

# A SCREAM FOR SELF-DETERMINATION

## Claiming Ownership over Identities in Kosovo

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**Iliriana Banjska**

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<sup>1</sup> This is a picture taken by myself on the 17<sup>th</sup> of February 2012 in Pristina. This day marked the 4<sup>th</sup> celebration of the declaration of independence in Kosovo.

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## *Claiming Ownership over Identities in Kosovo*

Bachelor Thesis Cultural Anthropology 2012

Iliriana Banjska

3494705

Mentor: Gijs Cremers

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Email: [i.banjska@students.uu.nl](mailto:i.banjska@students.uu.nl)

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## Introduction

As the first tunes were being played, the gathered crowd stood up from their chairs. The arms were neatly placed against the bodies, the faces illustrated a formal seriousness. Some sang along, others used merely their ears as an act of participation. It was the Albanian anthem that was being played at the beginning of the fifth commemoration of the death of two demonstrators that lost their lives during a demonstration, one where many others got injured. As this commemoration was organized to show respect to the deceased men and their family members, it served as a uniting force as well. The simple act of singing along to the words of the anthem seemed to send a signal of unity, creating a connection among people of which most did not know each other personally. Anderson's (2006) *imagined community* was visible in the little movie theater that day. Anderson talks about these communities as nation, stating that it "is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson 2006: 6). Within the field of Cultural Anthropology, it has been widely debated what the understanding of the term 'nation' should be. With the creation of the modern Western nation-states, conceptualizing this phenomenon that has come to be one of the prominent identity markers, has been the aim of many scientific research within the social sciences. Dominant in this debate is the question as to what social category makes up a 'nation'. What are the criteria that define who is a member, and who is not?

This thesis, is an examination of the dynamics that come to play in the field of identity formation based on nationality and ethnicity and fits therefore well into this debate. It focuses on the way in which these two identity markers influence the way people perceive themselves in the context of a newly created nation-state, namely Kosovo. Most of the research that has been conducted concerning these processes, focuses on long established states, making the findings somewhat 'theory at hindsight'. These processes are a present reality in the Republic of Kosovo. On February the 17<sup>th</sup> of 2008, Kosovo unilaterally declared its independence from Serbia. This momentous day was the beginning of a state building process in with the new constitution which was supposed to give Kosovo a multi-ethnic character on a political, juridical, and most importantly, social level, with the aim to create national affiliation based on citizenship. With the majority of the population being Albanian, the fact that it was the Albanians who fought a secessionist war against the Serbian state and the objection of the Serbian minority living in Kosovo of the independence of Kosovo, may be serious factors that question the ability of the state of Kosovo to be a source of identification among Albanians.

A group that has been publicly active to challenge different issues concerning these matters is *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* (Movement for SELF-DETERMINATION). Through its official channels,

*Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* presents itself as ‘a community of people that refuse to submit by aiming to achieve and realize the right to self-determination for the people of Kosova (sic)’ (Vetëvendosje n.y: ‘About Us’). Since 2012, they are also Kosovo’s third biggest political parliament in the government, forming a strong oppositional voice not much heard in Kosovo since the constitutional formation of the Kosovo republic. With their 3000 active members who mostly have a background of university studies, this movement represents a quite small intellectual elite (Delafrouz n.y: 9). Even though they claim that they are ‘working to achieve radical social and political changes that will enable respect for human rights, civil rights and social justice for *each and every citizen of Kosova (sic) without discrimination*’ (Vetëvendosje n.y: ‘About Us’). They are often depicted by outsiders as nationalists or extremists who fight for the ‘Albanian cause’. They often organize public meetings, speaking with local citizens about their issues. They have also cooperated in numerous occasions with different parts of civil society in Kosovo. They have in a very thorough way (and still do), used cultural references and old symbolism as a tool in creating a conflicting political identity that represents the “true” Albanian soul (Delafrouz n.y: 9). This means that their rhetoric and actions do show strong nationalistic characteristics. The combination of their critique on the international community’s role in Kosovo and the functioning of the Kosovar government as well as their outspoken ethnic affiliation, makes this group of people a useful research group for the aims of this research. Thus this thesis is a study of the relation between the national identity and ethnic identity among young *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* activists in Kosovo.

I conducted fieldwork from the 29<sup>th</sup> of February until the 11<sup>th</sup> of April 2012 in Kosovo’s capital, Pristina. The choice to stay in Pristina was influenced by the fact that the main offices of the research population, young *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!*, are located there. During this time I was present at the offices every day, for besides being a field worker, I also became an activist. The methods I used in this research are methods that are familiar to the character of qualitative research methods. One of them is also known as ‘hanging around’. This method has highly informal characteristics as it does not include asking direct questions related to the research issues to the informants, but it takes on the form of interacting with them in order to observe how daily interaction may or may not contribute to the formation of these types of identities. The locations where this method was used was at the main offices of *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!*, at different political gatherings of *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* throughout the country, the offices of the student body of *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!*, the homes of several activists, coffeehouses and in different restaurants. The second method that was used is that of participant observation. By taking part in the daily activities, interactions and events of the young activists of *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* in Pristina, I learned the explicit and tacit aspects of their understanding of ethnic and national identity. In practice, this meant that I took part in events organized by *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* as an activist. In this way, I was not only able to

observe how these people actively think and act upon their beliefs on the state-building process in Kosovo and their roles as Albanians herein, but this also got more credibility from my research population and enabled the process of building up rapport. As I am myself an Albanian from Kosovo, me actively participating in the different events also helped to 'prove' my 'Albanianess' and win over the trust of my informants. The third method that was used to obtain data was interviewing. Ten of the Pristina based activists were interviewed. This was done by the way of using the technique of informal interviewing where I followed the lead of the informant but in which I asked occasional questions in order to make sure that some topics relevant to the research were covered. This resulted in none of the interviews being identical to one another, making them unique stories that represented the perspectives and ideas of each of the informants. But the data obtained from each interview were validated by the way of incorporating questions and topics that were specific to one interview into the other. The final method that was used for this research is the collecting of data from textual sources. This means that I have read local news reports, official *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* documents, the constitution of the Republic of Kosovo and the Ahtisaari proposal.

This thesis is presented through five chapters. The first chapter is a theoretical framework in which the concepts central to the theme of the research are explained by the way of placing them in the debate within the field of Cultural Anthropology. The second chapter applies these theories and debates on the case study of this research, namely Kosovo, and forms the context specific theoretical examination of the main themes. This is followed by the chapters forming the empirical chapters in which the data obtained in the field are analyzed and presented. The first of these is chapter three, the central question herein is how official state institutions present the national identity. By answering this question, a comparison can be drawn between how the forces of state institutions try to create the new national state-based identity and how this could effects the way young *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* activists in Kosovo see themselves as citizens of the Republic of Kosovo. This part will be answered in the fourth chapter, thus herein an analysis of the ways in which the activist perceive the new state-base nation identity will be made. The last theoretic chapter is chapter five in which the perceptions of the ethnic Albanian identity among *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* activists will be handled. This thesis will be concluded with a conclusion, literature list and appendixes with different field work material.

# 1. Theoretical Framework

## 1.1 Identity

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The first theoretical roots of the concept identity can be found in psychology. Freud is seen as the founding father of the conceptualization of this phenomenon that ever since has dominated numerous anthropological research as well. Erik Erikson (1968) followed the line of Freud and developed concepts like 'personal identity', 'psychosocial identity' and 'identity crisis'. The most important findings in his research can be summed up as follows; identity is a conscious sense of individual uniqueness, an unconscious striving for a continuity of experience and a solidarity with a group's ideals (Erikson 1968: 208). During these times, primordialist views on identity were dominant. The idea was that identity is something that people have and is consistent. Within the field of anthropology this theoretical approach was represented by the Culture and Personality School with Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead as the most influential scholars<sup>2</sup>. Throughout the years, these ideas were challenged by different authors within the disciplines of anthropology and sociology.

The new doctrine within the studies on identity became that identity is a process rather than a static and natural or biological part of a person's being. The focus switched to the flexible character of identity which in turn influenced the analytical strategies in studying identity, putting the emphasis on the process inherent to identity formation. This shift in the paradigm also affected the way in which anthropologist approached identities based on nationality and ethnicity. Zygmund Bauman (1996) refers to this theoretical shift by stating that the *modern* 'problem of identity' was how to construct an identity and keep it solid and stable, while the *postmodern* 'problem of identity' is primarily how to avoid fixation and keep the options open (Bauman in Hall and Du Gay 1996: 18). The notion that became widely accepted, was that identities are ambiguous and that this ambiguity is connected with a negotiable history and a negotiable cultural content (Eriksen 2002: 73).

Furthermore, identity processes are more and more so regarded as fundamentally dual and compromising aspects of meaning as well as politics in a wide sense (Eriksen 2002: 77). This means that they are symbolic, creating meaning and feelings of belonging for people as well as instruments to be used politically, socially and economically. This type of understanding of identity puts people, the holders of identities, in position where there is a lot of freedom of choice and thus making agency an important factor in how people perceive, express and carry out their identities.

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<sup>2</sup> Yvonne van der Pijl, University of Utrecht, Etniciteit en Nationalisme, Lecture 1 'It's all about identity; van identiteit naar identificaties'. 28-04-2010.

How does this translate to the conception of identities based on nationality and ethnicity? The following sections will present different theoretical approaches of these types of identities with the aim to get a better understanding of how these phenomena have been analyzed and conceptualized in the field of anthropology.

## 1.2 The Nation

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Anthropological literature focusing on the analysis of the nation and concepts that are related to it, usually make a distinction between a 'civic' form of the nation and an 'ethnic' form of it. These two explanations may seem irreconcilable, but as will be shown later, they are two forms that are interconnected and come together in one and the same concept. In order to understand what a nation is, how it is perceived by its members and what kind of political implications defining a nation has, a thorough analysis of how and why these two explanations or faces cannot be seen separately must be made. Smith (1991) argues that the 'civic' model of the nation can be divided into three main domains, namely territorial, political and legal domains.

Firstly, a nation is a predominantly spatial or territorial conception (Smith 1991: 9). In the conception of the nation, this space or territory is not perceived as merely a piece of land but rather as a place where historic memories are born and where 'home' is. The political element in the civic model of the nation entails a unity of institutions, law and political will, forming a community of common political sentiments and purposes, which forms the second domain (Smith 1991: 10). The third and last domain is concurrent with the growing sense of community and unity out of the political unification, that is the growth of a sense of legal equality among the members of that 'community'. This legal equality among the members implies a minimum of reciprocal rights and obligations among them and the correlative exclusion of the 'outsiders' from these same rights and duties (Smith 1991: 10). Merely by analyzing the different implications and assumptions that accompany these formal and institutionalized elements that are supposed to form the nation as a concept, is not sufficient. This concept is a strong interplay of formal/abstract and emotional/symbolic elements making it multi-dimensional not only in its understanding and analysis but also in the perception of its meaning by its members.

It must be stated that postulating the nation by defining it as a civic concept, is a highly Western conception of it; other definitions and conceptualizations of the nation can be found in other parts of the world, models which can be referred to as 'ethnic' models of the nation (Smith: 1991: 11). What sets this model apart from its civic counterpart is its emphasis on a community of birth, kinship and native culture. The nation is first and foremost seen as 'kinship at large'. This means that the members of a particular nation perceive themselves to be part of the same fictive

family. One of the most influential scholars that have contributed to this debate is Benedict Anderson (1989). He defines the nation as 'an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign' (Anderson 2006: 6). In his words, it is imagined because 'the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion (Anderson 2006: 6). Thus, the place of history, myths and language is more central in this model of the nation. This idea rests largely on the belief that certain people share the same story of origin and linguistic tradition that is connected to a certain place and that because of this they form a community and therefore a nation.

Baumann (1999) seems to support this approach on ethnicity as he argues that the nation as a unity has an ethnic character and forms the basis for state making and nation building. The idea behind this is that the world is populated by different peoples and each of these has its own distinct culture. The final expression of this cultural unity is the making of a state, an act that promotes the cultural or ethnic group to the status, some say liberty, of a nation (Baumann 1999: 19). With this, Baumann adds another dimension to the understanding of this concept. For, in his view a nation can only be called as such if it has some sort of political control over a state. Taken all together, it can be stated that there is no single understanding of the concept 'the nation'. It is best to not draw the line between the 'civic' and 'ethnic' model this precisely for analytical purposes, for these two models are often highly interconnected in the perception of the people that actually form a nation. Thus, these two models should be studied as two expressions of a phenomenon that work together seeking to forge a link between a (self-defined) cultural group and the state (Eriksen 2002: 99), making the nation more of an ideological construction rather than a fixed territorial, political and judiciary or 'ethnic' phenomenon.

The question that remains is how do these two approaches relate to each other? Smith is one of the authors who has attempted to shed some light on this problem. In his study on the ethnic origins of nations (1986), he argues that a strict separation of the civic and ethnic variant of the nation and nationalism as the ideology postulated from it, cannot be made. Especially in the age of modernity, where state-making processes more and more face the challenges of uniting different ethnic groups in the nation-state model. He puts the matter succinctly by stating that 'all nations bear the impress of both territorial and ethnic principles and components, and represent an uneasy confluence of a more recent 'civic' and a more ancient 'genealogical' model of social and cultural organization (Smith 1986: 149).' With this, he argues that it is often so that within the model of the nation-state, both the 'civic' and 'ethnic' model are integrated and constitute the base for national identities. In order for any 'nation-to-be' to function in a way that it can become the key identity marker of the inhabitants of any given state, there has to be some sort of perception of a homeland

or myth of common origin and descent; the people have to perceive the vessels of their society as one that is united.

At the same time no 'ethnie-aspiring-to-become-a-nation' can achieve its goals without realizing a common division of labor and territorial mobility, or the legal equality of common rights and duties for each member, that is citizenship (Smith 1986: 149). He goes on by saying that as the 'nation' is a modern phenomenon and conception, it must become a territorially centralized, politicized, legal and economically unit bound by a common civic outlook and ideology (Ibid. : 152). Again, in order for the 'nation', national identities and nationalistic ideologies to be a solidary and mobilizing force, they must take over some of the attributes of pre-existing *ethnie* and assimilate many of their myths, memories and symbols, or invent ones of its own (Ibid. : 152). Thus the reconciliation of the civic and ethnic models of the 'nation' and national identities may not be as problematic as it might appear. The particular history and process of state formation in a given nation-state influences the way in which the two models relate to each other as well. Ethnic identities will be less flexible wherever the process of modern nation-state formation has the greatest longevity; in these nation-states, there is less room for disjuncture or play between ascription and self-ascription, which is a key aspect of manipulating identities (Verdery in Vermeulen en Govers 1994: 37).

### 1.3 Nationalism

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*Nationalism is an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential 'nation'.*

Anthony D. Smith (1991: 73)

This definition provided by Smith, is a good working definition of nationalism because it embodies elements from both the ideological and the constructivist approach of the nation. When taken as an ideological force, the 'core doctrine' of nationalism can be summarized by the following four central propositions; 1) The world is divided into nations, each with its own individuality, history and destiny. 2) The nation is the source of all political and social power, and loyalty to the nation overrides all other allegiances. 3) Human beings must identify with a nation if they want to be free and realize themselves. 4) Nations must be free and secure if peace and justice are to prevail in the world (Smith 1991: 74). With this, Smith stresses that nationalism as an ideology, is one of the nation and not the state. He furthermore emphasizes that the notion that every nation must have its own state is a common, but not a necessary, deduction from the core doctrine of nationalism; this means that nationalism is primarily a cultural doctrine or, more accurately, a political ideology with a cultural doctrine at its centre (Smith 1991: 74).

This is somewhat contrary as to how Gellner defines nationalism. Gellner (1997) focuses mostly on the political aspects of nationalism by defining this national unity as a synonym of an ethnic group; 'In brief, nationalism is a theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones' (Gellner in Eriksen 2002: 98). In this view, nationalisms are ethnic ideologies which proclaim that their ethnic group should have the control over the territorial space that the state embarks and its political institutions, making the establishment of a link between the nation and the state the building block for any nationalistic ideology. Following this line of reasoning, a nation-state is a state dominated by an ethnic group, whose markers of identity (such as language and religion) are frequently embedded in its official symbolism and legislation (Eriksen 2002: 98). The cultural doctrine, which is according to Smith the centre of nationalistic ideology, is dependent on these symbols and legislation. Eriksen (2002) follows this line of theorizing by stating that most nationalisms hold that the political organization of a state should be ethnic in character in that it represents the interests of a particular ethnic group.

Conversely, the nation-state draws an important aspect of its political legitimacy from convincing the popular masses that it really does represent them as a cultural unit (Eriksen 2002: 99+100). Unlike Smith, Eriksen stresses (like Gellner) that the distinguishing mark of nationalism is by definition its relationship to the state (Eriksen 2002: 7). According to this view, a nationalist holds that political boundaries should be coterminous with cultural boundaries, whereas ethnic groups do not demand command over a state (Ibid. : 7). This would mean that whenever ethnic groups command political control over a territory, they automatically become nationalistic groups. These theoretical approaches of nationalism clearly utilize the ethnic variant of the concept 'nation' in their explanation of the nature of this phenomenon.

In the field of anthropology a rather serious move towards the examination of the sentiment inherent to nationalisms and the identity vessel it provides to people subjected to it, can be observed. One of the most influential theoretical studies concerning these issues is *'Imagined Communities'* by Benedict Anderson (2006) who was briefly mentioned before above. In this study, Anderson emphasizes the strong hold nationalism has on the minds of people, creating the belief that members of a self-proclaimed nation form a unity. He is a supporter of the idea that the ideological aspect of nationalism supersedes that of its political utility. By the way of nationalistic ideology, members of the nation are synchronized in the one temporality, occupy a single spatial context, and are thus placed in an imaginative unison (Kapferer 1989: 197). According to this view, symbolism, myths and vernacular languages play a key role in the formation of nationalistic sentiment and the perception of community. Despite the differences in emphasize, creating a duality of meaning and politics, these two conceptions - here presented by Gellner and Anderson - are quite compatible. Both stress that nations are ideological constructions, seeking to forge a link between

(self-defined) cultural group and state, and that they create abstract communities of a different order from those dynastic states or kinship-based communities which pre-date them (Eriksen 2002: 99).

As shortly mentioned above, these theories approach nationalism in a way that adheres to the conception of the nation as an inherently ethnic community. This is in line with most anthropological literature covering nationalism which see this phenomenon as a variant of ethnicity, emphasizing the ability of both to construct identities (Eriksen 2002). Where does this leave the civic model of the nation? Is it possible to think of the construction of a nationalistic ideology based on civic ideals, creating a feeling of community based on citizenship? Going back to the definition given by Smith at the beginning of this paragraph, it seems very possible that such a form of nationalism could exist. For, this definition does not stress that there has to be ethnic, cultural or linguistic similarity in order for people to perceive themselves as a nation and create an 'ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity'. In his study on ethnicity and nationalism, Eriksen (2002) also attempts to theorize on this idea of a post-ethnic form of nationalism. He uses Mauritius as a case study to build up to the argument that nationalism, popular and official, can depict the nation as a supra-ethnic or non-ethnic community, which encompasses or transcends ethnicity rather than endorsing it (Eriksen 2002: 116).

In this way, common ethnic origin is not needed to build nationhood. Baumann (1999) goes even so far as to say that ever since modern nation-states arose in the West, they had to face the challenges that multi-ethnic societies bring to the foreground by overcoming the boundaries of ethnicity among their citizens. He states that the nation is both post-ethnic, in that it denies the salience of old ethnic distinctions and portrays these as a matter of a dim and distant pre-state past, and super-ethnic, in that it portrays the nation as a new and bigger kind of ethnos (Baumann 1999: 31). This should not be an impossible quest if we follow the rationale of Gellner (1983) that has been cited in anthropological research many times. According to his view, it is nationalism that creates national identity. 'Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness; it invents nations where they do not exist – but it does need some pre-existing differentiating marks to work on, even if these are purely negative' (Gellner 1983: 168). This would mean that a form of nationalism that is based on the civic model of the understanding of the nation and which by that would override ethnicity and be 'super-ethnic', is possible to create and thereby win the hearts and minds of people.

## 1.4 Identification; the Ethnic and Civic Model of the Nation

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How then does this inescapable ambiguity and duality translate into the formation of identities based on the nation and thus on an individual's identity? Following Eriksen, nationhood on the identity level is merely a matter of belief, he states that the nations, that is the *Volk* imagined by nationalists, is a product of nationalist ideology; it is not the other way around (Eriksen 2002: 104). This was discussed in the section on nationalism above. The following paragraph will present a short analysis of the different 'functions' of national identification. These functions are subjected to perceptions, can have a symbolic meaning and are highly flexible and negotiable. They can be divided into external and internal functions of national identities. Smith (1991) elaborates on this division and explains how the external functions have a territorial, economic and political character.

According to this, national identities have three external 'functions' (Smith 1991: 16): 1) National identities define a definite social space and demarcate a historic territory that locates a community in time and space, 2) Economically, nations underwrite the quest for control over territorial resources and 3) National identity underpins the state and its organs, it is presumed to represent the national will and national identity of the inclusive population. Clearly, these external 'functions' are in line with the 'civic' or the 'rational' model of the nation, emphasizing the territorial, economic and political aspects of nationhood or national identity.

The internal 'functions' have a more symbolic and, as some may say, a romantic character. According to Smith (Smith 1991: 16), 1) National identities socialize members as 'nationals and citizens', this is mostly done by the way of compulsory, standardized public mass education and the standardization of language (Eriksen 2002: 102), 2) The nation is called upon to provide a social bond between individuals and classes by providing channels in which shared values, symbols and traditions can nourish, to remind members of their common heritage and kinship to feel strengthened by their sense of common identity and belonging, 3) A sense of national identity provides a powerful means of defining and locating individual selves in the world, through the prism of the collective personality and its distinctive culture. As the external 'factors' of nationhood or national identity are related to the 'civic' or rational model of the nation, the internal 'factors' are connected to the ethnic or romantic model of the nation.

A function that can be added to this list, is that advocated by the so called instrumentalist school within Cultural Anthropology which holds that identification along national lines – referring to the ethnic model – is an instrumentalist act. One of the most important supporters of this theoretical orientation is Abner Cohen. According to Cohen, social interaction and organization are essentially dual phenomena: they comprise aspects of utility and aspects of meaning. When this is applied to ethnic ideology this duality comes down to its immediate appeal because of the fact that it

offers answers to 'the perennial problems of life': the questions of origins, destiny and, ultimately, the meaning of life. However, Cohen argues, ethnicity must also have a practical function in order to be viable (Cohen 1974, xii-xv). According to Gellner and Erikson (see section on nationalism above) , when this function is getting political control over a territory, nationalistic ideology is its driving and mobilizing force, making the perception of the nation based on ethnic grounds. Cohen mentions another 'instrumentalist' characteristic of ethnicity by stating that ethnic identities develop in response to functional organizational requirements. In this light, ethnicity simply is a particular form of informal political organization where cultural boundaries are evoked so that the group's resources or 'symbolic capital' can be secured, making ethnic identity and thereby the perception of the nation based on ethnic grounds a highly political act/ strategy (Cohen 1974, xii-xv).

## 2. Context

### Kosovo

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One could say that the birth of national consciousness among Albanians in Kosovo took place during the Yugoslav period. In 1974, the Yugoslav constitution, under the Tito regime, recognized self-rule for Kosovo but not the right to independence granted to each of the Yugoslav republics. Self-rule for Kosovo meant the establishment of provincial legislative, judicial, and executive institutions, which given the demographic realities was dominated by the Albanian majority<sup>3</sup> (Giannakos, S. A. and Graczyk, D.A. 2006: 147). By then, the Albanians were classified by the Yugoslav regime as a nationality or an extension of the Albanian peoples whose home state was Albania (Giannakos, S. A. and Graczyk, D.A. 2006: 147). This policy fostered the establishment of an interconnected perception of the nation, creating vessels for the perception of nationhood in terms of 'civic' (having provincial legislative, judicial and executive institution) and 'ethnic' (the labeling of Albanians in Kosovo as a nationality) components.

The new policies built the autonomous province of Kosovo in political understandings, but it also made it possible for the Albanian language to have equal status to that of Serbo-Croatian on all official documents. As Anderson (2006) explains, this process of vernacularization of language enhanced the sense of Albanian awareness and stimulated the *imagining* of the Albanian community in Kosovo. For Kosovo as a territory this meant that with the nationalization of the Albanian language, Kosovo was nationalized as well. For, as Giannakos and Graczyk state; 'Where a specific language is present in any specific territorial context, and where that language is nationalized, the territory is nationalized as well' (Giannakos, S. A. and Graczyk, D.A. 2006: 151).

The effects of Yugoslav succession wars, the abolishment of Kosovo's autonomy in 1989 by former Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic and the Albanian's struggle and sacrifices for independence of Kosovo<sup>4</sup> all effected the perceptions discourse on what national identity is. In the political arena, the reconstruction of Albanian identities became somewhat of a project. After Kosovo became a UN protectorate in 1999, this project was characterized by two contradictory but also interrelated strands. On the one hand, the ethno-nationalist discourse which was strongly influenced by nineteenth-century notions of nation-state building, including the reification of the myth of an ancient past and of a continuing independence struggle, highlighting heroism, sacrifice, victimhood

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<sup>3</sup> 88% of the population in Kosovo is Albanian, 7% Serbs and 5% others (Bosniaks, Gorani, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian and Turk).

U.S Department of State <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/100931.htm> 19-01-2011

<sup>4</sup> This illustrates Anderson's statement that it is the imagining of the nation (in this case based on ethnic affiliation and thus a 'ethnic' model of the nation) as a community which makes people not so much kill, as willing to die for such limited imaginings (Anderson 2006: 7).

and trauma (Ingimundarson 2007: 95). This discourse is in line with the 'ethnic' model of the nation and nationhood as all mentioned aspects refer to the Albanian population in Kosovo.

On the other hand, Albanian nationalism incorporated a civic vision based on the idea that an independent Kosovo should be firmly anchored in supranational bodies like the European Union and NATO (Ingimundarson 2007: 95). This meant that a switch in thinking and talking about nationhood had to take place, presenting it as a post-ethnic and all inclusive concept. This was officially formalized in 2008, when Kosovo unilaterally and supported by the United States and the European Union declared its independence, with the Ahtisaari plan as the state-building tool.<sup>5</sup> The state-building process that entered into force after this, took the 'civic project' a step further by implementing a new national constitution (see footnote 4), flag and anthem.

A group that has been very present in Kosovo when it comes to questioning this process of stimulating a post-ethnic national conscious in Kosovo is *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* (Movement for SELF-DETERMINATION!). With their 3000 active members who mostly have a background of university studies, *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* represents a quite small intellectual elite.<sup>6</sup> The movement comprises furthermore of numerous young volunteers and activists. This indicates that thinking about and expressing the views on national and ethnic identification is present among the new generation of Albanians in Kosovo, a generation that is important in the early years of state-building.

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<sup>5</sup> The settlement provisions of the Ahtisaari plan state that 'Kosovo shall be a multi-ethnic society, governing itself democratically and with full respect for the rule of law, the highest level of internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms, and which promotes the peaceful and prosperous existence of all its inhabitants'. These principles were to be enshrined by the newly created constitution, which highlights the multi-ethnic character of the Kosovar state.

UNOSEK. Status Proposal. <http://www.unosek.org/unosek/en/statusproposal.html> 19-01-2012

<sup>6</sup> Delafrouz, G. <http://lup.lub.lu.se/luur/download?func=downloadFile&recordId=1405441&fileId=1414996> p. 9, 12-01-2012

### 3. A State Full of Friction

It was in the year of 2005 when the UN decided to start the talks on Kosovo's political status (Tansey 2009: 159). These actually started in 2006 with the UN special envoy former Finnish president Martti Ahtisaari overseeing months of shuttle diplomacy between Pristina and Belgrade as well as face to face negotiations between Kosovo-Albanian and Serb officials (Tansey 2009: 159). The talks did not end in both parties coming to an agreement about Kosovo's status. At that point, Ahtisaari reported back to the UN, urging this body to resolve the status issue unilaterally and recommend for Kosovo "independence supervised by the international community" (Tansey 2009: 159). The most important conclusions of his 'Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement', also known as the Ahtisaari Plan', are that Serb minorities living in Kosovo should be protected and granted a high level of self-rule by the way of decentralization and bringing the UNMIK (United Nation Mission in Kosovo) mandate to an end, in order for the EU to take it over (UNOSEK 'The Status Proposal'). After a long process of negotiations, this Plan was accepted and Kosovo declared its independence on 17 February 2008. Since that day, the government of Kosovo adheres to the Plan in the process of state-building. By writing a new constitution (mostly based on this proposal), institutionalizing new national symbols and having a pro-European agenda, the current government of Kosovo is doing everything it can to convey the message that it is a new, multiethnic and a possible EU member state. But the question is how these formal state-building processes are translated into practical actions taken by the state and what kind of possible effects this has on the perception of national identity by the *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* activists. The next chapter will present an analysis of the actions undertaken by different state institutions with the aim of creating a new national Kosovar identity. Thus this chapter aims at answering the question as to how the new national Kosovar identity is presented through official state channels by which a comparison can be drawn between how the forces of state institutions try to create this new national identity and how this effects the way young *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* in Kosovo see themselves as citizens of the Republic of Kosovo.

#### 3.1 Ahtisaari and the Constitution

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The Ahtisaari Proposal was the first step of formulizing a constitution and institutionalizing this at all the levels of government in the newly created state of Kosovo. In the proposal itself it is stated that; 'Kosovo shall adopt a Constitution. The Constitution of Kosovo shall prescribe and guarantee the legal and institutional mechanisms necessary to ensure that: Kosovo is governed by the highest democratic standards, and to promote the peaceful and prosperous existence of all its inhabitants. The Constitution shall include, but not be limited to. The principles and provisions contained in Annex I of this Settlement' (Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement, Article 1 point 1.3).

One could thus state that the constitutive document for Kosovo as a state is the Ahtisaari proposal. One of the most important parts of this proposal and an occurring theme is the multiethnic character Kosovo should have wherein Serbian enclaves must enjoy a high level of self-rule by the way of decentralization. When this is translated to the envisioning of the nation, it resembles the argument Baumann (1999) makes concerning this matter. According to Bauman ever since modern nation-states arose in the West, they had to face the challenges that multi-ethnic societies bring to the foreground by overcoming the boundaries of ethnicity among their citizens. He states that the nation is both post-ethnic, in that it denies the salience of old ethnic distinctions and portrays these as a matter of a dim and distant pre-state past, and super-ethnic, in that it portrays the nation as a new and bigger kind of ethnos (Baumann 1999: 31). The problem here is though that the very document that aims at creating this super-ethnic that should portray the nation as a new and bigger kind of ethnos, the Ahtisaari Proposal, in very fact underscores the ethnic distinctions it tries to set aside. As I talked with one of the activists, Blerim, about the possibility to create a national Kosovar identity based on citizenship, he mentioned exactly this problem;

*It actually is the Ahtisaari Proposal that made Kosovo a state of ethnic communities. The problem of models of multi-ethnic societies is that it does not rest on the idea of people being citizens but on the difference between these people. If you grant the Serbs the form of autonomy that they have today in the enclaves created by the Ahtisaari Proposal, they don't need to be integrated and thus will never be connected to the Kosovar state.<sup>7</sup>*

As shortly mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, the Ahtisaari Proposal forms the basis for the constitution of Kosovo. Within this constitution, there are some interesting articles that formalize the frictions as mentioned above. One of them is the first point of Article 3 'Equality Before the Law' which refers to and identifies two population categories in Kosovo: Albanians and 'others'.<sup>8</sup> The multiethnic character that Kosovo should portray is not apparent in this type of categorization where the fact that the Albanians are the majority is highlighted but moreover, where the other ethnic groups are not even mentioned separately. Another article that has some friction posed by the words used, is Article 6. Within this article it is explained what the new symbols are that they are protected by the law.<sup>9</sup> In the Albanian version of this article though, these symbols are referred to in two

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<sup>7</sup> Interview 14-02-2012

<sup>8</sup> Full text of point 1 of article 3 [Equality Before the Law]: The Republic of Kosovo is a multi-ethnic society consisting of Albanian and other Communities, governed democratically with full respect for the rule of law through its legislative, executive and judicial institutions.

<sup>9</sup> Full text of Article 6 [Symbols] 1. The flag, the seal and the anthem are the state symbols of the Republic of Kosovo all of which reflect its multi-ethnic character. 2. The appearance, display and protection of the flag and

different ways; one it states that the *symbols of the state* should be protected by the law, in the other it refers to these symbols as *symbols of the komb* (roughly translated it means the nation, but it has its roots in the Arabic language and refers more to the ethnic variant of the nation).<sup>10</sup> Here, the state and the nation come together. This could be analyzed as one of the first steps to create a state in Kosovo according to the nation-state model with the nation being the citizens of Kosovo, somewhat like the French model where the state creates the nation. But taking the linguistic implications into consideration, it can also be rationalized that this is a prove of the inability to link these two 'entities' or phenomena in a state like Kosovo.

### 3.2 Conflicting Celebrations

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The sounds of Albanian music filled the streets of Pristina. As early as ten o'clock in the morning the melodies of songs honoring the UÇK<sup>11</sup> soldiers and their battle against the Serbian army could be heard blasting from car radios and music installations placed on the street. The main street in the center was crowded with old people and young children walking around to be part of the festivities on that cold winter day. The Mother Theresa Boulevard was where most of the activities took place. The new national flag was waving in rows of as much as 20 flags above the boulevard, coloring the sky blue and yellow. The street was filled with different stands, selling snacks like baked sunflower seeds, popcorn made in stand in the retro American style and sweet fried dough. Men with big wooden wheelbarrows were selling flags, the new national flag, the Albanian flag, the flag proposed by former president Rugova and the flag of the United States of America. There was also a stand selling wooden clocks in the shape of the two-headed eagle as on the Albanian flag and letters reading UÇK and one with traditional Albanian costumes for children. Little children were holding balloons with the new national flag and the Albanian flag on them, some both at the same time. A little closer to the middle of the boulevard, the music coming from people's radios was interrupted by a group of elderly men making music on traditional drums and flutes. There were

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other state symbols shall be regulated by law. The display and protection of the national symbols shall be regulated by law.

<sup>10</sup> In her master thesis, M.C.J. van der Wilk paraphrases Linda Gusia, a sociology professor from Pristina who states that there are no linguistic difference made between the words ethnicity and nation in the Albanian language: *etnik* (ethnicity) and *komb* (nation) are therefore regarded to be synonymous. 2007 'Kosovo: Entity without Identity?', Van Der Milk, M.C.J.

<http://www.alfredmozerstichting.nl/binaries/content/assets/ams/Scriptie+Marieke+van+der+Wilk.pdf/Scriptie+Marieke+van+der+Wilk.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> UÇK stand for '*Ushtria Çlirimtare të Kosovës*' which is internationally known as the KLA, 'Kosovo Liberation Army'.

people dancing the *valle*<sup>12</sup> while three of them were holding the new national, Albanian and USA flag. People were gathered around them to dance along, take pictures and make footages with their mobile phones. At one end of the boulevard, across the national theatre there was a stage where the Prime Minister of Kosovo, Hashim Thaçi, held a speech after the FSK<sup>13</sup> parade was over. In this speech, the prime minister mostly spoke in positive terms about Kosovo's independence and the state. Tears were coming down his eyes as he spoke to the people about the sacrifices that were made in order for this day to be what it is.

This day was the 17<sup>th</sup> of February 2012 which marked the 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the declaration of independence of Kosovo. This day and how it was celebrated marked also the discrepancy or friction between state initiated programs for the celebration of the creation of the state and how the people on the ground gave this day content. While the state presented all of the new markers of the nation-state, the people gave the celebrations a highly Albanian touch. At the end of the meeting at the office of *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* the day before independence day, one of the activists jokingly asked if they too had the day off on the 17<sup>th</sup>. Everybody started to laugh, knowing that the answer will be no. sarcastic remarks were made by several different activists that attended the meeting. This was not the first time that this national holiday was ridiculed. When I told the General Secretary that I was not going to be at the office on the 17<sup>th</sup> because I wanted to observe how people celebrated this day, he teasingly started questioning the reason why I would want to do that;

*You just want a day off to celebrate like the masses do. Now you are a traitor. You are now part of Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE! so you should not join the masses in celebrating something that should not be celebrated.*<sup>14</sup>

At first, this overall objection of celebrating the day that Kosovo declared its independence might come across as strange. One would think that activists within a movement like *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* are the people in Kosovo that were the biggest supporters of Kosovo's independency. After asking some of the activists why it is that they strongly object to celebrating this day, they explained that in fact there is nothing to celebrate. Kosovo is artificially independent, it is far from being a sovereign state for the independence in Kosovo is a supervised version of it. The next two chapters will go more into detail on this matter.

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<sup>12</sup> A 'valle' is a traditional Albanian dance.

<sup>13</sup> Kosovo's Special Forces.

<sup>14</sup> Informal conversation, 16-02-2012

### 3.3 Honoring Soldiers

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As much as the different state initiatives to present the new state and its new national identity are tried to be implemented with the goal to make the creation of a civic form of nationality possible (as shown above), in practice, some frictions can be found as to how the state institutions represent this new Kosovo. On the 31<sup>st</sup> of January 2012, a ceremony in the honor of the former UÇK commander Zahir Pajaziti and two of his close collaborators and soldiers Edmond Hoxha and Hakif Zejnullahu was organized by the government where the Prime Minister Thaçi and other key political figures were present. Several of them held short speeches about the deceased men. All of them referred to the men as heroes of the state. Thaçi himself labeled the day as one when “the institutions of the state of Kosovo, the citizens of Kosovo honor with the utmost respect for the deeds, life and heroism of the most prominent commander of the Kosovo Liberation Army Zahir Pajaziti and his comrades Edmond Hoxha and Hakif Zejnullahu. We honor them with the highest respect, power and energy to work even more on consolidating and strengthening our state in order for it to integrate into NATO and the European Union.”<sup>15</sup> This short piece of the speech that Thaçi gave that day as he stood next to the statue of Zahir Pajaziti in Pristina, has three interesting parts that show the nature of the conflicting faces of the manner in which the state of Kosovo presents the new national identity through its official channels.

The first is the fact that he states the institutions of the state of Kosovo and the citizens of Kosovo should show respect to the deeds, life and heroism of Zahir Pajaziti. This means that the institutions which officially should present the state of Kosovo as multi-ethnic and be inclusive to all of its minorities, should respect a man who fought for the creation of the state of Kosovo, a battle in which the struggle was directed at Serbian soldiers and civilians. The citizens of Kosovo, as he calls them, are not all Albanians. They are also Serbs, Bosniaks and Turks who may not stand behind the ‘heroic deeds and lives’ of these men. The second part concerns the labeling of these men as heroes. Calling them heroes of the state and celebrating their deeds in this manner, is a type of symbolism that links the Albanian struggle to the formation of the Kosovar state. A type of symbolism which makes the perception of the national identity based on the civic model and thus citizenship an impossible act. The final interesting piece of this speech is the last part in which the Minister President states that by honoring these men, the state will become stronger and closer to the integration into NATO and the European Union. This statement does not only forge a link between the Albanian struggle and the creation of the state of Kosovo (as the first part of the speech does), which is a thing of the past one could say, but it also links it to the future. A future where, because of

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<sup>15</sup> This comes from an internet news bulletin of the local radio and television channel RTV21. Translated by me. 2012. <http://rtv21.tv/home/?p=56425> accessed on 31.01.2012

the deeds and heroism of these men, Kosovo becomes a stronger state which is integrated into international unions. These statements give the perception of the nation a highly ethnic character where officially this should be civic.

Besides that, these statements could give way towards the creation of a type of nationalism as described by Gellner (1997). This author states that ; 'In brief, nationalism is a theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones' (Gellner in Eriksen 2002: 98). In this view, nationalisms are ethnic ideologies which proclaim that their ethnic group should have the control over the territorial space that the state embarks and its political institutions, making the establishment of a link between the nation and the state the building block for any nationalistic ideology. Following this line of reasoning, a nation-state is a state dominated by an ethnic group, whose markers of identity, such as language, religion and heroes are frequently embedded in its official symbolism and legislation (Eriksen 2002: 98). The friction that comes to play here is that the Kosovar state, due to its new constitution, has not the legislative rights to implement these 'markers of identity' in its official symbolism and legislation. But performances with a strong message like these do not end without having any influence on the perception of the nation on the people living in Kosovo. The next chapter will discuss this perception. It gives an analysis of how the young activists of *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* perceive this newly created national Kosovar identity.

#### 4. Imposed Nationality

The very next morning after my arrival in Pristina, the capital of the newly formed state Kosovo, I decided to walk around in order to get more familiar with the streets of this chaotic city. After taking a few steps near the main street that leads up to the Mother Theresa Boulevard, noises were grabbing the attention of people passing by. As I came closer to the place where these noises came from, it became clear. That day, a protest was going on, organized by student groups linked to the University of Pristina. The banners these students were holding and the slogans they were chanting let the gathering crowd know that it was a protest against the trial of EULEX (The European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo) against the former commander of the UÇK and now minister president in the Kosovo parliament, Fatmir Limaj. The protesters were chanting 'UÇK UÇK!' and something that sounded like *ka luftu!*<sup>16</sup>. Besides the banners, they were also carrying Albanian flags, signs with the logo of the UÇK and photographs of Limaj. Surrounding people were looking at the protest and making different comments. A lot of those comments were somewhat sarcastic and accompanied by laughter. One girl shouted *vetëvendosje!*, probably making a sarcastic reference to the fact that most of the protests that are held in Kosovo are initiatives of this movement. It all came a bit across as if these people did not seem to take the protest very seriously. During that time, the MP was of different war crime cases, but the students were celebrating his actions during the 'liberation' war. The protest showed strong Albanian signs (as mentioned above) and when compared to the message that embracing an accused politician of the Kosovar state, this may come across as choosing the Albanian 'side' over the national 'cause'. For, it might be reasonable to think that it is in the national interest to not support an alleged criminal that is at the same time a state representative. Not only would this be good for the national image, something that in the case of post-war Kosovo is truly needed, but you would think that as a citizen you would not want to be represented by a criminal. In this case though, things are not that straightforward or one-sided. A criminal act, especially in the context of separatist wars, can be perceived in two very different and often conflicting ways. Fatmir Limaj as a former commander of the UÇK may be an alleged war crime criminal in the eyes of the The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), but for a lot of Albanians in Kosovo he is one of the men that defended them against the Serbian aggression during the war of '98-'99 and took the first steps towards the independence of their country.

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<sup>16</sup> This means; '*he fought*'. As the shouting of the protesters was not clear, I am not sure if these are the exact words that were used by them. But considering the fact that the protest was about a former UÇK commander with the protesters supporting his deeds, these words are not that relevant. The protest itself illustrates the point I make in this section.

*Their* country. If one would walk around in Pristina, not knowing much about the history and present political situation of the country of which this city is the capital, it is not strange to come to think of it as a country of Albanians. The Albanian flag can be found waving on many places ranging from people's houses to next to the statue of former UÇK commander Zahir Q. Pajaziti. In Prishtina you can also find two other prominent statues of Albanian 'heroes', namely Skenderbeu and Mother Theresa. In lunchrooms and bars the menu cards are all written in Albanian and some have the English translation of the dishes and drinks that are served. The language that you hear around you is the Albanian language. Another interesting visual aspect that marks the city, is the number of graffiti sprayed texts on walls of different buildings. All in the same red and black letters, all in the same style. One of those was sprayed on concrete flower containers by the road saying *Blej Shqip*, which means 'Buy Albanian' (see Appendix II, photograph a) . These graffiti sprayings form one of the most known trademarks of the research population of this thesis, the *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* activists. This was part of a larger scale campaign of the movement that started in October 2011 with the aim to promote local produced products and by this generate a growth in the economic development. I came across another part of this '*Duaje Tënden*' ('Love Your Own') campaign in the restroom of a local sports bar. On the wall, there was a poster with the call for people to buy products that are produced in Kosovo. It also gives out facts about how many products produced in Serbia are imported annually in Kosovo. The most interesting fact about this poster though, is that in the call for buying more products produced in Kosovo and not buying the ones produced in Serbia it refers to two states. But there is another sentence on this poster which poses a question to its readers. It poses the question if people know how many different brands of water are produced by Albanians. Reading these two remarks on the poster – one referring to the Kosovar state and the other to the Albanian producers – it seems that the Kosovar citizen is perceived to be an Albanian.

This chapter will present an analysis of the question surrounding these observations and linkages. It will tell the story of how the activists of *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* perceive nationality, identity based on the new created state of Kosovo and matters that are related to this.

#### 4.1 *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!*

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These first visual indicators of perceptions of national and ethnic identification among *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* activists may be a bit deceptive though. In reality perceptions on these identity markers these have proven to be much more complex. In order for one to understand this complexity, it is absolutely essential to understand the character profile of these young activists and Kosovar citizens and the way in which having these 'roles' has influenced their understandings of the perceptions central in this research.

Being a *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* activist, is being a young citizen of Kosovo who is aware of the friction and frustration that form a constant in one's life in this young state. Moreover, being a *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* activist is being a person that has made the conscious choice to be an agent, actively working to bring social, political and economic changes about in his/her society. Most of the informants joined the movement during their teenage years. Almost all of the informants faced strong family objection towards their wish to become activists, and social exclusion from friends that did not understand or agree with the political ideologies of the movement. Reasons for joining *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* differed, but the excitement that came along with participating in the organized actions and protests is a common reason that the activists expressed to be a motivating factor for making this decision. As teenagers, these young Albanian citizens from Kosovo lived through a period of war which made a drastic impact on their lives, influencing their perceptions about the society they live in and their role in it, or as one of them, Fisknik, said; *'I always talk about my life in terms of before the war and after the war'*<sup>17</sup>. Another activist, Luan, who lived in Gjakova during the war, told me that as a child he did not fully comprehend the geographic and political context of Kosovo during the '90.

*'I did not really understand that Kosovo was being suppressed, but during the war my parents and other family members started to talk about the UÇK (KLA, Kosovo Liberation Army) which influenced my perception on things'. I also remember this one time in school, I was 10, when the teacher asked the class who our mother is (refereeing to the state of Albania). We were young, we did not understand that we were separated from Albania and that we were under Serbian rule. She was the one who taught us these things through poetry, songs and stuff like that.'*<sup>18</sup>

Seeing his uncle getting murdered, his mother in constant fear, left definite scars on his childhood memories but strengthened his determination to fight against injustice at the same time.

Except from being the most influential opposition party in the Kosovar parliament and the biggest social movement in Kosovo, *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* has also been and continues to be a school for the activists. Many of them feel that the years of being an activists has taught them more than all of the years of education at school and university combined, indicating that *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* has been a leading factor of influence on perceptions in the field of politics and society. This is enforced by the different activities that are organized by the movement for the activists. Examples of these are the weakly movies that are shown at the office covering relevant

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<sup>17</sup> Interview, 02-04-2012

<sup>18</sup> Interview, 04-04-2012

political, social and economical subjects and followed by a debate. Another is the weekly readings and presentations about different subjects as reforming the pension system in Kosovo, readings of Ukshin Hoti about the Albanian state and Kosovo, female emancipation etc. As Ilire, a 24 year old activist explained how she, aside from the above mentioned reasons, joined the movement because she shares their ideological views, many of the activists were also aware of the difficulty to separate their personal beliefs and perceptions with that of the movement after so many years of being intensively active in it. This means that the socialization process of being an activist has resulted in the incorporation of the political views of the movement concerning internal and external matters in Kosovo in such a deep level that thinking and talking about these subjects on a personal level and on behalf of the movement have become one and the same thing.

## 4.2 An Albanian State

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When linking this phenomenon to how the activists of *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* perceive the new national Kosovar identity it is not difficult to understand that this group of young people in fact do not identify with the newly formed state. *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* is a political player in Kosovo which works towards different goals in order to change everything that Kosovo is and stands for right now. They are highly critical towards the Kosovo government and the international community who are the most important actors in the state-building process at the moment. Thus, before analyzing how the *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* activists perceive the new state-based identity, one needs to understand how that state, Kosovo, in itself is perceived by these young Kosovar citizens. These factors that have influenced the perception of the state can be divided into two periods, one being before the formal creation of a constitutional republic and one being after this historic moment that took place on the 17<sup>th</sup> of February in 2008. Before the formal independence of Kosovo was established, there were two bodies that acted as actors more or less parallel to one another in the process towards the independence. These were the pacifistic LDK under the leadership of former president Ibrahim Rugova and the armed struggle of the UÇK. Although both had a different character in the sense of the means that were used, these two bodies were initiatives of Albanians to create a sovereign state of their own. In that period the nationalism that mobilized numerous of people to join the 'Albanian struggle' was based on ethnic affiliation in combination with the goal to seize the power over a territory, that is Kosovo.

This is in line with how Gellner (1997) defines this ideology. According to Gellner, 'nationalism is a theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones' (Gellner in Eriken 2002: 98). In this view, nationalisms are ethnic ideologies which proclaim that their ethnic group should have the control over the territorial space that the

state embarks and its political institutions, making the establishment of a link between the nation and the state the building block for any nationalistic ideology. In the case of Kosovo, this has resulted in feelings of 'ownership' over the state by the Albanian population in Kosovo. As Ilire said, '*Jashari did not fight for the Kosovar but for the Albanians as a people to have their own sovereign state.*' Following this line of reasoning, a nation-state is a state dominated by an ethnic group, whose markers of identity (such as language and religion) are frequently embedded in its official symbolism and legislation (Eriksen 2002: 98). The cultural doctrine, which is according to Smith the centre of nationalistic ideology, is dependent on these symbols and legislation. Eriksen (2002) follows this line of theorizing by stating that most nationalisms hold that the political organization of a state should be ethnic in character in that it represents the interests of a particular ethnic group.

The fact is that the Albanian markers of identity are not embedded in the official symbolism and legislation of the newly created nation-state, that is Kosovo. In his interview, Blerim often mentioned this as an important reason why he himself and Albanians in general in Kosovo do not identify with the state based identity.

*People were not asked if they wanted this Kosovar project. This is why nationalism based on citizenship will not be formed in Kosovo. Albanians did not accept the new symbols out of an idea of free will and the idea that there is a Kosovar. But out of the necessity to accept the compromise. The people were not asked. If asked, for example in the form of a referendum, they would refuse.<sup>19</sup>*

Luan expressed this as follows;

*The form in which this new national identity is imposed is wrong. The new flag is now only used out of common sense, not out of the will of the people.<sup>20</sup>*

This means that this state based national identity is perceived to represent the mere fact why these activists believe that the people in Kosovo need *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!*; there is a lack of the right to self-determination, the very name of the movement. Moreover, there is a lack of substantial safeguarding of the provision of citizenship rights from state institution. The next section of this chapter will discuss the effects this has on the way the activists of *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* perceive the new Kosovar state, which officially – as shown in the first chapter - is not an Albanian state, and the identity derived from it.

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<sup>19</sup> Interview, 14-02-2012

<sup>20</sup> Interview, 04-04-2012

### 4.3 A Citizen of a Failing State

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One day while some of the activists and I were walking out of a lunchroom where they serve traditional Albanian dishes a man said to the activists that he was a relative of a former UÇK fighter and asked if *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* supports former UÇK fighters and their cause. Lenart, a 26 year old activist, replied by enthusiastically and convincingly saying that *'of course they did'*. *'We are the continuation of their historic legacy'*. Why would Lenart say this? At first thought this might come across as a belief based on emotional symbolism, political strategy to win the 'hearts and minds' of people for the movement or simply just politeness. But hearing other activists express the same thoughts more thoroughly, it became clear that there was more to this. This remark was a reference to the process of state-building that started after the war of the 90's and which was thought to be as a failing one. That moment in 2008 that was supposed to bring the struggle to full circle by the creation of the Kosovar state, has proven to be a deception as most of the activists vocalized their feelings and perceptions concerning this matter. Vlora, a girl that has been active in the movement since she was sixteen, answered negatively to the question if she feels any different being an Albanian in Kosovo after 2008;

*The people understood the declaration of independence as gaining independence from Serbia and having freedom. I myself thought it was just another thing that fed the illusion. For what followed was the mandate of UNMIK and the Ahtisaari Plan. It proved that the independence was not fully installed. It was something that came about after negotiations with Serbia took place. It became clear that there was no independence but that it was only a name. I think that most of the people don't know how to vocalize this exactly, but they feel that this is not it.<sup>21</sup>*

This illusion was mentioned by several other activists as well. According to them, the declaration of independence has left the people in an illusion of release and hope which blinded them and left them unable to see the reality. A reality in which the independence of Kosovo is still under the watching eye of the EU and is being tested by politics of Belgrade and Pristina. The phrase 'we have no state' was used frequently by the activists when asked how they perceived the Kosovar state, referring to the malfunctioning of the government institutions, not being fully recognized by other states, not having its own army or the right to unite with another state.

As citizens of Kosovo, these activists do not use the phrase 'we have no state' merely on political/ juridical grounds, referring to the fact that Kosovo is not yet fully recognized as a

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<sup>21</sup> Interview, 10-04-2012

sovereign state. When stating this, the activists expressed the inability of the Kosovar state to provide them with some of the elementary services in the form of functioning state institutions that citizenship should guarantee. Shpresa, a 21 year old activist that became active in *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* at the age of sixteen, expressed this during her interview.

*People feel connected to a strong state or nation. Take Switzerland, this is a state in which it is possible for people to speak different languages but still feel Swiss. This is possible because Switzerland is a strong state. The Kosovar state doesn't offer anything, people here have no positive perspectives. There is no strong state.*

Being born in Kosovo but having lived in Switzerland from 1995 and 2001, Shpresa knew very well the difference between living in an economic and political strong and long established state and living in a state that is not and the effects this has on national identification. One day while we were drinking coffee, she told me more about her live in Switzerland and the big switch she had to make when she and her family moved back to Kosovo.

*I and my brother were totally assimilated. We did not even know how to speak Albanian anymore. After the war, when we returned to Kosovo, I felt like all of my dreams and plans for the future were crashed. It was really hard for me to adjust here. But after four years of living in Kosovo I went on a holiday to Switzerland, after that I realized that I would not want to live anywhere but Kosovo.<sup>22</sup>*

The last sentence is an interesting one, for during previous conversations she, being a student and a young citizen of Kosovo, she conveyed clearly that she was aware of the struggles she faces on daily bases due to the fact that she lives in a so called failing state. She had expressed many times her desire to travel more and the frustration that comes along with this because of the fact that Kosovar passport is only valid for traveling visa-free over the borders of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania. Being a Kosovar citizen is a constant reminder of the hinder she faces when trying to realize her goals and dreams. This is most evident in the dissatisfaction she and all of the other activists that are students expressed when talking about educational issues. Being students, these activists are the social category that is affected most by the effects of being citizens of a failed state. A wave of private universities (mostly American) has hit Pristina, mirroring the demand for a well functioning education system. The public university of Pristina (UP), is one more state institution that is characterized by its malfunctioning. The student body of *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* '*Studim, Kritik, Veprim*' (Study, Critique, Action) is currently running

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<sup>22</sup> Interview, 22-02-2012

for the elections of the university parliament. During several meetings that they held where they presented their political program and discussed with various students, it became clear that the problems these young people face are of a serious character. Outdated books, corrupted professors, political interference, no research capacity, dorms in bad conditions and many more issues leave these students in a position where getting an education is not only a fight against iniquity but is not profitable either as the prospects on employment are slim. Considering the fact that the UP is officially a public university and the way it functions now, it is the primary source of dissatisfaction among youngsters in Pristina in relation to the state.

According to Smith (1986), 'all nations bear the impress of both territorial and ethnic principles and components, and represent an uneasy confluence of a more recent 'civic' and a more ancient 'genealogical' model of social and cultural organization' (Smith 1986: 149). In order for any 'nation-to-be' to function in a way that it can become the key identity marker of the inhabitants of any given state, there has to be some sort of perception of a homeland or myth of common origin and descent; the people have to perceive the vessels of their society as one that is united (Smith 1986: 149). These national identities and nationalistic ideologies can become a solidary and mobilizing force, if they take over some of the attributes of pre-existing *ethnie* and assimilate many of their myths, memories and symbols, or invent ones of its own (Smith 1986 : 152). The task that Kosovo was facing has proved to be a difficult one. As the international community carefully orchestrated the road towards independence in Kosovo, or the "supervised independence"<sup>23</sup> as it is officially called, the new Albanian political leaders had to design a nation-state model that was inclusive for all the different ethnic groups living in Kosovo. As was shown above, this has resulted in the activists feeling almost robbed of their right to be represented as Albanians, the people that have fought for the very existence of Kosovo as a state. The new national identity is something that has been created by the international community, accepted by the corrupt political elite and has to be 'swallowed' by the Albanians.<sup>24</sup> It did not incorporate any of the 'attributes of pre-existing *ethnie* and assimilate many of their myths, memories and symbols'. But as Smith (1986) states, this is merely one option for a nation-to-be as the Kosovar tried/tries to be. It is also possible to invent these 'basic' components of ethnicity that are needed to make a national identity a source of identification. Fact is that with the independence in 2008, a new flag, anthem and constitution came along, forming then newly invented symbols. But just like Luan said (see quote above), these new symbols are accepted but not with a great will. Or in the words of Lenart;

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<sup>23</sup> This is explained in Chapter 1.

<sup>24</sup> Interviews 01-03-2012, 22-02-2012 and 14-02-2012

*Symbol does not come before sign. Take for example the Jashari family. Their death and struggle for freedom left a sign or a mark, afterwards the symbol was created.*<sup>25</sup>

In the minds and experience of these activists, the state of Kosovo has left nothing but bad signs. Yes there is a new flag that emphasizes Kosovo's status as an independent new state. But what does this flag represent? The activists choose content over form. And it is true that Kosovo, compared to other Western nation-states, is still very young, making it possible for national identities based on statehood to develop. But these first important years of what will then be history, are surrounded by mostly negativity, making this possibility small. Shpresa's answer to the question if she believes that the Kosovar identity will develop in the future if Kosovo becomes a stronger and better functioning state, illustrates this well;

*If the history was different, if the flag [meaning state] would have brought industry and a well developed economy maybe yes. Maybe if this flag was installed after people were given a choice and the freedom to hold a referendum about accepting it or not. But this was not the case. This [flag and thus the new Kosovar identity] represents a lack of freedom of choice of the people.*<sup>26</sup>

It seems that the objection these activists have against this newly created Kosovar state identity, is so strong that a future wherein Kosovo becomes a stronger and better functioning state able to create national identity vessels, is unimaginable for them. The most important reasons for this, as discussed above, are the fact that Kosovo historically has been perceived to be an Albanian state and the inability of Kosovo to fully function as a state by fulfilling the provision of the basic citizenship right to its citizens. The next chapter will discuss the way in which the activists of Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE! perceive their ethnic Albanian identity, which will not only present the second main theme of the central question of this thesis, it will shed more light on the other more or less indirect objections towards this Kosovar identity.

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<sup>25</sup> Interview, 01-03-2012

<sup>26</sup> Interview, 22-02-2012

## 5. Being Albanian

The following chapter is an analysis of the question as to how the activists of Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE! perceive their ethnic Albanian identity.

*Coniu, shqyptarë, prej gjumit çoniu, të gjithë si vllazën n'nji besë shtërngoniu. E mos shikoni kisha e xhamia: feja e shqyptarit asht shqyptaria!* One of the activists was reading this poem during the poetry night in Café Butoni, managed by a team of activists and students. This poem was written by the Albanian writer Pashko Vasa in 1880, and I heard it being recited in 2012 in Pristina. Some of the activists that were present mumbled along, knowing the words by heart. Smiles appeared on several faces, some seemed to be expressions of pride. Other facial expressions accompanied by quiet laughter seemed to reveal some feelings of awkwardness, as this poem is regarded as being very nationalistic and 'typical'. Chills went down my spine as I heard these words being said, echoing a nostalgia not based on a lived past, but a shared story passed along generations of Albanians, an ethnic group that the activists and I are a part of. The words of this poem reveal a lived reality as a continuation of history in which these young Albanians in Kosovo live. 'Wake up Albanians, wake up from your sleep, all as brothers in one faith become stronger. And don't look at churches or mosques: the faith of an Albanian is Albanianism!' The call for unification of Albanians, the call for believing in being Albanian was a highly relevant call during the Ottoman and later Serbian hegemony. These were times when Albanians were suppressed politically – losing territory and statehood - and culturally by systematic and enforced religious conversions, by forbidding them to teach their language at schools and carry out their traditions.

Today, more than a decade later, the activists of Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE! say that they as Albanians are still suppressed. The context might have changed, but they feel that there still is a need for a stronger unified Albanian population in Kosovo. During that evening a book was passed on from activist to students, all who were willing to recite poems by poets like Fan Noli and Ismail Kadare, writers known for their contribution to the Albanian emancipation. Berat who studies the Albanian language at the University of Pristina, knew a lot of the poems by heart. His passion for and knowledge of Albanian literature and poetry was fascinating. When I asked him why this was he answered by saying; *'these are real Albanian writings, of course I know them'*<sup>27</sup>. As the night went on, most of the students went back to their dorms. The activists and I were left in an empty Butoni where the *raki* was generously served. By that time the reading of poems had made way for the laptop on which video footage of performances of traditional Albanian dances and music were being played. Every poem that was being read, every song that was played and every dance that was

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<sup>27</sup> Informal conversation 01-03-2012

shown, was an act of entertainment, but at the same time a performance of their ethnic identities. At times when the activists were talking about historic Albanian figures and proposing video footage that should be shown, it looked like a battle in being Albanian. I caught myself feeling a bit ashamed. I, as an Albanian, did not know a lot of these “real Albanian” writings or historic events.

## 5.1 Born Albanian

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I wondered why I felt this. The activists themselves said when asked what it meant for them to be Albanian, that they were simply born Albanian. Or as Shpresa has said; *‘I’ve been Albanian my whole life.’*<sup>28</sup> Most of the activists found it hard to articulate what it means to be Albanian or what role their ethnicity plays in their daily life. They expressed that they are Albanian because they are simply born in an Albanian family. They speak the Albanian language, went to schools where they learned about Albanian history, listen to Albanian music, eat Albanian food etc. Being Albanian and thus belonging to this ethnic group is not a choice, it is determined by birth. As I asked Vlora about her perceptions on being Albanian, she asked me if I have seen something of the actor George Carlin. I told her I did not, which resulted in her telling me about a saying of his on which she agrees. During one of his plays he asked the audience if they were proud to be American or Irish. Then he went on by explaining that proud is a feeling that you feel after achieving something. Being American or Irish happens to you by accident. *‘I am born Albanian’*<sup>29</sup>, she added. Following this line of reasoning, I myself am Albanian as well because I am a child of two Albanian people. But during these ‘performances’ of ethnicity, I noticed that, as myself, the ones that did not know the texts or lyrics of the songs seemed to be ashamed because of this. I caught myself feeling the same way. Not knowing these poems, or at other moments details of Albanian history, made me feel less Albanian, a feeling that created a distance between me and my informants. It became clear to me more than once, that not only did I at times question my ‘Albanianness’, but so did the activists. There was one occasion where Berat introduced me to a *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* activist from Albania. He told him that I was a new activist from Holland. *‘But’*, he said, *‘she is just like us’*. *‘You know when I came to realize that? When she predicted my future in my coffee cup. She knows these detailed things from our culture’*<sup>30</sup>. Even though they expressed that being Albanian is not a choice, they were born in that way, examples like these show that ethnic identity cannot seize to be an important source of identification without some sort of confirmation and repetition of traditions and other characteristics of this identity vessel that confirm the cultural competence of its holders (Eriksen 2002: 35).

The next section will show that in the case of *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* activists, ethnic identity

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<sup>28</sup> Interview, 22-02-2012

<sup>29</sup> Interview, 10-02-2012

<sup>30</sup> Informal conversation, 18-02-2012

has another important component that makes it besides a 'natural' and cultural phenomenon also a highly political phenomenon.

## 5.2 Linking the Ethnic Group to the State

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On the 6<sup>th</sup> of March, an interesting form of this 'confirmation and repetition' of ethnic identity took place. This day marked the 14<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of the Jashari family. The key figure of this family was Adem Jashir, a former UÇK fighter and chief commander of the Drenica operation zone of the UÇK. In 1998, he together with fifty-two of his family members got murdered by the Yugoslav national army and police (in that time mostly in the hands of the Serbian republic)(Krieger 2001: 96). In 2008, after the declaration of independence, Adem Jashari was titled a national hero by the prime minister of Kosovo. That day, fourteen years after this momentous massacre had taken place, the political figures, some of the activists of *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* and myself went to the graves of this family where a commemoration is organized every year by the state. A large group ranging from politicians to schoolchildren were present that day, paying homage to these fallen Albanian heroes. Vlora, one of the activists with whom I drove to the graves, explained to me and the others why there were so many little children visiting the graves that day;

*'The schoolchildren that we saw visiting the graves probably got a day off from school on this day. They usually go to the graves in the morning with the class and then get the afternoon off.'*

Shkodran, an Albanian activist from Albania who has been working at *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* since 2010, reacted on that;

*'That's a good thing.'*

Vlora;

*'Other children from other schools unfortunately don't have a day off on this day.'*<sup>31</sup>

As the large groups of people walked by the graves, most of them carrying the Albanian flag but some of them also the new Kosovar one, I was wondering what kind of effect taking part in this commemoration and maybe ritual has. The school children were too young to fully comprehend the reasons why the tombs they were looking at were there and why their teacher has brought them there. But the very fact that they get a day off to be there and that Shkodran says that 'that is a good thing', explains how much importance is placed upon passing on the historic legacy of the Jashari family. Shkodran's remarks on the whole event illustrates this well;

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<sup>31</sup> Informal conversation, 06-03-2012

*The place where they placed the graves is well thought out, it fits in the panorama of the village. Also I found it really beautiful how there wasn't made any difference between the sacrifices these people made, you couldn't tell that from the graves. Adem Jashari's grave is the same as that of a five year old Jashari offspring. I think it is a good thing for Kosovo that they have these more recent war heroes, in Albania they don't have them. This can help built up the state.<sup>32</sup>*

This remark contains two interesting parts. The first is the reference to the death of the Jashari family as a sacrifice. As explained in the second chapter, before the formal independence of Kosovo was established, the armed struggle of the UÇK was widely known to be an initiative of Albanians to create a sovereign state of their own (Hedges 1999: 9). One could say that labeling their death as a sacrifice, makes these historic figures martyrs of their country. This intrinsically forges a link between Albanians and Kosovo, or the ethnic group and the state and gives the perception of the nation a highly ethnic character. The second interesting part of the comment that Shkodran made in relation to the commemoration, is the fact that he refers to the Jashari family as war heroes who will enable the process of state-building in Kosovo. The idea behind this is in line with the first part of the comment, for this remark does exactly the same. When saying and believing that having war heroes like the Jashari will help to build the state, Shkodran envisions the Kosovar state to be an Albanian one. Just like the Minister President did on the ceremony in the honor of the former UÇK commander Zahir Pajaziti and two of his close collaborators and soldiers Edmond Hoxha and Hakif Zejnullahu (see chapter 1). This idea is supported by Baumann (1999) who states that the nation as a unity has an ethnic character and forms the basis for state making and nation building. The idea behind this is that the world is populated by different peoples and each of these has its own distinct culture. The final expression of this cultural unity is the making of a state, an act that promotes the cultural or ethnic group to the status, some say liberty, of a nation (Baumann 1999: 19). With this, Baumann adds another dimension to the understanding of this concept. For, in his view a nation can only be called as such if it has some sort of political control over a state.

This almost myth-like thinking and talking about the Jashari sacrifices is not supported by everyone. That day, after the commemoration was over and we were back in Pristina, I got into a conversation with Lenart and Luan while we were walking towards a restaurant to lunch. Lenart was talking about what the people in the car he was driving in towards the graves were talking about and what kind of discussion they had.

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<sup>32</sup> Informal conversation, 06-03-2012

*They talked in a way too folklore manner when they were talking about the commemoration. I am against the creation of and keeping intact the myth of the Jashari or of Rrugova and Skenderbeu for that matter. The movement was in the beginning of its existence too focused on the unification of the 'komb' (the nation) just out of emotional and symbolic reasons. Now this has changed, now the political and economic factors are the main reasons why the movement is an advocate of unification.*<sup>33</sup>

Luan, who was walking with us, added to this that;

*The wrong thing about this mystification is that it creates a distance between those figures along with their acts and us. It places them in a position that is above us. We look at them and their acts as something that we cannot or should not accomplish. No, we stand right next to them. We should continue what they started.*<sup>34</sup>

This was not the first time that Lenart expressed the fact that he disagrees with this type of expression of, what he himself called nationalism. Discussing the television appearance of the night before one of the political figures of VETËVENDOSJE! at the office, he told the others how he did not like the frequent reference he made to the '*bashkimi kombëtar*', literally meaning the national unification, but refers to the unification of the states where Albanians live. In his eyes, this rhetoric was too folkloristic, a term used by other activists as well to describe a form of nationalism that focuses too much on symbolism and patriotisms for the wrong reasons. The activists expressed on numerous occasions that nationalism and patriotism should be constructive, meaning that love for ones people should be expressed in activism and contributing to bringing about the needed changes for Kosovo as a state and the citizens making up its society. Linda, a seventeen year old activist and thereby the youngest, expressed this in her interview as well when I asked her who the Albanian is:

*The Albanian is someone who tries to achieve the establishment of the collective good. He knows that he is a cosmopolitan; he is not a banal nationalist. He should be in LVV because that is what will be good for Kosovo.*<sup>35</sup>

Thus, nationalism is clearly linked to the state, making it an ideology that serves as tool in state formation. Here a friction in perception is born. Nationalism is the ideology linked to a social category that is called the nation, whether this category is perceived to be formed by ethnic unity or based on civic grounds with citizenship belonging to a particular state as the deciding criterion. When stating that nationalism is a state building tool, a mechanism for changing certain political, social and

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<sup>33</sup> Informal conversation, 06-03-2012

<sup>34</sup> Informal conversation, 06-03-2012

<sup>35</sup> Interview, 16-03-2012

economic structures in Kosovo, it indirectly indicates that the nation is perceived as a category derived from statehood. But as the comments above have show, the activists talk about a form of nationalism that lives among Albanians. Furthermore, when asked to which nation they belong, or what their nationality is, all activists answered Albanian. Also, when asked to which ethnic group and 'komb' they belonged, all answered Albanian. This means that their perception and understanding of national identity is based on the 'ethnic' model. Gellner (1997), a scholar who focuses mostly on the political aspects of nationalism, also defines this national unity as a synonym of an ethnic group; 'In brief, nationalism is a theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones' (Gellner in Eriken 2002: 98). In this view, nationalisms are ethnic ideologies which proclaim that their ethnic group should have the control over the territorial space that the state embarks and its political institutions, making the establishment of a link between the nation and the state the building block for any nationalistic ideology.

One part of the interview with Lenart illustrates well how this perception and linkage has become such a 'natural' way to think and feel about this manner. As part of the interview, I asked him what was written on his identity card about his nationality. He got a bit confused and said that he was not sure if his nationality is mentioned on this official state document. He showed his identity card on which it says that he is a citizen of the Republic of Kosovo, but there is no mentioning of his nationality. I told him that I thought it was strange; on my passport you can read that I am a Dutch citizen, having a Dutch nationality. The confusion got bigger as I showed him my passport, confirming the fact that citizenship is what determines your nationality in the Netherlands. When asked him he could envisage a future where the state of Kosovo could create the vessel in which national identification based on statehood would replace the idea and feeling of nationality being connected to the ethnic Albanian identity, he answered negatively. He was not the only one.

### 5.3 Ethnicity as a Political Strategy

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This way of conceptualizing nationalism, as a tool or strategy for state-building, has a strong instrumentalist connotation to it. An interesting fact, often vocalized by the informants, that surprised me and which at first thought might seem to contradict the 'naturalness' of ethnic identification, is the perception of the ethnic identity as a political strategy as well, which is in line with the instrumentalist way nationalism is perceived. The first encounter I had with this perception was during a conversation I had with Shpresa on our way to a lunchroom. After talking a bit about my research, she started to express her ideas about the different concerning issues.

*I identify more with the ethnic Albanian identity but not out of emotional reasons or out of some sort of dedication to the flag (Albanian flag). The reason for this probably is the*

*way my parents raised me and my brother when we were living in Switzerland. They never really did anything to stimulate a sort of affiliation with the Albanian ethnicity. But, I still do identify with it but purely out of political instrumentalism (sic.) It is necessary for Albanians in Kosovo to do the same in these times where not only their own government but also the international community is trying to create this new Kosovar identity. It was easy for them (the international community) to set aside issues of ethnicity in their own countries because they have more important issues like the economy to worry about. If we present ourselves as Albanians we will get more politically noticed.<sup>36</sup>*

When asked why this was not possible by embracing the Kosovar identity and presenting yourself as a Kosovar she answered that this identity is simply not sufficient enough yet. Neither could she envisage a future wherein the Kosovar identity would ever be strong enough to be embraced by Albanians in Kosovo because of the fact that Albanians have always identified with their ethnicity and they fought in the name of this ethnicity. Several other activists explained as well that because of the fact that Albanians have always been suppressed because they are Albanians only reinforced the affiliation with the ethnic group. *'If I am suppressed as an Albanian, I will fight against this as an Albanian. Just like I will do if my rights as a woman are not respected'*<sup>37</sup>, Vlora said. This suppression is not merely a past thing according to many of the activists. Even though their lives as Albanians in Kosovo are no longer defined by war, they feel that because of the fact that they have no right to SELF-DETERMINATION, the suppression is still going on. By openly identifying with the Albanian identity, they are trying to send a signal out to the international world and the current government of Kosovo that they are not willing to accept some identity (the new Kosovar identity; see Chapter 2) which is imposed on them without considering their wishes.

According to Cohen (1974), social interaction and organization are essentially dual phenomena: they comprise aspects of utility and aspects of meaning. When this is applied to ethnic ideology this duality comes down to its immediate appeal because of the fact that it offers answers to 'the perennial problems of life': the questions of origins, destiny and, ultimately, the meaning of life. However, Cohen argues, ethnicity must also have a practical function in order to be viable (Cohen 1974, xii-xv). According to Gellner (1997) and Erikson (2002), when this function is getting political control over a territory, nationalistic ideology is its driving and mobilizing force, making the perception of the nation based on ethnic grounds. Cohen mentions another 'instrumentalist' characteristic of ethnicity by stating that ethnic identities develop in response to functional

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<sup>36</sup> Interview, 22-02-2012

<sup>37</sup> Interview, 10-04-2012

organizational requirements. In this light, ethnicity simply is a particular form of informal political organization where cultural boundaries are evoked so that the group's resources or 'symbolic capital' can be secured, making ethnic identity and thereby the perception of the nation based on ethnic grounds a highly political act/ strategy (Cohen 1974, xii-xv).

In the case of these Albanian activists, Cohen's argument that ethnicity has an immediate appeal because it offers certain meaning creating mechanisms concerning questions of origins and destiny, is a very valid one. Most of the activists emphasize the importance of history and thus origin. Ilire is one of them;

*A people is characterized by its history. It gives you a certain baggage, heroes, culture, literature etc. I think that 'vazhdimësi' (continuation) is important. Take for example the issue about cultural heritage in Kosovo right now. There are wall illustrations found in old Orthodox churches of men wearing 'plisa' (traditional Albanian for men) even though the Serbs are now claiming that is Serbian cultural heritage. These illustrations create a line between the past and present.<sup>38</sup>*

Shpresa:

*Historically, they have tried to change us, but we have always been Albanians. if we take this away, then what are we? History gives people the right to go the way they want to go.<sup>39</sup>*

These perceptions of *their* people adheres to the 'ethnic' model of the nation, for it emphasizes the importance of the belief that certain people share the same story of origin and that is connected to a certain place and that because of this they form a community and therefore a nation. As Anderson has stated, these activists do not know who these people that are illustrated on the walls of the Orthodox churches are and will never know most of their fellow-members of the 'nation', meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion (Anderson 2006: 6). But, as explained above, this same young female, Shpresa, was also the one that clearly emphasized the functionalist or instrumentalist reasons of ethnic identification. This supports the idea that identity processes are fundamentally dual and compromise aspects of meaning as well as politics in a wide sense (Eriksen 2002: 77). This means that they are symbolic, creating meaning and feelings of belonging for people as well as instruments to be used politically, socially and economically.

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<sup>38</sup> Interview, 23-02-2012

<sup>39</sup> Interview, 22-02-2012

This type of understanding of identity puts people, the holders of identities, in position where there is a lot of freedom of choice and thus making agency an important factor in how people perceive, express and carry out their identities.

#### 5.4 Flexible Identification

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Agency in perception and expression of identities based on nationality and ethnicity again proved to be an important factor among the activists during the weekend trip we made to Tirana, Albania's capital. I was accompanied with Ilire and Berat on the drive from Pristina to Tirana. In the restaurant where we stopped for a coffee, the boyfriend of one of the parliament members that was with us in the car asked me who I was and what I was doing here. He had never met me before, so I told him about my research, triggering a conversation with the rest about the topics of my research. Berat started to ask me questions:

Berat:

*Do you have any idea how Albanians in Kosovo identify themselves?*

I:

*Yes, probably be as Albanians.*

Berat:

*Exactly. Did you go into the city to see the celebrations of the 17<sup>th</sup>?<sup>40</sup>*

I:

*Yes I did. I was very surprised with how little it was celebrated, I expected more.*

All agreed with me and said that people were just tired of it and it isn't really a 'hit' anymore to celebrate the independence.

Berat:

*You should observe pictures of the celebrations of 28<sup>th</sup><sup>41</sup> and pictures of the 17<sup>th</sup>. You will see a huge difference in how people celebrate. This indicates perfectly how Albanians in Kosovo identify themselves.<sup>42</sup>*

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<sup>40</sup> Here he refers to the independence day of Kosovo.

<sup>41</sup> Here he refers to the 28<sup>th</sup> of November; the day when in 1912 Albania gained its independence from the Ottoman Rule.

Clearly, Berat was trying to tell me that no Albanian in Kosovo would call himself/herself a Kosovar over an Albanian. The new national and state based identity has no leverage among the people. What was interesting, is the fact that this same young man, Berat, slightly changes his discourse concerning these matters as we neared the Albanian borders. In the car, on our way towards Tirana Berat continuously spoke about 'we' and 'they' when talking about Albanians from Kosovo and Albanians from Albania. He joked about the differences he saw on the streets, making fun of the way these Albanians dressed, the buildings etc. Yll, an older activist who was driving the car said; *'why do you speak about' we' and 'they and not us? We are one people'*. Rron replied by saying; *'I was referring to the two peoples as two peoples in two different states, not to the 'komb' (here Albanians as a nation). Kombi is a emotional thing, the state is merely a political unit.'*<sup>43</sup>

Here he makes the distinction in understanding of the nation or a people in the same way as Smith (1991) does, namely; between the ethnic and civic model. As much as these activists, among which Berat, stress the ethnic bond they share with Albanians in Albania and the similarities on other aspects that these two groups of people (even though they usually don't refer to these people as two different groups) when they are in Kosovo, in Tirana they seemed to see and vocalize the differences between Albanians in Albania and Albanians in Kosovo. In Albania the geographical context seemed to matter. Here the discourse changed from talking about we, in they over here and we over there. Thus in another state, their status as citizens from Kosovo seemed to matter more, reflecting the notion of flexible identities in which the holders of identities are in position where there is a lot of freedom of choice.

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<sup>42</sup> Informal conversation, 17-02-2012

<sup>43</sup> Informal conversation, 17-02-2012

## Conclusion

The process of writing this thesis started with some questions raised on the effects the formally creation of a state in Kosovo has on identification among Albanian *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* activists living in Kosovo. This resulted in a research focused on the relation between the national identity and the ethnic identity among young *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* activists in Kosovo. The very fact that the academic debate within the field of Cultural Anthropology has not reached a consensus on what the exact definition of the 'nation' is or what it entails, is evidence of the flexible, ever-changing and interpretation sensitive character this phenomenon has. Smith (1991) is one of the authors who has tried to structure the concept of the 'nation' by differentiating between two understandings of it. The one is labeled the 'civic' and the other the 'ethnic' model. The civic model conceptualized the nation on territorial, political and legal grounds (Smith 1991:9). This means that the nation as a community is formed by 'civil forces', meaning that membership is acquired by having citizenship of the state to which a certain nation belongs. The 'ethnic' model differs from its civic counterpart because of its emphasis on a community of birth, kinship and native culture. Thus, the place of history, myths and language is more central in this model of the nation. Baumann (1999) seems to support this approach on ethnicity as he argues that the nation as a unity has an ethnic character and forms the basis for state making and nation building. With this, he adds another dimension to the understanding of this concept. For, in his view a nation can only be called as such if it has some sort of political control over a state. When these different understandings are translated into the current paradigm on identity theory, nationhood or nationality as identity vessels are more and more so regarded as fundamentally dual and compromising aspects of meaning as well as politics in a wide sense (Eriksen 2002: 77). This means that they are symbolic, creating meaning and feelings of belonging for people as well as instruments to be used politically, socially and economically. This type of understanding of these concepts puts people, the holders of these identities, in position where there is a lot of freedom of choice and thus making agency an important factor in how people perceive, express and carry them out.

As this thesis has shown, the perceptions of the national and ethnic identity among *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* activists does not follow the strict line that this distinction between two models of the nation presents. As we have seen in chapter 2, the effects of Yugoslav succession wars, the abolishment of Kosovo's autonomy in 1989 by former Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic and the Albanian's struggle and sacrifices for independence of Kosovo all affected the perceptions discourse on what national identity is. Within the political arena in Kosovo after the war of 98-99, the reconstruction of Albanian identities became somewhat of a project which was characterized by two strands. The first was the ethno-nationalist strand with the focus on myth of an ancient past and of a

continuing independence struggle, highlighting heroism, sacrifice, victimhood and trauma (Ingimundarson 2007: 95). Thus showing strong 'ethnic' components in the perception of the 'nation. The other incorporated a civic vision based on the idea that an independent Kosovo should be firmly anchored in supranational bodies like the European Union and NATO (Ingimundarson 2007: 95). This meant that a switch in thinking and talking about nationhood had to take place, presenting it as a post-ethnic and all inclusive concept. These frictions or maybe even contradictions in depicting what the nation is and who its members are born in the political arena, have undoubtedly affected the way the *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* activists perceive this concept, the role their ethnic identity has in it and the way in which they identify with it.

With the official declaration of independence in 2008, this friction within the political arena did not vanish, it merely changed its form and content. As was shown in chapter 3, different state institutions of the Republic of Kosovo, appear to be trapped in a situation wherein, based on the new constitution and the Ahtisaari Proposal, the Kosovar state should be represented as a multi-ethnic state with nationality being based on citizenship. But in practice, things like organizing official ceremonies in the honor of former UÇK soldiers, speeches of the Prime Minister labeling these men heroes of the state, creating regions of high level self-rule for Serbian minorities and thereby underscoring ethnic division, and the contradictions in the constitution itself concerning the nation, paint the picture a bit differently. For, this picture is one where the nation is still portrayed by the way of the ethnic model, honoring Albanian UÇK soldiers as heroes, referring to symbols as state symbols and symbols of the *komb* at the same time and not halting people to sell and carry around the Albanian flags on the fourth anniversary of the declaration of independence. In chapter 4 it became clear that the activists of *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* are highly critical towards the government and the international community who are currently the most important actors in the state-building process at the moment. This influences the perceptions these young people have of the newly created national Kosovar identity. All activists clearly objected the new Kosovar nationality as an identity vessel. The most important reasons for this, is the fact that Kosovo historically has been perceived to be an Albanian state and the inability of Kosovo to fully function as a state by fulfilling the provision of the basic citizenship right to its citizens. Another important and returning theme concerning the new national Kosovar identity is its perception by the informants as something that is fake and not created by the will of the people of Kosovo. This means that this state based national identity is perceived to represent the mere fact why these activists believe that the people in Kosovo need *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!*; there is a lack of the right to self-determination, the very name of the movement. Moreover, there is a lack of substantial safeguarding of the provision of citizenship rights from state institution.

When these factors are linked to the perception of the ethnic Albanian identity among the

*Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* activists as outlined in chapter 5, it becomes clear that this identity that might feel 'natural' to them because they are born out of Albanian parents, they speak the Albanian language and are part of the culture, is also somewhat of a last resort for citizens like them who feel that they have no state. As one of the activists has said; *'If we are not Albanian, then what are we?'* (see chapter 5). Out of this frustration, the activist embrace the ethnic Albanian identity also as a form of resistance against the suppression they face as citizens of Kosovo. Even though their lives as Albanians in Kosovo are no longer defined by war, they feel that because of the fact that they have no right to SELF-DETERMINATION, the suppression is still continuing to be a factor which marks their lives as citizens of Kosovo. By openly identifying with the Albanian identity, they are trying to send a signal out to the international community and the current government of Kosovo that they are not willing to accept some identity which is imposed on them without considering their wishes. Thus, the relationship between the new national Kosovar identity and the ethnic identity is one of friction. It is a relationship in which the existence of the one enforces the other.

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## Appendix I.

### Abstract

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Ever since the first nation-states came to be the new geo-political ordering and functioning of the world, questions surrounding belonging and identity have gotten new dimensions. For decades, nationality has been one of the strongest and lasting identity vessels, able to unite people and start wars in the name of it. This thesis is an examination of these concepts. It is a study of the relationship between national identity and ethnic identity in a context wherein the first has been tried to given new shape and content because of the newly formed state, namely Kosovo. After a long process of negotiations, the Ahtisaari Plan was accepted and Kosovo declared its independence on 17 February 2008. Since that day, the government of Kosovo adheres to the Plan in the process of state-building. By writing a new constitution (mostly based on this proposal), institutionalizing new national symbols and having a pro-European agenda, the current government of Kosovo is - formally - doing everything it can to convey the message that it is a new, multiethnic and a possible EU member state. Thus, officially, the state institutions of Kosovo are enabling the process of the formation of a civic model of nationality which entails that the nation as a community is formed by 'civil forces', meaning that membership is acquired by having citizenship of the state to which a certain nation belongs.

A group that has spread a voice of critique about different issues regarding the state-building process in Kosovo from 2008 up until this day, is *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* (Movement for SELF-DETERMINATION), the research population of this thesis. The activists of this movement are young Albanian citizens of Kosovo who are aware of the friction and frustration that form a constant in one's life in this young state. Moreover, these people are those who made the conscious choice to be agents, actively working to bring social, political and economic changes about in their society. This has effected how they think and feel about the newly formed state based national identity. Living in a failed state, where their perspectives as university students are slim, they feel that the new national Kosovar identity does not offer any positive attributes to ones identity. Moreover, this identity is perceived to be something that is fake and not created by the will of the people of Kosovo itself. The Kosovar is according to them yet another sign of the lack of SELF-DETERMINATION in Kosovo. It is something that has been created by the international community, accepted by the corrupt political elite and has to be 'swallowed' by the Albanians while they, the Albanians, are the ones who have fought for the existence of this country during the 90's not the inhabitants of this so called multi-ethnic state.

This linkage between the ethnic group and the state can be found in the perceptions of the ethnic Albanian identity among the activists as well. On numerous occasions they expressed that the very fact that the state of Kosovo has been created and that it declared independence from Serbia is

an Albanian merit; it was the Albanian population who wanted this and, again, they are the ones who fought for this. Thus ethnicity was a tool of claiming political control over the territory of Kosovo. Even though the war is over and Kosovo declared its independence, the activists feel that their ethnic identities can be used as a political strategy to show the international community and the current government of Kosovo that the people are not willing to accept some identity which is imposed on them without considering their wishes. Moreover, embracing the Albanian identity strategically, is a form of resistance towards the lack of having a voice as a citizen in Kosovo (lack of self-determination). This is somewhat in contrast with the perception on being Albanian is as merely something you were born with; the activists were raised by Albanian parents, speak the language, know the history etc. But contrasting perceptions are not the same as mutually exclusive ones. The activists are exactly that; activists. They are using something they feel they are because of birth strategically to fight for something they are not; citizens of a state in which SELF-DETERMINATION prevails.

## Appendix II.

### Reflection

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This thesis is the result of my first fieldwork experience as a beginning anthropologist. This experience has had some significant effects on my perceptions on anthropological research and on myself personally. Being in Kosovo from January the 29<sup>th</sup> until the 11<sup>th</sup> of April and spending a significant amount of time at the movement and with the activists has proven to be an intensive adventure. During the second week of my stay in the country's capital Pristina, I registered as an activist which resulted in me spending five days in the week, from nine until five, at the office and often during the weekends as well. As the rapport between me and the activists grew stronger, I befriended these young Kosovar citizens as well, often spending time with them after office hours. All of this has had positive effects on the process of obtaining data, because I won over their trust and respect as I contributed to the movement and became a friend to them as well. It enabled me to get closer to them and get the true story behind the at times political discourse in the line of the *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!* ideology.

Before going to Kosovo, I was already interested in the movement and their ideology. Being born in Kosovo and being Albanian myself, I felt a form of affiliation before even meeting the people of *Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!*. This may have affected the way in which I analyzed the data that I obtained at times. But, as I was constantly aware of the existence of this possibility, I used the technique of writing down a reflective paragraph for each of the sections of data that were relevant. Furthermore, I spent time with family during my stay there. With them I talked about the research and what I had observed. As they are not part of the movement, their reflections and ideas about how I understood things served as good check-ups. Besides these possible moments of subjectivity caused by the fact that I am an Albanian and support the movement, I believe that these aspects also contributed to the research. It did not only help me to build up the rapport relatively quick with the activists, as mentioned above, it also helped me to get a more thorough understanding of that what I was observing and analyzing. Knowing and understanding a lot about Albanian culture (I am raised by my parents this way) and being aware of the political context and history of Kosovo, I was able to ask the right questions and understand the answers.

The one thing that may be labeled as a bad experience that I had during my fieldwork is the fact that doing qualitative research has led me to question Cultural Anthropology as a science. I have experienced at first hand that with the technique of qualitative research in which the research instrument is the researcher himself/herself, you can influence not only how you understand the data obtained but also what kind of data you obtain. Even though I myself have used precautionary measures like adhering to a topic list for the informal interviews, reflecting as much as possible

during the process of data analysis and validating the obtained data as much as possible, I still wonder to what extent this minimizes subjectivity. I believe that every starting anthropologist should be trained intensively before going to 'the field' in how he/she can circumvent this trap that is inherent to conducting qualitative research.

## Appendix II.

### Photographs

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a. 'Blej Shqip'- 'Buy Albanian'



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<sup>44</sup> Photograph taken by author in Pristina 30-01-2012