

A Trip to an unfinished state

In June 2013 German and Kosovar students came together at ISPE College in Prishtina in order to test their theoretical knowledge in practice. Surprising impressions and a different view on the own situation is what the participants take home.



The Newborn-Monument is a typographic sculpture that was uncovered on February 17th 2008.

Big jeeps are parking in front of the ISPE College in Prishtina; soldiers are keeping watch in the back part of a seminar room. Major general Volker Halbauer is standing in the front at a speaker's desk and a group of students is listening to him. In a conversation tone, he starts to talk about his family before reporting about his mission: Halbauer has to ensure a safe and secure environment in Kosovo with the help of 5500 soldiers – a task that is not always clear without ambiguity. That is because Halbauer has the impression of living in three different worlds: For him, Kosovo is a country that is de facto independent since 2008. However, it is also a country that is still under the UN resolution 1244 and thus not on its own yet. Thirdly, the Kosovo is a country where a “world of shadows” exists. According to Halbauer, “crime and corruption are a massive problem.”

Halbauer is talking about all of this to an audience that literally comes from different worlds as well: 25 students from ISPE College and 18 students from the Ruprecht-Karls-University in Heidelberg have come together in Prishtina. During the previous weeks the two groups were preparing for the four days they would spend together. They examined the situation in Kosovo, the history of the country and state building dilemmas. Whereas the Kosovar part of the group is personally involved and remembers the war very clearly, most of the German participants know the problems of the country only from books. “We as Germans are responsible to determine what happens to the societies whe-

ment the final judgments of regular courts. “The problem is that the three powers are not in the same level. If the executive decides about other powers there is no rule of law.”

Also the economy of the country is developing slowly despite strong state building activities. The unemployment rate is high and services still account for a high part of the GDP - owing in large part to donor presence in the country. Many are hoping that the accession to the EU will help the country gain prosperity. But until then it is still a long way to go: “The normalization of the relationship between Kosovo and Serbia is crucial. The agreement of April 19th was an important step in this direction,” said Thomas Gnocchi, the Head of the Integration Section in the EU office in Prishtina. According to Gnocchi, it is essential to initiate reform processes in the state: “Corruption goes to high political levels and is endemic. It needs to be tackled.”

Jakup Krasniqi, the president of the Kosovar parliament, is also conscious of the problem. “We are a society in transition. It is difficult to fight corruption without the help of powerful politicians,” he said during his visit at ISPE college. But according to Krasniqi, it is necessary to combat crime and corruption in order to implement rule of law and lay the foundation for the development towards the EU. That the relationships with the Serbs have to improve as well is obvious to Krasniqi: “The time of domination has passed. The future of the people from Balkan is in cooperation.”

But the striking talks with politicians, members of the military and NGO staff are not the only things that the participants will keep in mind. The visits to Prizren and Mitrovica as well as the evenings spent together were memorable. Discovering the cultural differences was interesting for both sides. “We are much more emotional whereas the Germans are very objective and keep their cool,” stated the 19-year-old Atdhe Lila. In the discussions he had observed that the Kosovars based their arguments on what they experienced whereas the German participants used the facts that they have read. For his class mate, the 23-year-old Fitore Osmani, the biggest benefit of the seminar was the collaboration in joint working groups. “I have learned a lot from my Heidelberg project partners about how to conduct a presentation – I didn't expect that,” she said. The German participants on the other hand were able to fill their theoretical constructions with life. “Via the talks with the Kosovar students and the official representatives we were able to obtain a different perspective of the development of the country”, said Dorina Diemer, a student from Heidelberg. Normally, research was often conducted in an “ivory tower” but in Kosovo she had a hands-on experience. “One could even imagine to work there and bring in acquired knowledge professionally.”

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re army forces are deployed,” said Professor Sebastian Harnisch, who organized the field trip together with former NATO chief of staff general Karl-Heinz Lather. According to Harnisch, the gap between theory and practice should be closed by talking to different representatives from politics, military and NGOs. The aim would be to identify the problems still occurring in the course of the state building process in Kosovo.

During the visit of Sami Kurteshi, it became clear that one of the biggest state building problems lies in the field of rule of law. The ombudsman for human rights serves as a mediator between public authorities and the Kosovar people. “We hear many complaints against judiciaries,” he said. Most of them referred to delays in procedures. According to Kurteshi, there are cases with a delay of ten years. Moreover, the state was not willing or able to imple-