there because they have this idea that we don't want to be perceived as victims anymore. We made it. [...]And then you have women, miners 'wives, listening to them and be like, we just don't have such opportunities (Interview with Tërshani, KWN, March 2023).

On a contrasting note, the above quote reveals an important feature of the entrepreneurship model: the individualization of women's economic conditions, which puts the burden of success or failure on the shoulders of women. Capturing the story of a typical conference which promoted entrepreneurship in Kosovë, Adelina Tërshani, Program Officer for the Women's Economic Empowerment and Gender Responsive Budgeting in KWN highlights broader problems that need to be addressed and that cannot be done so through the promotion of successful women who had unequal access to resources. She located the entrepreneur as an identity of privileged women. However, that privilege and the lack of it are attributed to the family in this case as well, continuing an understanding of women's status in relation to that of their families. Building upon assumptions about" wives of the miners" experiencing that talk, Tërshani implies that all these women have the capacity and willingness to become entrepreneurs, they just do not have adequate opportunities.

But on the donor approach to economic empowerment projects in Kosovo, and we also speak out against them on many levels also when speaking with donors, because the whole entrepreneurship model doesn't work in Kosovo for multiple, multiple reasons [...] Not every woman is an entrepreneur, I'm sorry, So you're already reaching less than 10% of the population, probably less than 5% of the population that could even attempt to succeed in this global economy of competitiveness (Interview with Farnsworth, KWN, March 2023).

Such an assumption is opposed by Farnsworth, who challenges the entrepreneurial self that is being promoted in the NGO sector as the main path to economic empowerment. Arguing that the entrepreneurship model does not work in Kosovë for systematic reasons, she also challenged the entrepreneurship potential which is presented as being hidden in every woman's body. Challenging this assumption, Farnsworth suggested other approaches might be more effective in reaching a wider group of women and reducing poverty and promoting equality.

Notwithstanding the nuanced understandings of the modalities of women's economic empowerment and its effects, this paradigm seems to dominate the discourses of NGOs on the gender equality and development agenda. Such a paradigm, I have argued, is built upon specific assumptions and fosters new subjectivities that are dependent on the market. The neoliberal subject that inhabits the vocabularies of NGOs is a vulnerable, disempowered woman who at the same time, has qualities that make her profitable for the market and the state. Characterized by altruistic qualities, a high sense of responsibility, and caring for the family, this subject is well-aware of her interests, and with the right training, she will be equipped with the right qualities to become a productive citizen. Similarly, to international actors' discourses, they do not challenge the gendered division of labour, but rather focus on managing it through the promotion of flexibility. In doing so, they ascribe care and emotional labour to women's identity, or what Foucault (2008) has named as "innate qualities".

To conclude, this chapter has analyzed the discourses regarding women, empowerment, and entrepreneurship that circulate amongst local NGOs in Kosovë. The chapter has identified different modalities of agency expressed by NGOs and underlined the role financial dependency plays in this regard. Smaller NGOs have reported lower levels of autonomy and agency, while bigger NGOs tended to express more agentic actions. Regarding the ideas on women and empowerment, the chapter has argued that NGOs positions tend to comply rather than challenge those of international actors. Finally, the chapter concludes that human capital theory tends to inform their discourses and actions. Consequently, international actors through and with local NGOs, are both engaged in the continuous construction of the gendered neoliberal subject.

7 Conclusion

This thesis has analyzed discourses around gender, economic empowerment, and development in post-war Kosovë, arguing that they were employed in concert with the structural adjustment programs to construct a neoliberal regime, and its corresponding neoliberal subjectivities. In tracing the dominant discourses, the thesis has demonstrated that human capital theory has played a crucial role in this process, affirming a new market rationality in the reconstruction and development agenda. Following Calkin's feminist critique of human capital theory, the thesis has argued that gendered assumptions have significantly informed discourses on empowerment and entrepreneurship. Employing a CDA of documents produced by international actors concerning gender and development, the thesis has shown the paradoxes that have accompanied them. Specifically, the thesis has illustrated that to construct the neoliberal subject, international actors negotiated between victimhood and empowerability. On the one hand, women were predominantly portrayed as poor, victims of war, and hostages of the traditional society, whose passiveness was unfavorable for the economy and reconstruction plans. On the other hand, women were increasingly being portrayed as empowerable, and ultimately as bearing entrepreneurial potential. Through constructing this potential, this thesis argues, these discourses have authorized investing in "voluntary qualities" (Foucault, 2008) in women as an efficient way to maximize the benefits of the market economy. The investment in women has heavily relied on the assumed "innate qualities" (Foucault, 2008), which essentialize the category of women and link them with care labour, naturalizing their relationship with the family, their good and sacrificing nature. The thesis has also argued that these documents were surrounded with modernist discourses that created an essentialized, inferior other through the standards of the West (Mohanty, 1988).

Locating the increased influence of NGOs on the development agenda as a product of the new neoliberal aid regime, this thesis also explored the local(ized) understandings of economic empowerment and entrepreneurship. By highlighting how different levels of dependency in donors 'support impact the agency of NGOs, this thesis has concluded that local NGOs tend to conceptualize women's economic empowerment in a similar fashion as international donors. In spite of the fact that not all NGOs seem to endorse entrepreneurship, they encourage women's independence by increasing their dependency on the market. Additionally, embracing

flexibility as the modus operandi of the new economic system, they reinforce similar essentialist ideas about women to make activation in the labour appealing.

This study contributes to the literature on gender and development by bringing empirical data from Kosova as a study site. The thesis has demonstrated that using Calkin's critique of Human Capital Theory further advances the analysis of women's empowerment as part of development paradigm within the context of neoliberal governmentality. Such an approach, as shown in the thesis, allows us to go a step further in the co-optation debates and see how gender is being used to form new market subjectivities. Additionally, I contribute to international intervention studies by analyzing post-intervention policies from a gender perspective. In contrast to the dominant scholarship that locates international governance in Kosovë within the peace and international relations studies, I expand the existing knowledge by approaching it as a new form of neoliberal governmentality that is concerned with the governing of the general conduct (Foucault, 2018, cited in Calkin, 2018). Having in mind the similar fashion of intervention logic in post-conflictual and "democratizing" contexts, the findings can be relevant for developing further knowledge in similar contexts. Lastly, the limitations that have already been discussed, might inspire further research that focuses on specific institutions and might inform comparative analysis.

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Appendix I: The list of the analyzed documents

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Appendix II: The list of the interviewees

Name	Sex	Position	Organization	Location/ Geographic coverage
Adelina Tërshani	F	Program Officer for the Women's Economic Empowerment and Gender Responsive Budgeting	Kosova Women's Network	Prishtinë/National level
Iliriana Gashi	F	Executive Director	Kosova -Women 4 Women	Prishtinë/National level
Judita Krasniqi	F	Researcher/Project Manager	Democracy for Development	Prishtinë/National level
Luljeta Demolli	F	Executive Director	Kosovar Gender Studies Center	Prishtinë/National level
Nicole Farnsworth	F	Program Director/Lead Researcher	Kosova Women's Network	Prishtinë/National level
Xhulieta Devolli	F	Project Manager	the Network of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Women's Organizations of Kosova	Prishtinë/National level