

GUESTS OR SISTERS: ALBANIAN WOMEN'S ACTIVISM IN THE THREE NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES (MACEDONIA, KOSOVA AND ALBANIA)

By

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Abstract

This study uses Floya Anthias' and Nira Yuval Davis' theory on women and nation to analyze Albanian women's activism in three countries (Macedonia, Kosova and Albania) during the period of 1990-2010. Analyzing narratives from twenty interviews conducted with Albanian women from Kosova and Macedonia, I track their activism and the identity negotiation processes (of gender and nation) during the conflicts and their cross-border collaborations.

The first chapter examines collaborations, tensions and divisions between the women, when trying to establish a transnational Albanian Women's Alliance. While the second examines the intersection of the identity negotiation processes of women who challenged the roles of "passive actors in conflict times" and used the "national cause" to challenge the male dominated areas (such as political structures and nation-building processes). The last chapter gives an overview from a transnational perspective on how the transformation of "hard" to "soft" borders between the bordering countries, impacts women and the future aspirations for "Great Albania".

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Introduction

In this research I analyze women's activism and the negotiation of their identities while striving to strengthen their position into the political arena and the nation building process. The women that I study share same nationality, same language, and (more or less) similar cultural values, yet they live in three different countries. I track their activism in politics and in the non-governmental sector, within the borders of their countries, and outside of them, with a special focus on their cross-border cooperation. In addition, I also study the processes of performing their gender and national identities. More specifically, I study Albanian women living in Macedonia, Kosova¹ and Albania and their activism during the period of 1990-2010. I have chosen this specific period of time because there have been serious occurrences, like conflicts and wars in these countries (Kosova war 1998-1999; the armed conflict in Macedonia 2001; massive demonstrations in Albania 1990 and 1997); during and after which there has been a rise of women's collaboration. Given that the main goal of this research is to study women living outside of their "homeland country", Albanian women from Kosova and Macedonia will be the main focus of my research. The performance of their activism and identities within the framework of the so called "national liberation" will be the main focus of the study.

Women's rejection in masculine predominated areas is seen even in the process of nation-building of the state (Connell, 2004). The nation, in its own construction, relies in the family model (Balibar & Wallerstein, 2002). In this process men are the ones who are placed in centered positions of leading the nation, while women are left with the "secondary status".

¹ The term Kosova is the Albanian name of Kosovo. Kosovo was used by the Serbians and the English-speaking people for a long time. However, after its independence the Albanian-speaking government started to use the term Kosova to the public. Serbia still refers to it as Kosovo, but since the governments in UK, USA, Australia and Canada which are important English-speaking states, use the term Kosova, I will be using it in my thesis.

Moreover, the status and the reputation of one's nation are still determined by its masculine capabilities (Ivekovic, 2001). Women present in the political sphere have tried to break these boundaries by finding specific ways to involve themselves in the national processes and state practices. Anthias and Davis (1989), emphasize five different ways in which women tend to participate in these processes. One of the ways which they identify is women try to "incorporate themselves in the national and state processes as participants in national, economic, political and military struggles (p.7)."

I take the war in Kosova (1997-1998) and the conflict in Macedonia (2001) as the main case studies through which I study women's activism before and after it. I try to reconstruct the events based on the narrations of the twenty interviews (see Appendix 1) conducted with women activists from Kosova and Macedonia. In addition to this I analyze the performance of the identity negotiation process in the interviews, during the conflictual times when they are allowed to contribute together with the men for the "well-being" on the "nation". I found my interviewees to be using this phrase (the "well-being" of the "nation") very often in cases when they talk about the discriminations towards their nationality/ethnicity, thus I will use it as such throughout the thesis without entering into theoretical implications connected to this concept.

My research question is two-fold since the two parts of the research question are intertwined and they complement each other. First, I ask how Albanian women's collaboration developed during the period 1990-2010, especially during the war in Kosova (1997-1999) and the conflict in Macedonia (2001). Subsequently I ask how these women have negotiated their identities within the process of contributing to the "well being" of the "nation" as they defined it, especially in the conflict cases I have chosen; and to what extent has this process influenced the development of women's activism in the three countries together.

I present the findings from my research within a framework constituted from two perspectives: transnational and the gender/nation intersectional perspective. Hence my argument is divided in three different sub-arguments:

- (1) Starting from the transnational perspective I argue that during conflictual times, Albanian women's collaboration in the three countries grew to a higher level. However, the rise of the activism was manifested in different levels in the three countries. Factors such as different political regimes, different political systems, differences in enjoying citizenship rights (minority, majority rights) and different fields of activism created significant divisions among them.
- (2) Looking from the gender/nation intersectional perspective, I argue that the paradigm of the national liberation influenced the construction of their political identity too. I argue that the variation of the identity negotiation processes (based on prioritizing either the category of nation or gender, or trying to balance both of them), added more divisions among them. Thus making it impossible to achieve mutual consent for the consolidation of their collaboration into an institutionalized organization.
- (3) Relying again on the transnational perspective, I argue that even though their participation in the "national struggles" (as they call it) during conflict times helped them align together and strengthen their cooperation; the transformation of "hard" borders into "soft" borders in the post conflict period, lead to the lowering of the attempts for the institutionalization of Albanian Women's Alliance within the three countries.

In the first chapter, I analyze Albanian Women's Activism within the countries they live in, and then I study their engagement to institutionalize Albanian Women's Alliance. Since the

literature on Albanian women's activism in the last twenty years is scarce, and there is not any documented literature on Albanian women's collaboration within the three countries collectively, in the specified period (1990-2010), I dedicate this chapter to this matter. Relying on the historical context I build the chapter by explaining and analyzing the events as narrated in the interviews conducted with the women interviewed. This chapter provides broader analysis of the beginning and the development of Albanian women's collaboration in Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania. My main goal here is to analyze the factors that caused tensions and divisions among women's organizing and collaboration in this period.

In the second chapter, I study the identity negotiation processes of Albanian women in the three countries. I focus my analysis on the discourses and symbols they use when positioning themselves towards the "nation"; how they are constructing "Albanianness" as women; and how that has shaped their individual identities within the collective identity of the "Albanian nation". In addition I track the variations in the construction of their narrated identities, and see how that has affected the attempts for the institutionalization of women's cooperation in the three countries.

The last chapter is dedicated to exploring the impacts of the official and "imaginary" borders of the three countries in relation to women's engagement and the construction of their identities. First I analyze how their location and their activities inside and outside the national borders of their countries influenced their identities and their ties with the Albanian women from the other countries. In addition, I analyze how the "softening"² of borderlines between the three countries affected the collective aspirations for national unification, especially women's

²I have borrowed this term from Mostov's theory on hard and soft borders. Refer to chapter 5 for further elaboration.

inspirations for the unification of their collaboration into an institutionalized organization (Albanian Women's Alliance).

I conclude listing the factors of the narrated differences and divisions among the Albanian women in the three countries. I refer here to the differences in the political regimes, political systems, differences in enjoying citizenship rights (minority, majority rights), and differences in fields of activism had a great impact in shaping the future of Albanian women's organizing in the three countries. In addition, the variations in prioritizing identity categories, added even more to the emphasizing of the divisions. However, in cases when gender was prioritized, women's pursuit for women's rights and collaboration grew too.

Lastly I conclude the changes in the "imaginary" and official borders, as well as the softening of the borderlines between the three countries in the after-conflict period, had a significant impact in the decision for Albanian Women's Alliance. In relation to this I conclude that, even though the idea for Albanian Women's Alliance was based on "nationalist aspirations", later on it paved the path for Albanian women to expand their collaboration from "co-national" to a multicultural level.

The main concepts that will be used throughout my thesis are: "Albanian women", "nation", "activism" and "identity". Additionally questions of "the state" and the "nation-state" will also emerge. Thus, before going to the next chapter, I want to clarify the way these concepts are interpreted throughout the thesis.

When I say Albanian women, I do not refer to all the Albanian women rather than the group of women activists that I interviewed and the other women activists who have been indirectly involved into these processes. In order not to make long repetitions I refer to them as women from Kosova, Albania, Macedonia. With respect to the states they live, I make

distinction of the nationalities in each of the three countries. For the ones living in Kosova I use Albanian women from Kosova or just women from Kosova. I do not use “Kosovar women”, since that refers to women who are not Albanian, yet they live in Kosova. The distinction for Albanian women in Macedonia is clearer, since during the interviews none of them identified as Macedonian, rather as an Albanian from Macedonia. Thus throughout the thesis I will be using Albanian women from Macedonia or just women from Macedonia. Lastly, I refer to Albanian women from Albania, as women from Albania since Albanians make up 95 % (“Encyclopedia of the Nations”, n.d.) of the population in the country, and the distinction of the name with the 5 % of minority groups is quite strict. An additional important detail I want to mention here is that these women belong to the intellectual elite in the countries they live in.

The concept of the “nation” is the most common used concept in my thesis. Through the narrated stories of my interviewees I found out that the way they talk about this concept is related to concept of the nation as an “imagined community”. The women I interviewed live in different countries; however they talk about their co-national fellows as people with whom they have very close ties/relationships. As Andersson explains, these people “will never know most of their-fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in their minds of each lives the image of their communion (Andersson, 1991, p.6)”. As it will be shown in the following chapters, Albanian women talk about the other Albanian women in the other countries as their “sisters” until the moment when they meet each other and realize the number of differences between them, despite their “shared” nationality. Even though concepts such as ethnic community are more appropriate when describing their ties and national relationship, I use the concept of nation, since this is the concept they use to talk about their national belonging. This type of conceptualization carries an emphasized essentialization of the nationality; therefore the

nationalist discourse is quite present in the discourses these women use. In order to use the concept of nation in their context, and the way they interpret it I use it in quotation marks.

The main social categories which constitute one's identity are – gender, class, religion, nationality/ethnicity, race, location etc. In my study, when I talk about women's identity I refer to it as a social category with which people identify in certain circumstances and for certain purposes. In the case of Albanian women and the composition of their identity I concentrate my study only on two social categories- gender and nation. When talking about national identity, based on the respondents' explanations from the interviews, I interpret it as identity based on the grounds of collectivity, composed of different intersecting social categories (gender, class, religion etc. which are), preceded by the category of nation. To be more precise, I base the definition of national identity on Smith's definition of ethnic communities. According to him ethnic community can be identified with these six attributes: "a collective name; a myth or common ancestry; shared historical moments; elements of common culture; an association with a specific "homeland", a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population (Smith, 1991, p.21)." The category of nation in Albanian women's identity, relates to this definition since, unlike traditional definitions on national identity, this one includes the feature of associating themselves with a specific "homeland". Since the women in my study live in different countries, in the interviews they identified with their specific "homeland"- Albania. I will elaborate more on this issue on chapter 4 and 5.

The question of the "nation" initiates questions about the state and the nation-state. The state according to Weber's definition is a political organization which has a centralized government and holds a legitimate monopolized power to use force within the territory of its established borders (Salmon, 2008). This definition is legitimate for Albania and Macedonia, but

not for Kosova which was considered as a province until 2008. The situation gets even more complicated for the three countries if it's analyzed from the nation-state perspective. As Brubaker (1992) states "The modern state is not only a territorial state, embedded in a system of coordinate territorial states; it is also a nation-state (p. 27)." The nation-state itself relies on the nation as the most important characteristic of the state and its citizenship. For Albania, the format of a nation state is not problematic since 95 % of its citizens are Albanians. However, for Macedonia and Yugoslavia/Serbia this unit of political organization created serious problems since it also included considerable number of other nationalities. Thus in my thesis I use the strategy of insiders and outsiders in order to explain the implications the nation-state had for Albanians in the three countries. (See chapter 5 for further elaboration).

Activism is another concept which is quite visible throughout this paper. In the beginning I tried to avoid using this term, since the concept itself has very broad dimensions, thus making it hard to limit it into a single definition. Questions such as what makes a woman an activist? What are the criteria for being or becoming an activist, are very hard to define in this research. Previously I mentioned that the women I interviewed belong to the political elite, however this criteria is not enough to define their class stratification. During their "activism" they cooperated directly or indirectly with other women with whom they do not share same class, nor educational level. The women I interviewed had been active in different levels and different fields, thus finding an appropriate term that would encompass all this variations looked impossible. Another factor that did not allow me to replace this concept with other ones was because the women I interviewed express their activities and collaboration using mostly this term. Given that the women "activists" had been engaged in fields such as: politics, academic institutions, non-

governmental organizations, and the media I interpret their activism as mostly performed in the male dominated areas of the society.

CHAPTER 1: The Myth of “Great Albania” and gender

The “Great Albania” project symbolizes the nationalist desire and goal of ethnic Albanians to reunite the territories of other countries which are mostly inhabited by Albanians into a single state. More precisely, this national project aims to reunite the territories of Albania, Kosova , Presevo, Bujanovac and Medveda from Serbia, the Western part of Macedonia, some parts of Montenegro and Çameria (part of northern Greece). The desire for such reunification dates from the beginning of the 19th century when Albanians along with other nationalities from Western Balkans were under the rule of Ottomans.

The first ideas for “Great Albania” were born after the territorial divisions created by The Treaty of San Stefano³ 1877-1878. The treaty “assigned Albanian inhabited territories to Serbia, Montenegro and Bulgarian provinces (Jelavich, 1983, p. 363).” Considering the decision as an “injustice” towards the Albanian “nation”, there were reactions from the Albanian intellectual elite, who immediately met in Prizren and created their own network called the League of Prizren (Lidhja e Prizrenit). The creation of the network will pave the way for the creation of a concrete national project by Albanians. The purpose of this national project would be unification of the territories mostly inhabited by Albanians. The aim of the network was to show resistance against the enemies of Albanians and to strive for unification of all the lands where Albanians were living. On the other side, territorial divisions among the great powers and the Ottoman Empire continued. The treaty of Berlin which settled negotiations between Greece and the Ottoman Empire, again took a part of Epirus (Çamëria) which was mostly inhabited by Albanians. At this time, the network of Albanians created in Prizren, had matured into a stronger

³ The treaty was signed by Russia and the Ottoman Empire to end the Russo- Turkish war.

movement for national liberation. It was exactly in this period when the clear ideas for the national project called “Great Albania” were born. Being an intellectual project, with intellectuals like Sami Frashëri⁴, Pashko Vasa⁵, Abdyl Frasheri⁶, who also known for initiating the “national renaissance” period of Albanians, the project of “Great Albania” was very promising for national unification. However, even though the ideas for this national project had been established on solid grounds, the taking of Prizren (the center of the movement) by the Ottoman Empire, was a hard attack on the functioning of the League. Fearing the possibility for full independence, the Ottoman authorities took all the necessary actions to terminate the national movement.

The war between the Italian and the Ottoman Empire in 1911, initiated rise of nationalist feelings in the Balkan areas, thus many of the nationalities living in this area started their battles for liberation. Albania achieved liberation in 1912 with the Treaty of London (Zolo, 2002). However, the newly-founded state had left half of the Albanian population outside of its borders. The borders of the Albanian state have stayed the same since then.

The only time when the idea of “Great Albania” was implemented in practice was during the World War II, when the Italian and the German powers were present as occupiers in Western Balkans. The idea was manifested with the actual unification of the lands foreseen in the project. The main reason for the allowance of the unification was Italy’s and Germany’s back up plan of creating an actual enemy for Yugoslavia/ Serbia (Zolo, 2002). However, this did not last long, since after the war, the territories were returned to the same borders as they were before the war.

⁴ Sami Frasheri was an Albanian writer, remembered by his book "Albania - What it was, what it is, and what will become of it" published in 1899. The messages in this book helped the Albanian National Liberation movement to develop ideas for independence and demands for their own alphabet and education

⁵ Pashko Vasa was an Albanian writer of the Albanian National Awakening.

⁶ Abdyl Frasheri is one of the first ideologues of the Albanian National Liberation and nationalist Albanian activist. He is the elder brother of Sami Frasheri

After this period, the longing for “Great Albania” continued to be present among Albanians, especially among the ones living outside the border of their nation-state- Albania. The constant clashes between the Serbian government and the Albanians in Kosova (from 1945-1980s), kept the national myth for “Great Albania” alive. The same was for Albanians living in Macedonia and Montenegro, since being minority did not allow them to fully enjoy their citizenship rights. Kosova’s recent independence in 2008 has had an impact on the development of the “Great Albania” paradigm. A poll in 2010 showed that the majority of Albanians still dream about the unification. The poll indicates that “62 % of respondents in Albania, 81 % in Kosova and 51.9 % of respondents in Macedonia supported the formation of Greater Albania” (Likmeta, 2010). According to the poll, the Albanians living in Macedonia are less enthusiastic about the national unification. A possible explanation for this fact could be the significant attention the Macedonian government has given to minority rights in the states (which is part of the fulfilling requirement of entering the EU).

Now I want to turn to the functioning of “Great Albania” as a concept and as a national project. The aspirations for “Great Albania” as a concept are based on the “national values” (literature, folklore, songs, legends, national historical days, national symbols, etc) of the social groups (Albanians) in Macedonia, Kosova and Albania have in common. The ways in which this national project was born, was exactly through the national ideological movement, which in this case is manifested, through different kind of group interactions in different kind of levels.

First, there are official meetings of leaders of the Albanian political parties arguing about matters on national unification, which are made known to the public by the media. Secondly, organizing mutual cultural and scientific events and conferences, through which they express and nurture their “national capital/values” (literature, folklore, songs, legends, national historical

days, national symbols, etc), contributes to the reaffirmation of this movement. On the other hand, the unofficial interactions between these social groups and the forging of cross-border marriages gives a strong support for the continuation of this ideological movement. The acceptance of the refugees from Kosova by their “compatriots” in Macedonia and Albania, during the wartime in Kosova had a great impact in forging these kinds of close relationships. Given that until, now I have been using the concept of “social groups” for the identification of Albanians in the three countries, I want to move to a more solid term which will be used through the thesis when talking about them. According to Smith, it is important to make a distinction between the terms ethnic category and ethnic community, since they differ in the level of the ties the ethnic groups have with their “nation” (Smith, 1999). In order to make the distinction based on the ties relating to the “nation”, he gives the following definitions:

“*Ethnic categories* are populations distinguished by outsiders as possessing the attributes of a common name or emblem, a shared cultural element (usually language or religion), and a link with a particular territory. *Ethnic communities* are human populations distinguished by both members and outsiders as possessing the attributes of: an identifying name or emblem, a myth of common ancestry; shared historical memories and traditions; one or more elements of common culture; a link with an historic territory or “homeland”; and a measure of solidarity, at least among the elites.”(Smith, 1999, p.25)

The ties among the Albanians in the three countries rely on the second model. They are identified as Albanian in the three countries. In Macedonia they are identified as Albanians (ethnic group); in Kosova, the term Kosovar is used mostly used to refer to the citizens of Kosova in general, not only to Albanians from Kosova. The existence of the myth of “Great Albania” and the identity of Albanians has been studied by several anthropologists (Sievers &

Fischer, 2002; Kola, 2003a, 2003b). Additionally, Albanians from the three countries have common cultural traditions and they speak the same language. One interesting fact that I encountered during the interviewing of the Albanian women was that most of them identified themselves as Albanians. It was only in few cases when they would add the country they live in i.e. “Albanian from Macedonia, Albanian from Kosova”. In their narratives, the interviewees emphasize their Albanian identity which reveals their close ties to the national project. Based on the aforementioned explanations, I use the term ethnic community when I refer to Albanian’s living in Macedonia and Kosova.

Conducting interviews with women activists in Macedonia and Kosova, allowed me to investigate the intersection of nation and gender in Albanian women’s identity in Macedonia and Kosova. The interviewees used different ways to refer to the project of “Great Albania”. Most of them do not refer to it directly with the terms “Great Albania”, but rather indirectly by calling it “national reconciliation” “national mission”, “national question”, “national demand” etc. One explainable reason for this is that after the World War II when the territories under “Great Albania” were divided again, the discourse on “Great Albania” as a concept will fade too. The reasons for this can be analyzed from different perspectives. One explanation can be the weight of essentialization the term “Great Albania” carries in it. The fixed naming of the project -Great Albania, indicates something that has been carefully planned; a cause with a full mission; and determined intentions of accomplishment no matter what. On the other side, the use of the other aforementioned concepts by women, suggests they use more “vague” definitions of their national demands. An explanation for this would be, women trying to be “politically correct” when talking about their “nation” and the national requests of Albanians. This can imply they were aware that Albanians are not the only nationalities that have gone through territorial divisions in

the past, thus having a concrete national project with requests that might harm the interests of other nationalities. On the other side, it might mean that these women are so familiar with the national quest that for them, it is not just a project called “Great Albania”, but more than that. It is a way of life they long for, a mythical imaginary, a national project they dream about, national mission that needs to be accomplished. I turn to the broader analysis of women and the nation as a category which constitutes their identity in the sixth chapter of this thesis.

The myth of “Great Albania” has attracted the attention of several researchers (Canak, 1998, Kola 2003a, 2003b, Pearson 2006), however, they tend to explain this myth through the historical narrations of the events that created and influenced the existence of the Myth for three centuries. My contribution to the literature on “Great Albania” would be offering a more analytical gender approach of this concept, rather than just a historical background. Analyzing the interpretation of the events narrated by women in their interviews, I provide a new analytical approach of this concept, and a new perspective on women’s relationship to the “Great Albania” project.

At this point I want to turn to Nadjé Al-Ali’s (2000) acclamations for the gender-nation relationship of Israeli, Northern Ireland and Bosnian women in order to make a comparison with Albanian women, who were excluded from the processes of dealing with conflicts and constituting the nation-state. He states that ironically, their marginalization from these processes (which was done by the dominant elites, mainly constituted from males), made them react to their subjugated roles of cultural and biological reproducers of the nation. Women rejected not only their traditional gender roles, but also the dominant categorizations of the nation (Al-Ali, 2000). From the research I performed, I found most of the women interviewed also challenge their traditional roles and engage themselves into “male predominated activities” while

participating in the conflicts/ wars happening in their countries. Therefore, I want to situate my analysis within the grounds of these acclamations/ theory and see how did the Albanian women activists that I interviewed dealt with this process. In order to add to the stability of the theoretical background I introduce the theory of Davis and Anthias (1989) about women and nation. They recognize five ways in which women try to participate in ethnic and national processes in connection to state practices: “as biological reproducers of member of ethnic collectivities; as reproducers of the boundaries of ethnic/national project; as participating centrally in the ideological reproduction of the collectivity and as transmitters of its culture; as signifiers of ethnic/ national differences- as a focus and symbol in ideological discourses used in the construction, reproduction and transformation of ethnic/ national categories; As participants in national, economic, political and military struggles.” (Davis & Anthias, 1989, p.7)

In this part of the thesis, I turn to the theories on gender, nation, state from Tolz and Booth (2005), Connell (2004) and Ivekovic and Mostov (2002); in order to elaborate on the existing theories on nation and gender, and then situate my research in this field, and show in what way my research will bring contribute to the existing literature.

The study of the concepts has been under a broad scope of research since the late 80’s; and the intersection of gender, nation and identity has been an attractive subject of exploration for many scholars (Yuval-Davis & Anthias, 1989; Walby, 2000; Ivekovic, 2001; Leoussi, 2001; Ivekovic & Mostov 2002; Connell, 2004; Johnson, 2005). The studies of Connell, Ivekovic and Mostov generate theories on nations, states, and national projects being gendered in similar patterns. Therefore in my thesis I try to provide a different perspective on the gendering of national projects, by presenting cases of variations of the gendering of the nation in relation to women and their allegedly role as passive/ active actors.

Negotiation of gender, ethnicity and nationality generate a complexity of processes when trying to define and negotiate one's identity. The narratives of the interviewees have shown that the separate study of such concepts is very complicated due to their close intertwinement in every social aspect of individual's life. These identity negotiation processes, tend to initiate frequent changes in power relations between the concepts; which in the meantime initiate changes in the structural composure of one's identity. Therefore in this thesis I will provide an analysis of the identity negotiation processes of Albanian women and the variations of negotiations between the categories of gender, nation and state. I present these variations in three parts (see chapter 4).

CHAPTER 2: Oral history- Stories Untold

The primary methodological tool of my research is conducting biographical interviews with women activists from Kosovo and Macedonia. The reason I chose this methodology was mainly due to the very limited primary sources and literature that I found on these women; especially on the field of women, nation and conflicts. The war in Kosovo (1997-1999) and the ethnic conflict in Macedonia (2001) have received considerable attention by the local and the international community. However, women's participation in conflicts and the relation to their so called "nation" (which can be explained by "imagined community" or "co-national solidarity") has not been given any significant attention, nor have their stories of participating in the war have been heard widely by the public. Even in cases when their position has been discussed, their position has been described through the traditional model of women being victims of the war. Therefore, oral history as a methodological approach which acknowledges the value of women's lives" (Sangster, 1998,135) gave me the possibility to ask such questions to the respondents that they might have not imagined in the past and try to resemble their understandings which were ignored before (Perks & Thomson, p. 1998).

Conducting a research which would focus on women's activism and their efforts as women's movement in the last past twenty years in the three countries presents a big challenge itself, thus the oral history provides a methodological approach to face such a challenge. This kind of research required a close examination and thorough analysis of all the narrated experiences and processes that shaped women's activism and their identity in the three countries. Thus, using the narratives of face-to-face interviewing with women activists allowed me to have a close analysis of their narrated identity. For the analysis of the performance of their identities

(as narrated) I use intersectionality as an approach. This approach analyses “the relationships among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations- as itself a central category of analysis” (McCall, 2005, p. 1771). More precisely, intersectionality focuses on the interactions of categories such as gender, race, class and “other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power” (Davis, 2008, p.68). In my research project I use this approach to study the social dimensions of the categories of nation and gender in the identity negotiation process of Albanian women. In addition intersectionality will also help me study these two concepts within the frame of cultural/national ideology and the outcomes of power relations from these interactions.

Interviewing process

I started the interviewing process by putting together a list of possible questions for women activists about their previous involvement in activism. I divided this topic into three parts: beginning of activism, activism during the war/conflict, and activism after the war/conflict.

In the early phase of the interviewing procedure, which is mapping the field, I achieved to make a direct contact with 8 women activists through their e-mails which I found on the official web-sites of their organizations. In addition, I also completed three internships in women’s organizations in Macedonia, Kosova and Albania. The contacts I made with the members of the organization helped me get in touch with other women activists. After receiving their consent about the interview, I set a suitable date and place. Part of the other interviewees I reached by using the strategy of the “snow-ball effect”. The way how this strategy usually works is by asking your initial contacts about other people that work on the same field as them. In my

case the first 8 women activists that I contacted, helped me get in touch with other women's organizations and other women (activists, professors, politicians etc). The main women's organizations that helped me in this process were: Kosovar Gender Studies Center, Women's Forum in (Macedonia) Tetova, Gostivar, Kumanova, and Skopje.

I interviewed twenty Albanian women activists coming from Kosovo and Macedonia. The type of interviewing I chose for my research was face-to face biographical interviewing with open-ended questions. My interviewees have background in politics, non-governmental sector and academic institutions (see appendix 1 for more details). Some of them had been working only in one of these fields, while others do not necessarily belong to strictly to one of the aforementioned fields. Some of the interviewees have been engaged in civil society associations, and after the conflict they had moved to politics or academia (See Appendix 1 for more details). The age of interviewees varied from the age 24 to 78. Their educational background is Bachelors, Masters or Doctorate degree. Additionally, most of them have a degree in social sciences. Having solid educational background makes them the "intellectual elite" of the Albanian women. Being in a privileged position, these women have opportunities to challenge the male predominated area of politics and lobby for issues that concern their gender. In addition to this, Young (2001) argues that "studies of the attitudes and actions of women in political elites have, for the most part, found that gender does make some difference [...] Women in these political elites are more favorably inclined toward feminist policy stances, and place themselves further left on the political spectrum than do their male counterparts"(p. 22).

Narrative analysis

Through the interviews and the narrative analysis I try to discover the importance of their activism and gender issues in relation to their ethnicity/nationality. The first open ended question of the first interview section was "Can you remember the time when you started engaging yourself as an activist? Can you tell me how did it all start and for what reasons?" The question for the second section was "Can you remember the time when the war/conflict started? What did you do, did you leave the country or stayed there?" And open ended question for the last section was "What happened after the war/conflict? Can you tell me about your activism?"

In the cases, when the interviewee found it hard to give me detailed response for these questions, I used probe questions (asking indirect questions, about the important things that she does not mention). Initially, after this process, questions that helped me find the answers about gender, activism, nation and ethnicity in the interviews were these: how do these women interpret the major political events in their countries; how are they constructing these events; and how are they constructing their participation in these events through accessing their memory, since as Sangster (1998) suggests, studying memory deals with the meanings not only the facts. The meaning they give to the experiences they had during these events is crucial for the analysis process (Reissman, 1993). The way women construct their participation in the conflicts and (as they call this period) the "struggle for national liberation" is one of the key elements of the analysis since it reveals the question: in what framework do they speak about activism, war, and ethnic identity.

Each interview was recorded, translated and transcribed by me. All the interviewees were interviewed only once. Even though translating and transcribing is a long and very demanding process, I did it on my own for several important reasons. First, as Reissman (1993) claims, it is

much preferable for the interviews to be transcribed and translated by the interviewer itself since this way will be careful not to reduce the parts of the interview which might be really important for the research. Second, listening to the interviews by myself helped me to be careful with the ethical concerns of interviewing, especially in the part of transcribing and translating. Performing these tasks by myself allowed me to go back at the place where the interview was made, and remind me of the context, the voice and the signs of the interviewee, which were helpful in avoiding the misinterpretation of the events and their words in the interviews. Keeping field notes immediately after each interview, was very important for making self-evaluation and self reflection regarding the conducted interview. The next step was, coding the interviews/ determining the main thematic fields. I did this through finding common themes between at least 8 interviewees. Given that the interviews were biographical ones, I employed the method of biographical thick description for analysis too. The next and the most important was conducting microanalysis of individual segments of the text. During this procedure, it was very important to be able to recognize how they construct narrative. Because each interviewee has its own specific discourse, being able to recognize similar narratives which are phrased differently; and patterns of how similar experiences are put differently is very significant. The last step of the procedure was writing the framework analysis by using the analytical strategy such as intersectionality.

Ethical concerns

One of the reasons that make the use of oral history- interviews very appropriate for my case is because it allowed me as an interviewer, as Lincoln (2003) calls it- to act as a “bricoleur”. That is, being able to perform a number of diverse tasks like interviewing, observing, interpreting personal and historical documents, and perform intensive self-reflection and

introspection. In order to be able to do all this I was aware that I needed to situate myself in a comfortable position (gaining trust and being accepted) on the space surrounding me and the interviewee. Ritchie (1995) calls for attention to the positioning of the interviewer as an “insider” in order to gain enough trust and avoid mechanical answers from the interviewee. Presenting myself as an Albanian woman studying abroad, helped me gain trust among the interviewees, especially the ones from Macedonia since the education for Albanians in Macedonia has always been a confronting issue between the government and the Albanians who present a minority. Moreover, being a gender studies student, interested in their biographies and their working experience as women made them feel more comfortable during the interviews, and very enthusiastic about my project. I had a similar experience with the interviewees from Kosovo. The fact that I was an Albanian, spoke the same language as them, and showed familiarity in the recent political events in the country, granted me the status of an “insider”.

In relation to this, I want to turn to Portelli (1995) who points out that the issue of power relations between the “observed” and the “observer” is a very delicate matter. Since there was a significant age difference between me and the interviewees, it was hard to maintain the balance of power relations with them. Striving for an atmosphere where there enough space for open communication, and not posing myself on a “higher level” than the interviewer, or vice versa was a very difficult task to do. Since I used the method of open ended interviewing I made sure to apply Ritchie’s (1995) methodology to pose myself as a learner and a listener most of the time giving enough space to the interviewee to reflect on the past and narrate her story. In the meantime, maintaining the desired direction of the interview created the possibility of conducting the desired type of interview and keeping the focus on the important research issues.

In order to handle ethical issues during the process of interviewing, I made sure to emphasize from the beginning the interview will be used only for the purpose of this research. Before starting the interview, the interviewees were asked if they wanted to sign an oral history consent form⁷. However the experience turned to be different. These women were thrilled that somebody had thought of them, having somebody who was interested to hear their stories was a great joy for them. I must say note that the process of interviewing itself was very difficult since the stories these women narrated were very traumatic ones. There were moments when the interviewees would have to stop for a while, due to the traumatic experiences they resembled while narrating their stories of activism during the conflict times.

One common element that I found between the interviewees from Macedonia and Kosovo is that they were eager to talk about women's emancipation, women's rights, women's education and the political events in the region. Some of the interviews lasted more than two hours. However these long interviews, I encountered an important ethical dilemma. I was asked by some of the women, mostly the ones from the older generation, to "right the injustice" done to them. Recently, there had been a publishing of a book called "Values of Kosovar Women"⁸. The book lists fifty successful women who have given a major contribution in women's emancipation, human rights, and peacemaking activities. I did not get to use the book in finding the contacts for my research, since it was published in December, 2010, just when I had finished with the interviewing process. Some of the women said they have felt left out, and this "injustice done to them", was to be fixed by me. In order to avoid such ethical responsibility of giving

7 This form regulates the rules and methods of the interviewing, as well as the responsibilities that the interviewee and the interviewer agree to take regarding the interview and the materials produced by it.

8 The book lists fifty successful women who have given a major contribution in women's emancipation, human rights, and peacemaking activities and so on. Reference to the book: *Vlera të Grave të Kosovës*. (2010). Prishtina: Qendra për Trajnime dhe Studime Gjinore.

credit to certain women in my work, I do not reveal the names of the women interviewees in my work (see Appendix 1 for details), but rather give brief information on their background.

CHAPTER 3: The State of Art Research on Albanian Women

In this chapter I elaborate on the state of research on Albanian Women performed by other scholars. In order to do this, first I provide a brief elaboration on the theories of nationalism and the gendering of the “nation”. In continuation, I provide an overview of the existing literature on Albanian women in Macedonia, Albania and Kosova. Additionally, I show how my project will contribute to the literature in each country, and also how it will contribute to the literature on women’s collaboration on a transnational level. In the last section of this chapter, I elaborate on intersectionality as a methodological approach that I will use to analyze the narratives of the women interviewed.

The concept of nationalism as a doctrine was invented in Europe in the beginning of the nineteenth century (Kedourie, 1978). Its influence became even more evident with the process of state and nation building in the European territories, which produced differences and changes in borders. Such example is the unification of ethnic nationalities of Germany and Italy in the 19th century, when the ideology of nation-building achieved to make a cultural unification, which was followed by state unification. Such unifications of the nations, usually produce, the, the non-nation and the marginal nation (Ivekovic & Mostov, 2002) Gender hierarchies, play a significant role in the “reconfiguration of the marginal nation in these processes of change (Samaddara, 1999). Ivekovic and Mostov (2002) note that after the dissolution of Yugoslavia, gender and patriarchal hierarchies assisted the restructuring “of the social structure, communal order and the state” in all post-socialist nationalisms” (p.13). However, analysis of such case studies in the European states show how the practice of the nation- building along with the democratic processes in Europe have hindered the process of treating gender in that way that it would not

include women (Booth, 2005; Ludi, 2005). Moreover, further research has shown that the story remains the same for the countries of South Eastern Europe (Daskalova 2002; Duhacek 2002; Brunnbauer, 2002). My research project, will contribute to this literature by adding a different perspective on national projects and goals for national unification, by showing that not all the women are passive actors in these processes. By presenting the case of Albanian women and the construction of their identities, I show that in the masculine dominated structures of nation-building practices women are present too.

The existing literature on women in Albania, Macedonia and Kosova is limited to separate studies regarding gender issues in each of the countries (Post, 1998; Mertus, 1999; Young, 2002, Dimova, 2006). To my knowledge there are no studies which compare women from 3 countries as a single inquiry or field of interest. Literature on Albanian women's issues in Macedonia is scarce⁹. In the research I performed I found few articles, which deal specifically with Albanian women in Macedonia. A study which deals exclusively with women's experiences during the conflict of 2001, using the narrated stories of the interviewees, describes Albanian women through the figure of mothers and wives grieving for their lost ones (Bubevska & Hoxha, 2006).¹⁰ Another study made in 2006, suggests that Albanian women's bodies are "idioms" where the minority struggles are focused; a phenomenon which turns them into signifiers- symbols of inherent limitations and impossibilities for the creation of the modern model of the nation-state"(Dimova, 2006, p. 316). My contribution to this topic will be-adding more than that to the story. Through my study I show that in 2001, not all women were passive

⁹ According to latest national census in 2002, Albanian's in Macedonia constitute 25 % of the country's population. However, before 2002, their number as a minority group in Macedonia was considered to be very small. This can be considered as a potential factor which had an impact on the limited studies on Albanian women in Macedonia, as a sole target group.

¹⁰ In comparison to abovementioned women interviewed, there's only one woman among them, who is portrayed as more of an active actor during the conflict time.

actors. There were a significant number of women who were dynamic actors in (as they call it) the national liberation struggle. Through the interviews conducted, I provide proof for the contribution these women gave before, during and after the conflict took place, which question and certifies the theory by Anthias and Davis. Additionally, this adds to the literature, by showing Albanian women in Macedonia, not only through the prism of symbolic signifiers of, but also active participants in national-military conflicts. In addition, I demonstrate how this approach of women's activism influences the negotiation of the gender-nation identity within the broader identity of "Albanianness" / Great Albania. I do this by analyzing the narratives of the interviews, in which I analyze the intersectionality between the categories of gender, ethnicity, and nation in Albanian women's identity.

In comparison to Macedonia and Albania, research/ literature on Albanian women in Kosova is relatively rich. Women's position during the wartime has been under study from different aspects. Similar to the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, gender based violence and mass rapes were also exercised towards women in Kosova (Brouwer, 2005; Bougarel, Helms & Duijzings, 2007). However, there are several in-depth studies which study women's position in the war from different angle (Weeping Women, 2002; History is Herstory too, 2008). The events in this research studies are presented in different frameworks when speaking about women and their activism. In some cases women are presented as passive actors, mostly through the figure of war victims. While in other cases women are shown in their active roles, such as women during the war in Kosova when they acted as reporters to the international actors about the mass killings and expulsion of the population by the Serbian guerilla outside the borders of Kosova. (History is Herstory too, 2008). The performance of the national identity of these women, as something that could not be contested above any other identity, including gender, has been addressed in several

studies (Mertus, 1999; Luci, 2002). Mertus (1999) emphasizes that the performance of national identity is a priority for Kosovar women, thus their positioning in the frame of national identity opens up space for exploration of their identity as women. My contribution to this topic is by giving another outlook, a much broader one when describing the women's relationship to their "nation" in Kosova. Given that, more than a decade has passed since Mertus made this observation on women in Kosova, I contribute to the literature by providing a more recent study of the women-" relationship in the Kosovar context. Subsequently, I also contribute to the study of the Albanian women's identity as a unitary project within the national project of "Great Albania".

There is not an academic research which provides an analysis of Albanian women together in a transnational perspective -outside of the boundaries of the three countries they live in (Kosova, Macedonia and Albania). Since this kind of approach was invented in the early 90s, there has not been much research done about women in Western Balkans in a transnational perspective. The transnational history perspective is a methodology which analyzes national, regional and international events in broader frames. The main approach of this is perspective is to interpret these events as movement, therefore it closely associated with the study of diasporas, social or political, which cross national boundaries (Bayly et al., 2006,1442) In comparison to the "international history" perspective (which is more inclined towards global analysis), transnational perspective uncovers many other "analytical possibilities for understanding the complex linkages, networks, and actors " (Bayly et al., 2006, 1444) that traverse national boundaries. Conducting a research on the level of three countries will enrich the literature on Albanian women, and women's activism in region in three aspects.

First, it will give a picture of how activism and women-nation relationship in Albanian women's case unfolds in three countries. Second, the compilation of the studies will allow me to show how the identities from each country are negotiated in the broader scale of the Albanian national identity as one- the "Albanianness". And last, the study will contribute to the literature on how courses of activism and gender/nation negotiation processes are constructed in the region of Western Balkans.

Secondly, the research will contribute to the literature on Albanian women's movements and their activism. Given that I have conducted interviews with women activists in the three countries, in the analysis, I will provide material on women's activism that has not been written about before (especially in Macedonia's case). During my research, I saw that the lack of this literature was mainly due to the lack of initiative of women activist to publish their documents and activities. During the interviews with the women activists in Macedonia, I was given documents about the activities of the organizations that were never compiled nor published. Additionally, the analysis of the interviews will give space to depict Albanian women's differences and similarities in the way how they understand activism, women's movements in relation to their ethnicity and national identity.

In order to perform the abovementioned research project I am using intersectionality as the main methodological/ theoretical approach. I base my study project in this socio-cultural scope, with a particular focus on Albanian women who are identifying themselves as Albanians, and how they are faring within the frame of this type of ideological movement. More to that, I trace their roots of activism and their cross-border cooperation with the Albanian women in the aforementioned countries. Given that it is precisely the vagueness and open-endedness of this theoretical/ methodological approach which makes intersectionality so successful (Davis, 2008);

intersectionality is the most compatible approach which allows space to conduct an analysis from a broad context and a three case study project. Giving one theory/ conclusion about the identity of the Albanian women living in these three different which will cover all the explanations and the complexities of this broad identity, is almost impossible without having to use the analytical tools of the intersectional approach. The only way to analyze this particular identity, which is characterized by intra- categorical relationships and shifting identities, is to employ the tools of intersectionality, that is micro-level analysis of categories of gender, ethnicity (nationality) and class; how they interact when framing subjective experiences, they way they establish access to resources and options, and how are they involved in the identity construction of Albanian women. And macro-level analysis, by providing contextualization and external factors that have shaped the forms of women's activism and their identity, In addition, as Gudrun-Axeli (2005) suggests, in order to understand these "structured subject positions", the analytical context needs to be broadened to such theoretical approaches as: how are gender and class relations, along with the category of ethnicity intertwined in the structural and institutional constructions of given communities, in national and transnational contexts. And what is important: what happens to these relationalities in times of social, political and economic transformation?

CHAPTER 4: Collaborations and Tensions of Albanian women's organizing

Beginning of the movement

“The ethno-national story is closed narrative. It is a story in which the contents of the identity in question are given through the official version of a unique and absolute truth/event. All of the multiple possibilities of the event (which could have happened) are discarded and reduced to one sole interpretation, which fixes the official interpretation of the event into a “unique truth.” (Ivekovic & Mostov; 2002, 19)

The gendering of historical events often tends to leave women and their stories out from the picture frame of the event. Thus, because of the closedness of canonized history, oral history has challenged the “closed” narratives of the stories which tend to give a single interpretation of the events “into a unique truth”. This methodology is very important especially for constructing historical events that also include women’s side of the story. As Sherna Berger Gluck (2008) states “women’s oral history is a feminist encounter [...].It is the validation of women’s experiences; it is communicating among women of different generations, it is [...] the development of a continuity that has been denied us in traditional historical accounts” (Kosovar Center for Gender Studies, 2008, p.13). However, “validating women’s experiences” seems to be a very problematic concept since it initiates consequences of using essentialized women’s identities and their experiences. Even though women have gender as a common category, they differ in other categories such as race, class, ethnicity, religion etc. Thus the construction of their identities cannot be essentialized in one category, nor can their experiences be framed as one. In this study, I try to avoid such essentialization since the informants have in common only two categories (gender and nation). However, they differ by their geographical position, field of activism, class, educational background, and age groups (different generations) etc. In this

research I show that even the categories they have in common, shape different identities and experiences for them. (See chapter five for further elaboration).

During my research I did not encounter any significant literature which would explain Albanian women's side of the story concerning their participation in the conflicts in the three countries, and their collaboration on a transnational level within the chosen period (1990-2010). Thus, I dedicate this chapter to this issue. This chapter provides a broader analysis of the beginning and the development of Albanian women's collaboration in Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania. My main goal here is to track and clarify the patterns of collaboration between them and analyze the factors that caused tensions and divisions among women's organizing/collaboration in this period. First I provide information about the beginning of the collaboration in the three countries, then I move to the section about the rise of the tensions; and finally in the last part I elaborate on the divisions which prevented the creation of the Albanian Women's Alliance.

Given that there is not any significant literature on these issues, and this chapter is omitted from the canonized history writing, I use women's narrations to construct the events. In order to do this, in each paragraph I provide first the brief context, then I add the quote of the interviewee, and lastly I conduct an intersectional analysis concerning the framework in which the interviewee speaks about the event, and the categories of gender and nation. Following this, in the next chapter I examine the identity negotiation processes of these women within the categories of nation and their gender.

Looking at Albanian women's movement/ activism during the 1990-2010 period, in the three countries (Macedonia, Kosova and Albania), from the (life-story) narrations of women, there are different factors which inspired them to initiate a movement and take actions in the

conflicts happening in their countries. Some are narrating it as they were driven by their strong national feelings to stand up for their “nation”, while other activists were mainly concerned about women’s volatile position. I found some of them to have been active as medical doctors, taking care of injured people affected in the war, while, others acted and protested as wives and mothers in grief for their loved ones. During my research I found many of these women to have been active in different fields (see Appendix 1 for biographical details). In some cases, the lines of defining their field of engagement/activism are very blurry and hard to define. For example, some of the informants had been engaged in politics for some period of time, and then they had moved to the non-governmental sector working for women’s civil society organizations. Some of them had worked as journalists and politicians, but in the meantime they had been engaged in the civil society sector by working for health center organizations. Being engaged in health centers, means these women were taking care of their (injured) people. This role is associated with one of the tracks of Anthias and Duval's (1989) theory on the relationship between women and nation, where women’s main role is as biological reproducers of the nation’s members. Besides being biological reproducers, the traditional gender stereotypes reinforce their roles caregivers of the nation (where they have to take care of the members of the community). In most of the cases, it is expected from them to take care of the soldiers and the ones who fight on the battle, while they are situated in the “less” endangered fields (evacuated areas, shelters, health centers etc.).

In order to avoid essentialization concerning women’s activism in different fields, I try to avoid any strict categorization on the grounds of their field of work. Therefore, I just mention the factors that made them engage in women’s movement and the “national struggle”.

Women's organizing and collaborations

The situation of Albanians in Kosovo in the 80's and 90's was very volatile due to the constant annexation demands Serbia was making about the territory and the population of Kosovo. In March, 1983 with several amendments approved, Serbia was allowed to take control over the main political institutions in Kosovo. Resistance and dissatisfaction was shown from the Albanian side by organizing riots and demonstrations. The same events were repeated again in 1989, with the approval of similar amendments, where Albanians refused to vote in the elections (Albanian Telegraph Agency news agency, 1993). This time the riots turned into all-popular protests against the change of the Constitution and the elections. This was one the crucial events where women made significant efforts to organize in great number/massively. Interviewee 7 from Kosovo narrates the start of women's participation in the movement in this way:

There were always movements which tried to accomplish the demand of Albanians for national liberation, and to also raise their voice against the suppression and the violence that was done in Kosova. And you know that after the World War II, there was always a strong voice for the realization of the Republic of Kosova. In these illegal movements, women's voice was heard also...and women were imprisoned due to the resistance they have shown... and if we talk about women we should talk about the period of the last 20 years. We cannot forget these women who kept their blood always "warm" to achieve freedom, and they gave their contribution which was extraordinary. They found their strategic position to contribute there where it was needed.

Using an essentialized ahistorical claim, the interviewee explains that the demand for national liberation was always present through illegal movements, which were the main trigger for women's encouragement to participate in the movement along with the male compatriots. In addition, using national claims framed within the framework of "national danger", the interviewee explains that was enough reason for the group of Albanian women activists from Kosovo to organize and take part in the actions of protesting against the enemy and protecting the "nation". This fact goes along the lines with Anthia's and Yuval's statement, that during the national, military and economic struggles, it is easier for women to enter in male dominated

spheres of the state and the nation, and enjoy a more balanced status with men. Interviewee's narration of women finding "their strategic position in areas where needed", shows the process of entrance in this field. Since there were spaces that lacked human resource capital who would take action, women found a way to enter through these spaces in the masculine dominated areas by organizing people, opening shelters where they would take care of the injured people, passing through the dangerous zones to send important messages, and documents etc. However, this shows that there were still gender divisions inside the resistance movement.

On the other hand, Albanians in Macedonia constituted a minority of 25.17% ("Encyclopedia of the Nations", n.d.) living under a "Slavic state" and the Yugoslav Federation. They were also facing discriminatory policies, due to their status of a minority group. In 1990, the changes of the constitution also redefined the name of the state. Its definition changed from "a state of the Macedonian people and the Albanian and Turkish nationalities" to a "national state of the Macedonian people (Koinova, 2002) ". The merging of three nationalities (Turkish, Albanian and Macedonian) in one Macedonian identity might have given possibilities for the Turkish and Albanians to enjoy full citizenship rights with Macedonia. However they rejected this possibility in order to avoid contestations of their "Albanianness". Albanian women living in Macedonia found the current political problems a strong reason for the start of their activism for the "well-being" of the "nation". Interviewee 19 from Macedonia narrates her start of activism in this way:

My activism started in 1987, in high school with different kind of activities which were connected to the general condition of the situation that we were facing as a nation. This period was a really hard one, since our activities were considered illegal, and this required committed conspiracy of all of our activities...the next ten years were even more difficult...I was one of the activists in the small group of women from Macedonia, who studied in Kosova and took active part in the cause for the liberation of the nation. ..but I must say that we were fully aware of the gender aspect in this kind of activity...I am saying this with full conscience.- women's participation in these activities was in a great number...and maybe that was the reason why we enjoyed such great respect from men...the gender aspect was not that important. What was important was the

personality of that person and the readiness of that person to act without taking into consideration his/her gender.

This interviewee too makes it clear from the beginning that her activism and women's organizing started for the cause of the "nation" (assuming it as a homogenized imagined entity) which at that time was threatened by the Yugoslav political forces. The two interviewees mention the term "illegal activities" in order to show the seriousness of the situation and the level of the risk they were taking. However, they differ in the way they speak about the national cause. This interviewee stresses the fact that she was from Macedonia, but was also connected to Kosovo since she studied there.¹¹ Additionally, when saying "the condition they were facing as a "nation" she speaks about the "nation" in broader terms, referring to it by including the Albanians from Macedonia and Kosovo. The frame within which she speaks about the gender issue, reveals again how the process of women's participation was easily facilitated due to conflict times the whole population was facing. She says that what matters in those critical moments is the readiness of that person to act within the given situation, which points to the importance of emotional motivation for her to preserve the "well-being" of the "nation". Here, she is using emotions, as essentialized units to explain or to legitimize her motivations to act politically. Issues such as gender, education and class were bypassed by the importance of the courage of the person who was willing to take risk and engage in illegal actions.

Another interesting finding I encountered during my research is that women's organizing was initiated at the same time when the creation of the first political parties started in the countries they live in. In 1990, when the first political party (Party for Democratic Prosperity) was created in Macedonia, some women tried to include themselves in the composition of the party. However, things did not develop the way these women were planning. There were long

¹¹ Since the Albanians in Macedonia, at that time didn't have any opportunities to study in their language in Macedonia; there were lots of Albanians who would go study in Pristina in their mother tongue language.

disputes among the men who initiated the creation of the party, whether they should allow women's group to enjoy the same membership status as men in the party, or should they divide them in a women's forum which would function under the umbrella of the party. Interviewee 20 from Macedonia explains the situation within this frame:

The main goal was for me to establish the movement with women's group...in order for us to create women's organization. This association was supposed to function within the umbrella of the Party for Democratic Prosperity. I have many witnesses for what I am saying. Together with 10-15 eminent women we created Albanian women's association within the PDP. This happened immediately after the creation of the PDP. We, as women were left aside...but we were not the only ones. They did the same to some men too, and this was because the establishment of the party was endangered due to this "great men's patriotism". Nevertheless we all took part...and did the most important work for the start of the Albanian democratic processes in Macedonia.

As explained by the interviewee, women's mobilization into a separate unit was accepted with reservation from men's side from the party. They created obstacles for women not to enjoy the same status as men. And they achieved this by marginalizing them into a women's forum. In order to explain the marginalization I want to turn to Connell's theory on gender "blindness" (2004). In order to explain this theory he reflects on theories of the state in philosophy and political science. He claims that these theories do not mention gender because they cannot "see" gender in places where there is only male presence (Connell, 2004). The lack for substantial representation of women on these spaces has made the problematization of gender not to be a *priori*. Thus, the differences between them and men were invisibilized. Today it is common for modern states to have men dominate the centers of state power (government, military, police, infrastructure, economic agencies) while the majority of women to be placed in sectors like social welfare, health and education (Connell, 2004). Therefore women's entrance into the male dominated spheres such as political parties is followed by difficulties (Matland & Montgomery, 2003) This is mostly, since politics is one of the male predominated areas, and usually men are the gatekeepers of the party (Pippa & Lovenduski, 1993). In the case of these Albanian women, they faced difficulties when tried to lobby for their equal membership status with men.

Therefore, they decided to close the short-lived Women's Forum in the party and create an independent organization which would cover most of the cities in Macedonia. Interviewee 4 narrates the situation within this framework:

In my opinion those two years, I mean the period from 1990-1992 was one of the most beautiful and the important periods for the development of Albanian Women's Movement in Macedonia. The misunderstandings from political parties, or may I say their negligence of the political factor at that time- The Party for Democratic Prosperity, which did not want to include us in their party, resulted with the formation of Albanian Women's League¹².

Similar to the Albanian women in Macedonia, the first intentions of women's organizing in Kosovo started with the creation of the first Albanian political party. The women from Kosovo encountered the same problems in the party as the ones in Macedonia. Here the dispute among women whether they should stay within the party as Women's Forum or separate into an independent association went for a longer period followed by long discussions. Interviewee 10 says:

In the beginning we did not create a real political party but an association which is called the Democratic League... which was a peaceful front of the resistance, where unfortunately it is not even mentioned that in its creation, women participated too. I am a witness of that. Exactly in this neighborhood/ quarter that we are talking now, women were present in main negotiations where the status of this party was created...Now that I am thinking about it...maybe we were not too persistent to raise our voice in the meetings, but I will never accept that women were not the constitutive part of the Democratic League.

The way the interviewee narrates the story, and her revolt for the "untold facts"¹³ of women's presence in the party, reveal the problems and tensions between the group of women and men who were participating in the creation of the first political party of Albanians in Kosova, called The Democratic League of Kosovo. The Albanian women from Kosovo faced similar issue as the women from Macedonia, in their efforts to incorporate themselves into the formal political structures. However, this was not only about women being included in the political structures,

¹² Albanian Women's League created over 30 branches in the entire territory of Macedonia and became a strong force in the country, by cooperating with other non-governmental organizations and receiving moral and financial support from international donor organizations

¹³ When the interviewee was asked, what does she mean by untold facts; she explained that in most of the cases where the creation of the Democratic League would be mentioned, women's presence would not be mentioned.

but also an indirect attempt of the women to get closer to the “nation” (which is also one of the male dominated “centers of state power”). In order to explain this process, I want to refer to Tolz’s and Booth’s (2005) elaboration on the impact of the “social theory contract” has on the gendering of nations and states. They suggest that the “ social contract theory” , which initiated the creation of the modern Western European political systems and the division of the” public” and the” private”, has contributed to the gendering of the nations and states. Since the dichotomy of public/ private, made even more rigid divisions in the male and female roles, the “public affairs” (where the nation and the state belong) were reserved for men, while the “domestic” ones were left to women. Specific about the attempts of Albanian women from Kosovo when trying to enter the political party, was they encountered even greater resistance on behalf of men. Her saying “maybe we were not too persistent to raise our voice in the meetings, but I will never accept that women were not the constitutive part of the Democratic League“implies that there have been such contestations, which have tried to deny women’s presence in the first meetings of the party. This can be explained by the “double” threat they were posing to the masculine dominated areas: the political party and the “nation”. Being accepted in the political party with the same status as men would have placed them closer to the highest hierarchical position within the “nation” (which is the most male dominated area).

Unlike the women from Macedonia, who were not satisfied with the creation of the forum within the party and separated themselves as an independent organization, women from Kosovo decided to manifest their dissatisfaction by showing greater resistance towards men within the political party. They decided not to abandon the political party, thus they created a forum which first will be called Women’s Democratic Association, and later on will be named as Women’s Forum. The forum will act under the umbrella of the party. As interviewee 10

explains, they had constant disputes with men in the party, especially when it would come to issues related to the “nation”:

The women from Albania were given the “black stamps” which obliged them to leave Kosova within 24 hours...but they did not want to leave immediately they want to meet with the leader of our party, but he did not accept it. I am saying this very clear and out loud. The reason for this was fear...but also something that I never understood it...to say that it was jealousy...maybe, since men are very jealous when women do something first, before them. After this, he told me in another meeting, he had wanted to be the first to collect the Albanians nationwide.

The framework, in which the interviewee presents the flow of the events, implies that women were the first ones to start collaborate more intensively on the issue of “national unification”. Since this issue belonged to the male dominated area, she was told directly from the leader of the party that it should have been him to first take this initiative. Similar clashes of power relations between women and men in the party were mentioned from other interviewees. These processes show how women negotiate their place within the male dominated areas.

Returning to the historical context, I must note that Women’s Forum in Kosovo and Albanian Women’s League in Macedonia were created the same year. However, the women from Kosovo were the first ones to start organizing. Within a short period of time, the organizing of women in Macedonia was also initiated, and through their close contacts with Women’s Forum in Kosovo they decided to cooperate for the forthcoming events that concerned them as part of the Albanian “nation”. Interviewee 15 explains how on their first gathering they had women from three countries united together:

I want to mention another thing which is really important about the movements...Albanian Women’s League (AWL) which was established in Tetova, organized its first assembly in very wide dimensions, we had above 700 women attending the meeting and there were Albanian women from all the Albanian lands...and this was magnificent. There was a vision...a big vision of seeing Albanian women from our lands united together working like sisters for our nation.

Before I start analyzing the framework within which the interviewee speaks I want to present Smith’s definition of a specific type of nationalism called “symbolic nationalism”. This type of nationalism is expressed as “a modern ideological movement” through which

social groups state their aspirations to “defend or maintain nations- their autonomy, unity and identity- by drawing on the cultural resources of pre-existing ethnic communities and categories (Smith, 1999, 27).” The discourse the interviewee uses when talking about the “big vision of Albanian women and lands united together”, the elements of symbolic nationalism become visible. Additionally she uses the term “land”, to refer to the places her fellow women came from. In this context she uses this term for the places where Albanians in Balkans live without taking into consideration the official state borders. This symbolic nationalist discourse defines these territories as purely Albanian, without taking into consideration the other nationalities living in the same territory with them. The use of the symbolic nationalist discourse is evident even when she speaks about her closeness to Albanian women living outside of Kosova by imagining them working together as sisters. Later in this chapter, I will elaborate more on the issue of “sisterhood” between the women.

Now, I want to turn to another important aspect for the women living in the three countries. After attending the Assembly organized by AWL, Women’s Forum from Kosovo, decided to take an initiative for a petition against violence and the killing of children. Interviewee 10 who claimed to have been a witness of all this events, structures the story this way:

We made a petition with 220 000 signatures from women and children against violence and especially against the killing of a 12 year old child, who was killed from the Serbs with a hoe. And this was the definite motive to make this petition. The petition was sent to the UN, UNICEF and to a lot of other international organizations but also to Stipe Mesic who was the last leader of Yugoslavia who had his residency in Zagreb...and in this meeting we indicated our requests against the massive discharge of people from their jobs, against the poisoning of children...and this made this issues to be brought up to the public. Finding neurotoxin poisoning amongst the children and doctors getting fired, especially the pediatricians and the gynecologists from their working places...this signalizes a genocide...it was genocide made to us in indirect manner.

The interviewee constructs the story by listing factors such as: violence against the population; alleged killing and poisoning of Albanian children, the discharge of the population

from their working places, especially the discharge of pediatricians and gynecologists as the main reason for Women's Forum to take affirmative action in such a decisive manner. This shows that women's will and readiness to react was not directed to protect only women and children. Their goal was to lobby and protest for the whole population, for their "nation" as a "whole". My point here is to clarify that even though they were united as women's group, their scope of advocacy was not limited only to women's issues, but it went beyond that. They decided to go to the public by lobbying for the issues they were concerned with, no matter of their gender, age or class. Their next decision to turn to the President of Albania and decide to take the risk to take the petition there, is another explanation how they tried to incorporate themselves in the male dominated field by using the rhetoric of "national demands". Interviewee 18 who was part of the group of women that went to Albania narrates the event in this framework:

And at that time, I personally proclaimed in front of the media that we will send this petition to our mother nation. These news reached the president of Albania at that time, and it was Albania's invitation, and women's organization in Albania (which at that time was the under the Socialist League) which welcomed us. We were 4 women. This trip that we took from Kosovo to Albania was the most dangerous trip I had taken in my life. At that time we did not have tapes and other technical options that we could convey the petition with. The trunk of our car was loaded with thousands of signed papers of the petition...and this signatures were carried out illegally even in Kosovo...and even here it was illegal to have them. I do not know how we made it with all the problems in the borders of Macedonia...but we did it and then we traveled to Greece...and then we went through Kakavia¹⁴, and the delegation of women was waiting for us there.

The way the interviewee narrates the event is through the framework that this was one of the rarest events where women decided to do something on their own and contribute against the violence that was being addressed to their people. The way her she tells the story, one can notice that she is trying to put an emphasis on the risk and the sacrifice they had to make in order to accomplish their goal. Being welcomed by the President of the Republic of Albania and women's delegation shows they had support from both, men's and women's side. What the

¹⁴ Kakavia is a crossing point of the borderline between Greece and Albania.

interviewee does not mention is the reaction of the Leader of the political party she belonged too (through Women's Forum). In this case, her silence can be interpreted as a "weapon" she uses to in order not to discover factors which do not go along the lines of her discourse. In continuance interviewee 10 continues the narration of the event in this direction:

We sent this petition to Ramiz Alia¹⁵, but we used this moment to meet with lots of other women who were accessing the Democratic league but also the women who were in the Socialist Party. The delegation received publicity from the media also since we were meeting with somebody who was in position, but who was soon to experience a downfall...And unfortunately very soon the government will dissolve. We took part even in the First Assembly of the Democratic Party of women, of women's forum. At that time, being in contact with women, we were talking about **the idea of the creation of the Albanian Women's Alliance**. In my head I was having the idea of promoting a league of Albanian women, nationwide.

The discourse the interviewee uses when speaking about her idea about "the League of Albanian women" is again based in Anderson's model of the nation as an imagined community. Using the term nationwide in order to describe the dimensions of the League, refers to this imagined space, where there are no boundaries separating the Albanian women coming from the three countries.

The way the flow of the events is narrated in this part, shows that besides meeting the President, the meeting with the women from Albania was very important too, since they already had in mind the idea for the institutionalization of women's collaboration. The institutionalization of their collaboration would mean gaining greater power within their scope of operation as women's unit, which would empower them to enforce their representation in the male dominated areas. In addition, explaining that the President and his government were about to experience a downfall shows that they doubted the duration and the stability of their collaboration with the government so they turned to women's groups. Finally, by directing their collaboration in this path, the interviewee explains how the idea for the creation of the Albanian Women's Alliance nationwide was born. In the next sub-chapter I explain and analyze the rise of

¹⁵ Ramiz Alia was president of Albania at that time.

tensions and conflicts that arose during the efforts of creating the mutual Albanian Women's Alliance with women from Albania, Macedonia and Kosovo.

Tensions and divisions

The idea for the creation of Albanian Women's Alliance nationwide was soon to be accomplished by Albanian women from Kosova, who, right after their visit to Albania, invited their fellow women from Albania and Macedonia to a secret meeting in Kosova. Given that the purpose of the meeting was connected to a nationalist cause, the Yugoslav police authorities in Kosovo had been alerted about the meeting. They had send police officials, to find out what the meeting was really about and to sabotage it if it has been organized on the grounds for national unification. Even though all of the women present at the gathering had taken a great risk of attending an illegal meeting to unite and talk with their fellow national women, they encountered several problems which diluted their primary expectations. Interviewee 1 from Kosova explains the difficulties of finding a common language between all the participants in this way:

The guests that came ...well for them it was the first time they had come out from their country. Since Albania at the time had closed its borders...and they were confused, very confused...and they could not understand the reality...especially our reality. They could not understand that Kosova is a part of ours...that it was an equal part of them too...they could not even understand the risk of this meeting...but Albanian women from Macedonia...they were different. They knew what we were going through; we felt them as our sisters.

The way the interviewee speaks about the participants of the event, the differences she makes when talking about the women from Albania and the ones from Macedonia can be easily identified. She uses the term "guest" when referring to the women from Albania, while she refers as "sisters" to the women from Macedonia signifying the stronger feelings of closeness between women from Kosovo and Macedonia. Furthermore, the interviewee tries to explain these divisions among them by pointing out the political circumstances in Albania at that time. When mentioning the "closed borders" the interviewee speaks about the era of communism and the

isolationist politics of Enver Hoxha towards other countries. Unlike them, the Albanian women from Macedonia and Kosovo had more mobility within the borders. By pointing to the possibility and limitations for cross-border mobility, the interviewee places women from Kosovo and Albania in a more privileged position rendering women from Albania as “confused”. This presents a significant factor for the division of women and their failed attempt to achieve an agreement in the meeting regarding the officialization of the Albanian Women’s Alliance. On the other hand, speaking through the frame “they could not understand the reality...especially our reality”, the interviewee first, emphasizes the existing differences between them and the women from Albania. The “reality of their solidarity” (reinforced by the “imagined community” paradigm) clashed with the current political and social circumstances, which proved to be very different from the “reality” the “imagined community” promotes. Second, the way the interviewee points out at the women from Albania that they could not understand the reality of the women from Kosovo, she places women from Kosovo in a victimized position. The use of this discourse opens the question of power relations, and reveals the ambiguity of their relationship because in one hand women from Kosovo place themselves in a privileged position (they had open borders and more possibilities for mobility than the women from Albania). On the other hand, they present themselves as victims not understood by their fellow women from Albania.

Another interviewee considers the ruling of Enver Hoxha as something that created differences in them; however in this case, interviewee 8 is more specific on how the ruling has made the differences between the women. She constructs the story within this frame:

The Albanian society at that time within Yugoslavia was suffering for proper education in their language...here I exclude the Albanians in Albania since they were in different position from us. The level of their education at that time was very high compared to us...it was the time when Enver Hoxha was ruling and things were different for them. Even though he might have achieved

the education of the population in a non-democratic form...he left to this people a very rich asset...an asset they still possess...and the one that we are still trying to reach.

According to the interviewee's opinion, the different level of education is one of the main factors for the differences among the Albanians living in the three countries. She explains this difference again by pointing out the distinction between the regimes under which they lived. Enver Hoxha was known for his authoritarian ruling towards the citizens of Albania, and he made education as one of the top priorities in which the people should focus on. On the other side, the Yugoslav regime did not give too much space for Albanians in Macedonia and Kosovo to study freely in their own language. This presented a big obstacle for them to enjoy the full citizenship rights in the countries they lived in. The differences in the level of education, can initiate other differences too. Interviewee 19 continues to explain other differences within this frame:

Yes, it is true we had a meeting but...they were not ready ...they were not interested...listen; there was a big difference in the mentality in Albania and the mentality of women in Kosova and Macedonia. I am not saying this was only in the aspect of the intellectual position...but Democracy at that time was not understood in the same prism in Albania and Kosova and Macedonia. We had two wars to handle, one for democracy and one for national liberation...and in Albania democracy was understood in the sense of liberating themselves from the dictatorship of Enver Hoxha...Democracy for them meant being able to get out of the country. Unfortunately there were not reciprocal feelings about the nation so all this failed to be officialized.

The interviewee explains how Albanian women were not prepared for the responsibilities and the risk the officialization of the alliance would bring. Their unwillingness was closely tied to their lack of experience on the issues that Albanian women from Macedonia and Kosova had been going through for a long period of time. They had not dealt with situations of having to fight and defend their national values¹⁶ which were constantly being jeopardized by the regime they were living with. The women from Albania attending the meeting had a different experience. They had wanted to “free” themselves from the communist regime, but in their case

¹⁶ Here I refer to the common literature, folklore, songs, legends, national historical days, national symbols, etc

the regime was not jeopardizing the integrity of their cultural and national values, nor their basic human rights, nor their right to education as it did to the people from Macedonia and Kosova. Using the example about the two different meanings democracy, the interviewee once again wants to point out the distinction between the ideologies of the regimes that the women were living in. Democracy in this case is one notion with two different meanings such as for women from Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia. For the women from Macedonia and Kosovo, democracy meant national liberation from their state and their federal (Yugoslav) regime. While, for the women from Albania, democracy meant to oppose the communist rule of Enver Hoxha which did not have to do anything with national liberation, but more with the type of ruling. This was reflected in women's ways of organizing and reinforced the divisions and tensions among them.

Besides these differences and divisions, the interviews of the respondents narrate other differences within their own organization. The differences appeared since the beginning, when they started organizing into Women's Forums and organizations. Interviewee 1 from Kosovo narrates the situation when they first started organizing within the Democratic League in this frame:

I was one of the women that opposed the separation from this movement as women. The other group of women was seeking a separation of women as a group, but they would still in the umbrella of the party. Nevertheless the association asked some kind of freedom. I did not agree then...and I still do not agree for women today to be separated. We wanted to move in the same track with men together. The movement needed to be equal for the two categories [women and men]...so in the end the Forum of women was created and we saw where we were standing... we were accepted for the battle in the field and for other activities...for everything...but we were kind of bypassed by men.

The analysis I have conducted so far in this chapter, led to the finding, that most of the women started their activism by integrating themselves in the political structures or in the non-governmental sector. In continuation, I want to analyze the factors that created divisions in women's organizing. First, as it was shown before in this chapter, when women in Kosova and

Macedonia made their first step to join the political structures, they encountered resistance by men. The question whether women should enjoy equal membership with men in the party, or should they belong to a special forum within the party, created different attitudes among women themselves. While some considered that they could be more effective by being united in a single women's forum within the party, other women believed that was not necessary. Being gathered in women's forum for some of them meant being "othered" and not given the opportunity to enjoy the same status as the other members- the men, in the party. This resulted with women's organizing in two different sectors (political parties and civil society), which presents the first division. Next when they went to meet their fellow women in Albania they encountered another factor for an additional division. The women politicians in Albania were divided into different political parties. Interviewee 10 explains this factor in this framework:

And this division was like a knife between the two different political poles, did not just surprise us but also brought sadness to us. In the both divisions we found great women who had the opportunities and capacities to lobby for the issue of our nation, and for the changes that were happening in Albania...but unfortunately they were separated...and our message was "women, find your own, internal dialogue among you.

The way the interviewee narrates the story is through a great surprise when they found women divided into political parties in Albania. This is because, at this time there was only Albanian political party in Kosovo and Macedonia, and the women who entered these parties had not experienced cross-party divisions among women. This division presented another obstacle for the realization of Albanian Women's Alliance, since the women from the three countries were divided first into different sector: political parties and civil society organizations. Second, there were subdivisions of women within these sectors (different political parties, different associations).

From the events and analysis presented in this chapter, I showed how women's organizing and collaboration in the three countries started. The reasons for this initiative were

mainly due to the endangerment of their co-nationals within the borders of their country and outside of them. During these processes, the gender issue emerged too, thus making some of the women activists aware about their gender identity. Subsequently, as the cooperation grew stronger and women started visiting each other in their countries, the more they realized the differences that created divisions among them. Factors such as the difference in the political regimes; different understandings about democracy, minority and majority rights; and differences in enjoying citizenship rights prevented the institutionalization of Albanian Women's Alliance.

CHAPTER 5: Gender, Nation and National Projects

“There is no doubt that all national ideologies are gendered, what might be brought into question are the discourses, symbols and the ways of gendering.” (Kasic, 2002, 190)

The women in my research have different (class, educational, and religious) backgrounds, however all of them have one element in common- contributing for the “well-being” of the “nation”. This is the main framework through which they narrate their role as women activist in male centered areas. In the previous chapter I argued that the paradigm of nation’s endangerment encouraged women’s self- organizing in the framework of contributing for their “nation” and also for their gender identity. In addition, the institutionalization of their organizing was not accomplished due to the existing divisions among them. Following the construction of the events in the last chapter and the analysis of the divisions; in this chapter I use a more oriented analytical approach in order to show how the categories of gender and “nation” are negotiated in women’s identities. I focus my analysis on the discourses and symbols they use when positioning themselves towards the “nation”, how they are constructing “Albanianness” and gender as women; and how that has shaped their individual identities within the collective identity of the Albanian “nation”.

The interviews conducted with the women activists, reveal three different paths in which women construct narratives about their ethnicity/ nationality and gender, therefore the chapter is divided in three sub-chapters. In the first chapter I show cases of women prioritizing nation as the main category they identify with. In the second one, I present cases when women are very conscious about their gender identity, thus they put gender in the first place. Finally, in the last

chapter I analyze cases when the categories of gender and nation intersect and as such they construct women's identity as one.

Prioritizing nation

The issue of civil rights and the status of citizenship within the model of nation-states has brought up many critical questions about the position of the minorities and migrants living in these states. The model of the nation-state has been criticized constantly for producing citizens and outsiders (Mostov, 2009, Bose & Manchanda, 1997). In addition, this kind of model of the state is particularly discriminating towards women, since as Connell (2004) argues; women are rejected from these processes related to the nation-building of the state. The nation, in its own construction, relies in the family model (Balibar & Wallerstein, 2002). Men are the ones who are placed in centered positions of leading the nation, while women are left with the "secondary status". Moreover, the status and the reputation of one's nation are still determined by its masculine capabilities (Ivekovic, 2001). Women have tried to break these boundaries by finding specific ways to involve themselves in the national processes and state practices. The construction of nation as a concept in the European context is considered to have been based on patriarchal roots coming from several European traditions (West, 1997). Moreover, the concept of nationalism as a doctrine was invented in Europe in the beginning of the nineteenth century (Kedourie, 1978). Its influence became even more evident with the process of state and nation building in the European territories, which produced differences/ changes in borders. Such example is the unification of ethnic nationalities of Germany and Italy in the 19th century, when the ideology of nation-building achieved to make a cultural unification, which was followed by state unification. Such unifications of the Nations, usually produce, the Nation, the non-nation

and the marginal nation (Ivekovic & Mostov, 2002). Gender hierarchies, play a significant role in the reconfiguration of the marginalized nation in these processes of transformation. (Samaddara, 1999). Ivekovic and Mostov (2002) note that, after the dissolution of Yugoslavia, gender and patriarchal hierarchies assisted the restructuring “of the social structure, communal order and the state” in all post-socialist nationalisms” (p. 13). However, analysis of such case studies in the European states show how the practice of the nation- building along with the democratic processes in Europe have hindered the process of treating gender in that way that it would not include women (Booth, 2005; Ludi, 2005). Moreover, further research has shown that the story remains the same for the countries of South Eastern Europe (Daskalova 2002; Brunnbauer, 2002). My research project will contribute to this literature by giving examples on how the category of nation is constructed (in women’s narratives) in regard to their identities in transnational constructed (national) frames.

The Albanians in Macedonia in the 90’s were facing many difficulties with enjoying their civil rights as full citizens of Macedonia. Even though they were mentioned in the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia as a constitutive part of the nationalities and citizens making up the population of the country; not having the right to study in their own language was one of the main factors that made them feel as outsiders in their own country. Interviewee 5 from Macedonia states this:

At that time we were under Yugoslavia which included the territories that were outside of our motherland (Albania)...we were outsiders. there were not too many women from Macedonia that studied in Prishtina (Kosovo) at that time...together with a group of women from Macedonia we tried to engage ourselves and participate in the struggle for national liberation of the nation... there is one thing that I feel like I need to emphasize here...There were not borders for us.

The discourse the interviewee uses in her narration about their participation in the national struggle relates to the Anderson’s theorization of nation as an “imagined political

community". For Albanian women, their "Albanianness", the strong national feelings, and the participation "in the struggle for national liberation" originate from the concept of the "imagined community". These women did not know most of their Albanian fellow- nationals from Albania and Kosovo; however, the belief in the "nation" as an imagined community, where they thought they belong was a leading "ideology" for them. As such, it strengthened their "Albanianness" and their feelings of an outsider while living outside the borders of their "home country". Thus, the framework in which the interviewee talks about the political situation is defined by the dichotomy of the outsider and the insider. She defines herself as an outsider when trying to explain that she was a woman living in Yugoslavia who felt the need to take action against the regime. Posing herself against the regime and willing to do something to save the "nation" gives an explanation about the path of her identity construction. Feeling as an outsider and showing closeness to her "nation" by calling Albania her motherland, she puts "nation" at first place. She used this term in order to show her affection and closeness to the nation-state she feels she belongs to, and also legitimizes her presence in the male dominated sphere as a woman. However, she also mentions the group of women that she was working with, which shows her awareness about the gender aspect in the cause for national liberation. She mentions Prishtina as a place where she studied, which again emphasizes the lack of the opportunities they had in Macedonia to study in their own language. The Albanians in Macedonia did not have a university in Albanian language until 1994. After its creation, the university was considered as illegal in the country and the issued diplomas were not accepted by the government of Macedonia until 2004, when it was legalized as an institution. Therefore, most of the people from Macedonia went to study in the University of Prishtina in Kosovo. Getting an education in Kosovo in her own language along with the other Albanian people living in Kosovo, especially

with other women made her get close to her co-nationals and also to her “Albanianness”. However, it also alienated her from the state she was born and lived in.

Similarly, interviewee 9 from Macedonia narrates how her feelings for the “nation” and national identity were nurtured when she became aware about the injustices and discriminations Albanian people in Kosovo and the ones in Macedonia were facing. Her awareness about the discriminations and injustices that were made to her “nation” lead the way for her to fit within “mentality” of the collective identity of the nation, and construct her individual identity within this rhetoric:

Like a young person being on my 16-17 ages...when let's say the intellectual hormones are rising and trying to get more mature...more expressed...I found out that yes there are nations who are feeling dominant and they want to show their dominance to other nations who are weaker and who are smaller. And this is let's say enough of a reason for me to get deeper to this mentality of the nation and the national identity who needs to survive through domination and discriminating “the other” one...and of course the institutional domination of the Serbian politics upon the Albanians in Kosovo and also in Macedonia...in a way raised deep inside me the feeling of protest and the feeling of measuring what is bad and what is good...what is equity; what are human rights; what can we do as a group, as individuals as a nation, as people of the world.

The way the interviewee talks about her understanding of the “nation” is through the dichotomy of “them” and “us”. Domination is the key concept here, since it is the only way for a nation to survive and be strong. The one who is stronger dominates the one who is less powerful. This neo-Darwinist discourse of domination is followed by her feeling of being “the other” which she again mentions in order to describe the feelings of suppression and discrimination caused by the Serbian domination. Similar to the first case, alienation enticed feelings of reaction and protests for the interviewee, and this lead to the construction of her identity through the close feelings towards her “nation”. In this case, the interviewee does not make any claim that might imply her to emphasize the importance of her gender when dealing with this kind of activism. The question she asks is “what can we do as a group, as individuals as a nation, as people of the

world”. The gender aspect in this case is overlooked. She is silent on issue how gender is playing a role in the construction of her identity in relation to the “nation”. The rhetoric within which she speaks might be influenced by her field of interest which is mostly concentrated on nations, the strategies of domination and the role of the individual within a collectivity, rather than women as a specific category.

The protection of the national history and the cultural values are the very crucial elements for the preservation of one’s national identity. On the other side, national identity keeps people’s awareness of them as a collective unit, and constantly protects their historic patrimony, such as territory and culture (Chong, 2001). Being treated unequally with the other part of the nationalities in Macedonia, for Albanians meant not being able to have academic prosperity in their language, but also to not be able to nurture and develop their cultural values. Interviewee 3 from Macedonia speaks about these discriminations within this discourse:

We were separated ...at that time we believed that this would be the salvation for the intellectual structures and categories , starting from the schools, especially from the schools...because the anti-Albanian politics attacked first the educational and cultural institutions and everything that symbolized the national wealth of the Albanians in Macedonia. These were of course directives from the Belgrade center, practiced and implemented in the Albanian environments, especially in the school with Albanian languages. I am saying this with my full responsibility, since I have studied and examined all the conditions and the factors that have influenced at that time, and I have all of them written my book.

According to the interviewee, the strong feelings for the “nation” and the unification with her fellow nationals in the other countries would be a good strategy to resist the separation the anti-Albanian politics was intending to achieve. This framework generates again the discourse of the victim and the enemy. The interviewee constructs the Albanians in Macedonia as the victimized figure, while the Macedonians are presented as the enemy who had an agenda of “an anti-Albanian politics”. Through the way she speaks about this, she constructs the attack on the educational and cultural institutions as an aggressive and direct attack towards the Albanians and

their national identity. The attack on the educational institutions means a prohibition for the development of one's intellectual capacities. While the attack on one's cultural values means a forbiddance on the development of one's national wealth. This rhetoric of the endangerment of the "nation" creates a homogenized, essentialized unit of the nation where women can be accepted as defenders of the nation. However, this is done through their silent identity in an indirect manner. While men are the ones who participate in battles and defend the "nation", for women is assumed to be defending the "nation" with their presence in silence.

In opposition to the silent identity, Chong (2006) identifies two types of women characters in the national discourse: heroines and intellectual creators of nation. In this case, the interviewee performs a typical character of the intellectual creator of the nation. Being deeply concerned about education and the cultural values as categories which constitute one's national identity it is obvious that she was worried about the future intellectual development of Albanians. Furthermore, her engagement into a research about this issue by writing a book which analyzes the situation of Albanians in that period and the anti-Albanian politics tells a lot about her efforts towards the intellectual project of construction of the nation. Her strong beliefs that their unification would be the salvation for the intellectual elite adds more to her profile of a woman who actively engaged herself into the national issue by trying to save and protect the intellectual capacities of her people. Similar to the previous interviewee, there is no direct or indirect acclamation from the interviewee's side that emphasizes her concern about the role of her gender identity in the nationality matter. In her case, her "Albanianness" is constructed through her strong affiliation to the national cause, more specifically through her affiliation towards the intellectual and cultural preservation of her "nation".

Similar to the former interviewee, interviewee 18 from Kosova also expresses strong feelings towards the national cause. She explains women's efforts to participate in the struggle for the national cause using this discourse:

There was no other association except the Democratic League which was active in the movement...and we- the women entered in that movement organized...but, some women came out and they wanted to form an independent association. At this time for the most of us, the most important issue was the issue of the nation...we forgot that we are women. We gave all our energy for the national liberation and we were ready to do everything that was needed, we were ready to fight together with our men and get the freedom we have dreamt of for such a long time.

Giving such a strong statement, about the significance of the “nation” and the struggle its salvation, it is clear that for the interviewee and other women the dangerous situation of the “nation” was the main cause they decided to fight for. Leaving out the important dispute whether they should organize as women's forum within the political party (The Democratic League) or as an independent organization; again shows that these women allowed the category of nation to define their main course of identity construction. Here I want to turn to Ivekovic and Mostov's (2002) theory of “double bind obligation”, which provides a more in-depth analysis about women's position in the “field of the nation” and a comparison of their position to that of men. They claim:

In the nation as a community, women, subjugated within a hierarchy insuring power to some [...], are paradoxically invited like anyone else to adhere to the pattern. For those men who accept the hierarchy (the brothers), it is easy to adhere to it because they can identify, they find themselves naturally resembling their ideal. For women [...], this identification is both necessary and impossible. Women do not resemble the ideal. However, hard they identify, they will never satisfy it. So they have to choose between being true to the nation [...], and being true to their own sex/gender. The nation itself involves contradiction as its constitutive condition in that it assigns it (the contradiction) to its subalterns in general (“minorities”, “ethnicities” etc.) and to woman in particular- through the imposition of a double bind obligation.” (Ivekovic & Mostov, 2002, 17)

The “double bind obligation” does not apply to men whose masculinity fits into the formation of the nation, since for them the categories of nation and gender most of the time do not clash. The more “maleness” one has, the more it coincides with the idea of contributing to

the nation. For women, things are quite the opposite. For them the “nation” poses a contradiction. The more they emphasize their gender identity, the harder is for them to merge both categories gender and nation together. Even in the cases when they will identify with the category of the nation, “they will never satisfy it”. Therefore “they have to choose between being true to the nation [...], and being true to their own sex/gender (Ivekovic & Mostov, 2005, 17).” Therefore women are bound to negotiate within the frame of “double bind obligation”. In most cases, the negotiation process is very complicated since women have to choose to either deny the passive roles assigned to them, or accept these roles, which immediately subjugates their gender identity. The aforementioned discourse of the interviewee “we forgot that we are women” verifies this kind of position. Claiming such a strong statement “we forgot that we are women” shows that they had to abandon the gender issue and identify with their national cause in order to fight along with men. Their strong determination for the long wanted freedom from the Serbian regime is an important factor in the construction of women’s identity. Standing up against the suppression of the enemy had to be more important for them at that time for two reasons. First, this kind of suppression was common for the whole population and Albanian women had to fight with men in order to liberate themselves from the enemy who was jeopardizing even their right to live. Second, there was not too much space for Albanian women’s position to be discussed broadly due to the critical situation created by the eruption of the war. Another important detail concerning Albanian women is that before, when they were under Yugoslavia they were excluded from the communist women’s organizations. Thus, this inspired them even more to organize as a group and defend their “nation”. At this time, men had opened the way for women to join them and help them by all means in their cause for the national freedom. Interviewee 16

explains how women were accepted in the army to even fight along with them directly in the battle.

There were lots of women who were part of the army. This was more common for women in rural areas. They contributed a lot for the national cause, and they offered even their bodies to contribute in the war...they were equally taking part in the war, and yet today after the liberation these women are not treated equally...I have gotten to know these women personally..most of them were from Drenica...we had women were imprisoned since they were fighting for the national cause...we had other women during the war running to find aid for the other helpless people...and at that time we did not have to create organizations to mobilize these women...everybody was aware we had to work for the only goal – the national liberation.

The way the interviewee speaks about women and their participation in the war, shows that women's inclusion in the war was achieved even in the ranks of the army, an area which is usually marked as highly male dominated area. The interviewee mentions that women had to offer their "bodies" to contribute to the war for national liberation. The use of the "body" concept here is very crucial since it generates many answers concerning the gender-nation relationship in conflict times. First, I want to mention one of the tracks Anthias and Duval (1989) mention, about women being signifiers of ethnic/ national differences Women's bodies here are placed on a position of representing the nation in a symbolic manner. In this framework, men's figures are created as the "defenders of the nation", while women and their bodies become the symbols of the nation; which is the nation itself. Being put in such a critical position, women's bodies are manipulated even more. Cases where women's bodies are the main target of rape are very common in conflict/war times. Women's bodies are what rape during war is usually about: raping the woman is raping the land, raping the nation; it means "polluting" the land and the future national subjects.

On the other hand, being placed in this position (which is very close to the nation), some women try to negotiate this representational"figure" of them by denying to play the role of the victim and act as "heroines". Natividad Gutierrez and Chong have identified this model of the "heroine figure" as one of the characters created during the interactions of categories of

women/gender and nation (Agra` z Garcí'a de Alba, 1992) explains this process of becoming a “heroine” as an act of love for the homeland which has filled the weaker sex with courage and fragile women have achieved extraordinary deeds (p. 12)”. This definition explains the process of transformation of the traditional women’s figure during the war times as a passive actor, into an active one where she achieve to make “extraordinary deeds” for the “well-being” of the “nation”. The discourse the interviewee uses to explain women’s contribution in the war, aims to do the same thing- show that Albanian women tried to transform their roles. By mentioning, “they offered their bodies” the interviewee presents the body as fence which protects the “nation” from the enemy’s attacks. In addition, these women sought to find aid for the helpless people, and they were imprisoned the same as men. By mentioning these (usually male) performed activities, especially the “offering their bodies” she is speaking in the discourse that they as women are breaking from this binary of "men-soldier; woman-land" which also means achieving or trying to reach the ideal that "everyone" is equal under the “nation”.

Prioritizing gender

In my research I found that despite the presence of strong nationalist rhetoric they were influenced by, during the conflict times, some women were noticeably aware about the role of their gender identity when trying to negotiate their position with men in the struggle for the “nation”. They define gender as the primary signifier and main characteristic of their identity; as something that she was aware to not let it be contested by the national processes (the discourse/ rhetoric for national unification and the conflicts for national liberation). Unlike the interviewees from the previous subchapter, interviewee 19 from Kosovo expresses different attitude towards her gender and national feelings. She expresses the same feelings of alienation towards the

Yugoslav Federation; however the construction of her identity reveals a different rhetorical strategy from the previous interviewee.

Albanians presented a big problem for the Yugoslav Federation. We presented the inside enemy that would destroy them in any way. How did the women's issue appear in this period? The problem was that Albanian women from Kosovo, who were the epithet of the nation, were presented in this articles as women who were slaves of their husbands...They did not know anything else but to make children...and this is the point where Yugoslavia had a problem with Albanians- it was the natality. The issue of the natality was brought up in different committees of the Federation at that time, and it was to be used later on in the politics of the 90s. Albanian women were called "birth machines"...and these facts can be found in the newspaper articles of the period 1987-88 in the most eminent newspapers of that time ("Ekspres politika", "Borba").The issue went to the point where there were proposals in the working committees for Albanian women to be awarded in order for them to stop giving birth to so many children...and this was such a big prejudice concerning the position of the Albanian women at that time. This issue added up more to the dominant opinion of that time: the division of Albanians from Yugoslavia and the creation of an independent state/ republic within Yugoslavia. Here we were all together women and men...but we were alone in the question about women, and there was the possibility of being misunderstood by our men. This was the reason why I decided to start working actively on the Albanian women's movement and the cause for national liberation.

In this case the interviewee is more inclined towards speaking about women's situation in this period of time when talking about the "nation" and the national liberation cause. The way she frames the story is by positioning the Yugoslavian Federation in direct confrontation with Albanian women stating that, the Federation had problems directly with Albanian women since they were the ones that were causing problems with the growing birth-rate of the Albanian population in Kosovo. This statement, again, confirms Anthias' and Yuval's statement of women participating in national processes by being positioned as symbols, signifiers of ethnic differences. The interviewee makes such a claim when naming the Albanian women "the epithet of the nation". She tries to explain that the Albanian women were considered as valuable symbol to the Albanian men and to the whole "nation". And the Yugoslav Federation had posed a great threat to the whole "nation" by wanting to go against the women of the Albanian "nation". In addition, the issue of Albanian women being called "birth machines" opens another issue for which is also elaborated in Anthia's and Duval's (1989) theory. Women tend to participate in the

making of the nation/ state processes also by being reproducers of the nation. The more they are able to give birth to the children of the nation, the more they are allowed to participate and contribute to the “well-being” of the nation. Albanian women’s position in this regard is very interesting. They were “excluded” from the Yugoslav nation, even though they lived in Yugoslavia. Thus their role of “reproducers of the nation” was going against the “Yugoslav nation” (even though they lived inside the borders of the federation). However, it went in support for the Albanian” nation” which was partly living inside and outside the borders of Yugoslavia.

The construction of the interviewee’s identity in this case is developed in an opposite way compared to the previous interviewee. This one was aware of her gender identity, and completely aware about the sensitiveness of the gender issue within the national issue. In fact, she stresses the gender issue as the main reason for the start of her activism. The discriminatory politics that was being directed to women, such as the one she mentions about Albanian women being called “birth machines” and the intention to award women who did not have too many children, makes it clear that she wanted to fight the prejudices about women in the whole national issue. In the end, once again she states that they were together with men in the cause for national liberation against the Yugoslav Federation; however they were alone in the issues that were concerning only women. Here she defines that these issues were not men’s issues, but their (women’s) issues. This situation reveals a lot of inequalities in power relations between women and men in their “struggle for the nation”. In one side, women are accepted to participate in this “struggle” with the equal status as men, and when their issues (giving birth to children) become nation’s issues, they have a great support from men. Her desire to work only with women during the times of national crisis shows that she put gender as the main characterizer of her identity. To conclude,

the fact that this women's issue appeared explicitly during the period when the "nation" was in crisis, shows once again the close correlation of nation and gender within conflict times.

Similarly, interviewee 13 from Macedonia tried to open opportunities for women to enter as active agents into these male dominated spheres, by refusing to leave her husband and sons to fight alone, when there were bombings and guerilla fights near their house. She narrates the story within this framework:

We were like a base for meetings and decisions for further actions, and there was no need for us to leave. Fear was the last thing on my mind ... I was going to stay there and fight even though I was a woman. In the neighborhood where I live, there were lots of arrests by the police, gun fires and bombing. There were cases when we would be the only family still staying there...and our close neighbors, the men had said to the others "as long as you see H... [the interviewee] in her yard, do not you fear anything, she is here. It does not matter if the others are leaving or not, she will be here with us"...and we stayed there all the time knowing that we could bear many serious consequences.

The way the interviewee constructed the narration of her story, makes this case an interesting example for analyzing her identity within the categories of gender and nation. First, using a discourse of symbolic act of resistance she stresses the fact that she decided to stay and risk her life along with the men, and fight even though she was a women. The acknowledgment of the fact that she was a woman, tells about the existence of patriarchal stereotypes about women and their passive role in national battles. Showing pride of taking active part in the conflict and working for the "well being" of the "nation", and emphasizing the fact that she was a woman tells about the importance of her gender in this matter. The way the interviewee tries to explain her character; she builds upon the "heroine figure", but not in indirect manner. For her it was important to be in front of the conflict, where she exposed herself in order to show that women are also courageous. Mentioning the opinion of her neighbors about her, she is trying to show that she achieved to make the people around her, that even though a woman she was brave and she was making a contribution in this national struggle against the enemy. The way she

explain her “bravery” she uses the style of referential narratives as a form of agency. She does not say I was brave in a direct manner, thus she uses her neighbor’s story to claim her agency in indirect manner in the conflict times.

Balancing gender and nation

Other interviews with women revealed a different path of their narrative identity construction within the categories of gender and nation. In the previous sub-chapter I presented examples of women’s identities being preceded either mostly by the category of nation or that of gender. Nevertheless, this is not to say that all of the women interviewed were only nationalistically oriented or only devoted to gender issues. I found some of them to employ a different strategy by trying to make the process of identity construction more negotiable in terms of both categories. In order to avoid putting the categories of gender and nation in binary configuration and clashing with each other, these women narrate their identity with the categories of nation and gender supplementing each other.

Interviewee 9 uses a different toolkit in regards to her identity, by speaking about her “nation” and her gender identity in a very negotiable way. She was driven to act by her narrated close ties to her “nation”, but by getting close to it she found a strategic way to not ignore the development of her awareness of gender identity. She narrates her stance in this frame:

You know being applauded by holding these speeches so you see that you are part of your nation but you are a woman of the world at the same time. You do not belong only to your nation, but lots of nations have the same problems as your nation too...and the resolved issue does not always have to be by force. It can also be achieved in a peaceful way. Networking of these women can bring to a higher cause...to a globalized cause for women’s rights for the children’s rights and for the better profiling of making positivist, progressive politics worldwide.

Even though they have close ties to their “nation”, some of them also try to incorporate their cause for gender in this fight, and what is more important, they try to do this by employing

a peaceful approach. Mentioning that they are the people of the world, the interviewee is trying not to “other” (differentiate) herself from the other people of the world. And that fighting for the “cause of her nation” does not have to mean that she is rejecting her gender identity, nor she is rejecting other people who do not share the same national identity as hers. The most common explanation used in this rhetoric of women as peacemakers as Helms (2003) claims, is based on the patriarchal stereotypes about gender which present the figure of women as “naturally” more interested in peace, more tolerant of (ethnic) differences, and more willing to engage in a dialogue and compromise to diffuse conflicts (p. 19).” In Albanian women’s case (despite the strong nationalist views some of the women have) this type of rhetoric is used by the women activists who want to balance the two categories of gender and nation. Correspondingly, interviewee 5 from Macedonia had employed the same strategy by avoiding the clash of nation and gender category during the construction of her identity. She talks about her patriotic feelings for the “nation” and her work with women within this framework:

At that time my activism started with feud reconciliations. I got this idea while I was in jail. When I got out from jail I wanted to make national reconciliation ...I mean a general national reconciliation in the region. I was assigned from Prishtina to do this, and I was the first women between the other men to do this kind of activity. It was really hard for people to accept that kind of reality. Nevertheless people were informed very well about me and my aspirations for the national liberations so I was accepted very well from them. The good thing in all this was that during my temptations for feud reconciliations among families I started working with women that I met during these activities...and this was a great opportunity to gather women and work with them. It took us very little time to organize and start working as sisters.

The interviewee’s idea to “make a national reconciliation” speaks about her strong national feelings. On the other hand, her desire “of organizing and working like sisters” with the Albanian women from Kosovo and Macedonia, speaks about her awareness concerning the importance of her gender identity. Achieving to merge her desires into activities that reflected both, she manages to balance the categories of gender and nation in the construction of her identity. The interviewee started her contribution for the “well being” of the “nation” with the

reconciliation of the feuds, something that was strictly performed by men due its relation to national reconciliation. Women were not allowed to perform these kinds of activities since the feud reconciliation was made in special rooms called “oda”. These rooms were spaces where only men could enter, when they would discuss important issues that only men were to decide. Since national reconciliation is performed in a masculine space, it was a problem for women to perform this activity and sit with men in “odas” to discuss these issues. However, since the national issue was in danger and help was needed from everywhere, some women achieved to negotiate their gender and started performing these kinds of activities. The construction of the interviewee’s identity starts from the national feelings, however it evolves towards the gender aspect too, since the women used the entrance of “odas” to communicate with other women to and encourage them on working together in their current challenges.

In this chapter, I analyzed the various identity negotiation processes of the Albanian women activists. Examining the frameworks through which the interviewees narrate their stories, I showed how the categories and gender and nation are negotiated. The analysis generated three main discourses: prioritizing gender, nation, or balancing both of them. The difference in the construction of their identities reinforces even more the divisions among them. My point here is to emphasize that besides the differences in the political regimes, minority/ majority rights, citizenship rights; the differences in the identity negotiations enhanced the divisions among them. This made the institutionalization of the Albanian Women’s Alliance less likely to be achieved. Here I want to address the questions of what would have changed if this institutionalization of a utopian project was achieved.

The institutionalization of this alliance would have been good to achieve for several reasons. One of the reasons for the missing literature on Albanian women’s movement is the lack

of legal institutionalization of this cooperation. The existence of collaboration be it on the grounds of women's issues, human rights or any kind of issue is going unnoticed and undocumented in the history. Hence this continues to reinforce the stereotypes about women as passive actors in the mainly male predominated areas of the society, especially in the state and nation building processes. With the institutionalization of the women's alliance, women's cooperation would have been more visible and stronger than it is now, especially in the male dominated areas of the society (made known to other important governmental, non-governmental institutions, the media, to the wider public). I elaborate more on this matter in the concluding chapter.

CHAPTER 6: Mapping the Borders: Imaginary vs. Official State Borders

“Borderland identity is not something that is fixed to a person’s location within the border, region...Borderland activity can be something that people have grown up in a multicultural border environment carry and perform through their life project.”(Prokkola, 2009, 32)

In this chapter I focus on the impact borderland identities had in women’s cooperation within the three countries. Most of the women I interviewed, had been working in the states they were born in. However, some of them are active in other countries¹⁷; from the one they were born. I want to see how they narrate their location and their activities outside the borders of their countries influenced their identities and their ties with the Albanian women from the other countries. I argue that even though their participation for “the national struggle” during conflict times helped them open up spaces to align together and strengthen women’s movement within the three countries; the existing divisions among them (the flux of imaginary and official borders) led to a lower level of cooperation after the conflict times, and they could not achieve the institutionalization of the Albanian Women’s Alliance within the three countries.

To understand the meaning of the state and imaginary borders between Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania; and their influence in relation to women’s collaboration, I will first provide contextualization about the creation of the countries with the borders of the three states, and then elaborate on the bordering issues between the countries. Then I turn to the interviews with women and analyze their narrations concerning the borders within the countries they live in, and outside of them. As a final point, in the next (concluding) chapter, I turn to the analyzing of women’s opinion about their collaboration today.

¹⁷ When saying different country, I refer here they moved to one of the three countries of my research.

Redrawing contested borders by any means, (sometimes even by force) and the use of nationalist discourses was always present in the region, especially in the territory of Yugoslavia. Simply said- mapmaking became an obsession (Mostov, 2009). The brief context of the history provided here, shows that the history of the three countries and the region is characterized with constant political instabilities and change of regimes. These changes have had significant impact on the stability of borders and mobility of people within the bordering countries. The present borders of Albania were settled since 1912, when Albania was proclaimed for the first time as an Albanian state (Hall, 2000) Even though it went through several regime changes and annexations, in 1991, it achieved to proclaim itself as a Republic.

In the same period, when Albania experienced the collapse of the communist regime (1990), Macedonia was deciding whether to continue being part of the Yugoslav Federation, or to become an independent state. Following the Presidential Elections, Macedonia became a Republic in January 1991(the same year as the Republic of Albania). This state is “the only former republic of Yugoslavia to achieve independence without violence.

The history of Kosovo and its territory is more complicated. When Albania gained its independence in 1912, the area of Kosova which was inhabited predominantly by Albanians was excluded from Albania. In May 1913, with the treaty of London, the territory of Kosovo was recognized by the internationals as part of Serbia. After that, Kosovo entered with Serbia into the Yugoslav Federation in 1918. The period from 1918 until 1997 was a time of constant fight of power relations and annexation between the Albanians living in Kosovo and the Serbian government. Starting from 1997 until 1999 the conflictual situation between the two sides was manifested through massive killings and expulsion of Kosovars from their homes. With the help

of the international community, the war stopped and governance over Kosovo was given to the United Nations. After the after war period, Kosovo was constantly to advocate its request for independence. After much deliberation and debating, the government officials decided to declare Kosovo's independency in February 17th 2008, making it the 193d country in the world (Kim & Woehre, 2008) Following the independence declaration, the government started lobbying with its neighborhood countries and its ally countries that had continuously supported their cause for independence. Albania was amongst the first ones to accept Kosovo and establish diplomatic relations, while Macedonia recognized Kosovo seven months later ("Macedonian Information Agency", 2010).

One of the main goals for fostering diplomatic relations with its neighboring countries was the establishment of the already existing ethnic borders and advocating for the opening of new border points. Athisaari's proposal had touched upon the issue of the bordering too, by mentioning the Kosovar- Macedonian borderline. This border had been approved by Serbia and Macedonia in 2001 (Meha & Selimi, 2010) without the consent of Kosovar officials. Now it was to be reapproved again; but the negotiations this time were managed between Kosovo and Macedonia. The issue of renegotiation between the borders of Kosovo and Macedonia became even more important due to the five thousand kilometers of internal borders, left from Yugoslavia's dissolution. With the help of the European Union, the borders were renegotiated and mutually accepted by the two sides ("EurAktiv, n.d.") In the meantime, the borders between Kosovo and Serbia were very critical. By proclaiming them as "administrative boundaries"¹⁸, the entrance of Kosovar people was strictly prohibited. On the other side, the negotiations of borders within Albania and Kosovo went on the opposite flow. They decided to open new border points,

¹⁸ Serbia rejected any kind of recognition of independence for Kosovo. Thus it proclaimed the borders with Kosovo as administrative border, meaning Serbia it was still considering Kosovo as administrative province within Serbia.

in order to broaden their cross-border cooperation in trade and reduce the rate of illegal migration (Likmeta, 2010).

In order to explain the issue of the borders and their meaning to the people living in the region I turn to Mostov and her elaboration on “boundary- setting strategies” and her classification of borders into “soft” and “hard” borders. Redrawing territorial boundaries with the purpose of achieving equivalence of the nation and state (Gellner, 1983), implies that kind of strategy of boundary setting, where the new drawn boundaries, set boundaries among people too; “separating them from one another or pulling them together in one roof (Mostov, 2009).” This way of restructuring has a great impact on people’s identities and the elements that create their national identity (language, cultural values, myths etc.). Employing rigid territorial and symbolic borders, means imposing rigid policies of inclusion and exclusion on people living within the borders of that country. This type of bordering, according to Mostov (2009) is a strategy of “hard” bordering (p. 6). “Hard” borders create cycles of inequality between the people separating them into strict units of majority and minorities. In a way, this is what happened to the Albanian people in the region. The Yugoslavian Federation was created in order to unite the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenian people, who spoke similar languages and had commonalities in their cultural values. While, the Albanian people residing in the territory of Macedonia, Kosovo and Montenegro found it hard to adjust to this common Yugoslav identity, since their language and culture was completely different from the people¹⁹ living within the borders of Yugoslavia, and identical to the people living in Albania. Nationalities who find it hard to cope with the collective identity imposed by the (nation)-state, the people who feel excluded start to experience problems of civil and citizenship rights. In the case of Albanians living under the Yugoslav Federation, they encountered such problems as not being allowed to study in their own language, nor show

¹⁹ Here I refer to Serbs, Croats, Bosnia’s, Macedonians, Montenegrins and Slovenians.

apparent predispositions towards their nationality etc. In Macedonia Albanians were not allowed to even name their children with names that would emphasize national differences. However, this was not an exceptional political strategy towards Albanians living in Macedonia. The same principles was applied to the Macedonian minority living in Albania. Consequently, “hard border” politics played a great part in the escalation of the violence and the series of conflicts and wars that happened in the region of Western Balkans.

In relation to this, Mostov argues that, the replacement of “hard” borders with “soft” borders is the best solution for the preventions of conflicts in the countries of former Yugoslavia. Her definition of soft borders stand for borders with are inclined towards “breaking down the physical and symbolic boundaries of inclusion and exclusion that create fixed identities of minority and majority, assign hierarchically differentiated memberships, and keep people trapped within the “hard” boundaries of their “home” states or at the borders of potential “hosts” (Mostov, 2009, 7).”

If we look at the condition of borders between Albania, Macedonia and Kosovo after the change of the regimes, there have been some significant changes for the better. With the fall of communism in Albania, the isolationist politics of the country opened its borders and allowed mobility for its citizens and visitors to move in and out of the country. The “softening” of the borders of Albania presented an opportunity for the women to be able to move freely from their country and meet with the women from other countries. Their presence in the secret meeting along with the Albanian women from Macedonia and Kosovo, made them realize the existing differences between them. Interviewee 19 narrates her impression from the meeting in this way:

Yes, it’s true we had a meeting but...they were not ready...they were not interested...listen; there was a big difference in the mentality in Albania and the mentality of women in Kosova and Macedonia. I am not saying this was only in the aspect of the intellectual position...but Democracy at that time was not understood in the same prism in Albania and Kosova and Macedonia.

The discourse the interviewee uses, she puts an emphasis on the different understanding of the democracy the women from Albania have in comparison to the ones from Macedonia and Kosovo. Democracy in Macedonia and Kosovo was fighting for minority and citizenship rights, while for women from Albania meant freeing themselves from Hoxha's communist at the time.

The opportunity that was given to women from Albania (to travel freely in other countries) revealed many things for all of them women at the meeting. First they realized that the desire for unification with their co-nationals living in their motherland did not have the same intensity on the women from the three sides. The rigid borders that had existed among them, had not allowed them to realize the differences they have. Instead they have all longed for their "imagined community" as something that was on the other side of the border, but with whom they shared the same language and cultural values. Now that the loosening of the borders of Albania had allowed the women to meet together, they managed to identify their differences very rapidly. Interviewee 11 from Kosova narrates the differences she felt in the meeting in this way:

Our cooperation with women in Macedonia has been much broader than the one with the women from Albania... the women from Macedonia have supported Kosova a lot...in so many ways...it has been the motive of patriotism...they have seen and loved Kosova as their motherland. They have been isolated just like us, since we both belonged in Yugoslavia and we have been closer to each other. When Albania opened its borders, we awaited them with great joy...we loved and respected them a lot, but from my experience...those that came to Kosova were not that passionate about the same issues we were.

Women from Albania had a hard time understanding the "mentality" of women in Kosova. While the women from Kosova and Macedonia understood that they had more common things with each other. For women from Kosova and Macedonia, the question of belonging presented a big confusion about their understanding of their national identity. Being under a Federation and states that promoted a different national identity from theirs, they had hoped that meeting with their "sisters" would result in unification and creation of Albanian Women's Alliance nationwide. But the differences they had just discovered in the meeting did not provide

space for the accomplishment of such ideas. These differences are not essentialized, fixed differences, rather than differences created on specific conditions of the current political atmosphere in Kosovo and Albania at that time. The interviewee uses the discourse of being “passionate” and “not passionate enough” to mark the existing differences among them at the time when they were attending the event.

Nevertheless, the opening of Albania’s borders had a positive effect for the national cause, since when the mass expulsion of the Albanians from Kosovo began, Albania opened its border points and allowed a great proportion of the Albanian Kosovars to be hosted by the families living in Albania. (Provide number how many of Kosovars were sent to Albania). Since the expulsion of the population from Kosovo was done in great size, the border points between Macedonia and Kosovo were full of people. Accepting the big mass of refugees from Kosovo, was very critical for the stability of Macedonia, since by now, the Albanians living in Macedonia had shown great infuriation for the occurrences in Kosovo, and the feeling of revolt was present in most of them. After much deliberation from the government of Macedonia, with the advice from the internationals, they opened the borders. Interviewee 12 narrates the event in this framework:

At that time Kosovo crisis had a great impact in Macedonia...great impact in Macedonia. They came in Macedonia, in Albania and it was an institutional crisis, political crisis in Macedonia. It was a real momentum of crisis for the Albanian people nationwide, but for the Albanians in Macedonia too, because other stereotypes were rising in the Macedonian society and there was a big fear that the conflict can be dislocated in Macedonia.

The decision of opening the “hard” borders had many different implications. Macedonians feared that by opening the borders, the mass of Albanians from Kosovo that would enter the borders of Macedonia would unite with the Albanians there and cause serious problems to the stability of the country. On the other side, the mass of the people waiting at the border was getting bigger and bigger and there were no conditions for survival for the refugees stuck in the

middle of the borderline of Kosovo and Macedonia. At this time, Albanian women's cooperation from Macedonia and Kosovo strengthened its cooperation like never before. Interviewee 6 from Macedonia narrates the story in this way:

Being a well organized and structured league of women we supported many refugees. When the war started, lots of Albanians approached us and as an organization we were coordinating all the activities regarding the accommodation of Kosovars in our families. Passing the border and finding their loved ones was a very hard task to do. We had the coordinators for the aid in each branch and we made sure to distribute the aids in cooperation with the international actors. After the war was over, they started to go back to their homes, and moral and financial support was given by us. We had projects with which we collaborated with the women from Kosova. They were psycho-social projects...and we worked in camps during the war. We have worked in the camp of Cegrane and Neprosten, financed by internationals again. We had women professionals like pedagogues and psychologists who worked in these camps too.

The help these women provided during the conflict times shows once again that they were determined to break the restrictions of the borders. They focused in helping their co-nationals to pass through them and they achieved to accommodate them into Albanian people's houses in a very coordinated manner. The range of mutual activities taken by women's organizations from Kosovo and Macedonia in the conflict times, show the seriousness of women's engagement in the different activities during the conflict. Interviewee 2 from Kosova narrates about women's cooperation and the meaning of borders within this framework.

At that time I also consulted with Albanian women from Macedonia...they were from Albanian Women's League...and we cooperated intensively. We had meetings in Tetova, then together with Women's Forum, Albanian Women's League and the Group of Writers and Veterans of Education we had an exhibition in Skopje about the creativity of Kosovar Albanian Women...yes we had problems...this was not achieved easily...passing the borders was not always easy..But we would always find a way.

After the conflict of the 2001 in Macedonia, the framework agreement provided some improvements in the citizenship rights for Albanians (they opened universities in Albanian language, the Albanian language become second official language in areas mostly inhabited by Albanians, more job opportunities were provided etc.). This allowed the government to loosen its control over the border with Macedonia, since the risk from the illegal movement of KLA

(Kosovo Liberation Army) had been reduced too. The improvement of the situation of the Albanians in Macedonia had an impact on women's cooperation too. If during the war there was intensive collaboration between women from Kosovo and Macedonia, after the war Albanian Women's League reduced its activities slowly. When interviewing the members of the organization, they could not give a consistent answer about the reduction of the cooperation with women from Kosovo and the inactivity of their organization. Some of them mentioned the lack of financial donations provided by the international humanitarian organizations at the times of conflict. The international actors²⁰ were interested in promoting peace and providing aid for the injured people. They were not interested in the national cause for "Great Albania", thus when they stopped giving financial aid to women's NGOs and health centers, they also lowered their activities for the "well-being" of the "nation" and their thinking in national borders. Interviewee 14 explains the financial factor in this way:

There was a great volunteerism of women in the beginning in different fields...schools ...creating more subsidiaries of the organization...education of women in rural areas...and this was exceptional ... I saw such immense willingness of women to be active and do things ... there was a high scale of motivation..It was such a great feeling...the willingness of women to get out from their houses and do something different.... and believe me this was very difficult at that time...and the materialistic side was not involved here at all. Money was the last thing on our mind at that time.

However, one thing was for sure- the "harder" the borders the greater was the resistance of women towards the "enemy" and the closer they felt to their mother nation. My point here is to show that during the time when the "hard" borders existed, the desire and will of these women to get united was greater. Of course this was influenced by another factor- the endangerment of their "nation". The mutual desire of women from the three countries to form their Women's Alliance was not accomplished since the divisions between the three of them were bigger. However, the idea about a stronger cooperation between the Albanian women from Kosovo and

²⁰ By international actors I mean humanitarian organizations and governmental states that provided financial aid for the injured people and gave financial means to provide peace.

Macedonia was achieved during the conflict times, since for them these divisions were not too rigid. With the “softening of the borders” fall of cooperation since the use of violence and affirmative action was not needed anymore. The softened borders did not make that huge pressure as before, and with the improved mobility of their borders they do not feel like they need formal procedures of institutionalizing their cooperation, as it was the desire for the creation of Albanian Women’s Alliance. Interviewee 17 from Macedonia explains how the “soft” borders allowed them to have a good cooperation between themselves without feeling the need to oppose the state they were living in. She frames the story in this framework:

At the same time when I was talking about our involvement in helping the Albanians from Kosovo to gain their freedom...now we got their feedback...they were helping us too. Lots of university teachers were coming from Prishtina to Macedonia. They were delivering lectures without receiving any salaries, they were volunteering. So this was a period of great humanity that touched the heart of every single Albanian and of course it was a period when we had no barriers anymore.

By emphasizing the help they gave to their co-nationals in Kosovo, and the feedback they got from them in the right time, the interviewee first tries to show how much their national ties meant to them. They were significant for the both sides, that they had expectations of helping and giving feedback to each other no matter of the existing state borders between them. By emphasizing the solidarity they had amongst them, once again reveals the national pride of the interviewee. However, the most important thing she mentions here is the loosening of the imaginary borders which she perceives as “having no more barriers” between them and their co-nationals. The softening of the borders meant that they did not have to struggle any more in order to have cross-border cooperation with the Albanians living the neighboring country. Nor did it mean that they had to use force in order to achieve this kind of cooperation.

Achieving independence and managing to settle the borders with the neighboring countries in a peaceful manner, it provided better opportunities for the mobility of the citizens of

Kosovo and also enhanced its economic cooperation with the bordering countries. The opening of new border points between Albania and Kosovo was pleasantly accepted by the two sides, since it symbolized more flexible borders and cross-border cooperation for Albanians from the two sides (Likmeta, 2010).

Conclusion

All the sacrifices that the Albanian woman have made until today have been for the good of our nation...but during every movement we have made it clear that we have never tended to oppress the other populations and communities. We have always had our doors open...we were the first ones to approach Serbian women...even though Serbia has always been our enemy we as women's group...after the war we initiated many contacts with them and Bosnian women. (Interviewee 2)

The after conflict period in Kosova and Macedonia was followed by peacekeeping missions initiated by international organizations. Women's organizations also took part in these missions. Interviewee 2 from Kosova tells they fostered contacts with women from Bosnia and Serbia after the war in order to improve the political situation between these countries. However, there were also collaborations between Serbian and Kosovar women even during the war.

In this research I analyzed Albanian women's activism and the negotiation of their identities in the conflicts and wars that occurred during 1990-2010 in Macedonia, Kosova and Albania. More specifically, I analyzed their activism in the political sphere and in the non-governmental sector in the countries they live in and outside them, with a special focus on the cross-border cooperation. I presented my findings through two perspectives: gender and nation, and the transnational perspective.

Relying on the transnational perspective I argued that during conflict/war times, Albanian women's cooperation in the three countries grew to a higher level. However, even though the cooperation was performed from the three sides, the rise of activism was manifested in different levels in the three countries. In chapter four, I showed how factors such as different political regimes, different political systems, differences in enjoying citizenship rights (minority, majority

rights) and divisions in the fields of their activism (political parties and NGOs) created considerable divisions between them.

Arguing from the intersecting gender/nation perspective, I state that the paradigm of the “national liberation” had an impact on the construction of their political identity too. In addition I argued that the variation of the identity negotiation processes (prioritizing either the category of nation or gender, or trying to balance both of them), added more divisions among them; thus, making it impossible to achieve mutual consent for the consolidation of their collaboration into an institutionalized organization -Albanian Women’s Alliance.

From a transnational perspective I argued that even though their participation for “the national struggle” during conflict times helped them open up spaces to align together and strengthen women’s movement within the three countries; the existing divisions among them (the flux of imaginary and official borders) led to a lower level of cooperation after the conflict times, and they could not achieve the institutionalization of the Albanian Women’s Alliance (AWA) within the three countries.

The last argument opens up two important questions. What good would it be for Albanian and non- Albanian women if AWA was to be achieved and why? Second, in what way did the “softening” of the borders have an impact on the possibilities for the establishment of AWA and on the further perspective on women’s collaboration in the three countries?

In relation to the first question I want to state that even though Albanian women’s organizing started based on strong “nationalist”/ “patriotic” grounds, it helped them learn a lot about women’s organizing and how to deal with men’s resistance when positioning themselves in the male societal dominates areas. Additionally, in chapter five, I showed that during the

conflict times for "national liberation" some women become very aware about their gender identity and the discriminations they were facing just because they were women.

The institutionalization of Albanian Women's Alliance would have been good to achieve for several reasons. One of the reasons for the missing literature on Albanian women's movement is the lack of institutionalization of this cooperation. The existence of their collaboration be it on the grounds of women's issues, human rights or any kind of issue, is unnoticed and undocumented in the canonized history. Hence this continues to reinforce the stereotypes about women as passive actors in the mainly male predominated areas of the society, especially in the state and nation building processes. With the institutionalization of the alliance, women's cooperation would have been more visible and stronger than it is now, especially in the male dominated sphere". It would have been known to other important governmental, non-governmental institutions, the media, to the wider public.

The opening of the borders between the three countries after 2001 was a strong factor for Albanian Women's Alliance has not been established. Revisions of the borders between the neighboring countries and the opening of the new border points provided opportunities for greater mobility and collaboration for the women living in the three different countries. If before the closedness of the borders enticed more revolt and national reactions; the softening of the borders now lowered these tensions. With that the aspirations for the institutionalization of the women's collaboration (AWA) also lowered. Since the "soft" borders provided more space for socialization among them, the perceptions and dreams about the "nation" and their "co-nationals" as an imagined community were replaced by more personal realistic perceptions about each other. Having the opportunity to be in close contact with their fellow co-nationals and

experience things made a big difference in their perceptions about the “nation” and their identity. This refers to the women of my research too.

The softening of the borders created a cradle for cooperation not just on national basis, but also on international basis with other women too. This made them join the modernized discourse that women activists use today (working on women’s rights, human rights, mainstreaming gender balance etc.), transforming Albanian women’s agenda more to issues concerning women than national ones. There are changes in their identity too. If before their only goal was the establishment of an Albanian Women’s Alliance “nationwide”, today they have different goals when establishing women’s organizations. The establishment of Women’s Regional Lobby for Peace, Security and Justice tells a lot about these changes. This regional organization includes women’s cooperation from Kosova, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Croatia, Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The President of the association is Edita Tahiri from Kosova. This is the only institutionalized organization where Albanian women cooperate together. However, this does not mean that the women from the seven countries collaborate on national basis, rather than the level of cooperation between them is based on the similarity of the challenging issues they deal with in their countries. These kinds of organizations have a great impact on the nurturing of a multicultural attitude, which is a constitutive part of the agenda for Balkan countries to fulfill the entry requirements to the European Union.

The politics of the European Union in the Balkan countries plays a great role on the national politics within these countries. Joining the EU has shown to be an important factor in giving up the support for “Great Albania”. Most of the Albanian politicians lead a more liberal politics, by claiming that the Albanian lands will be united once they enter the EU with no existing borders among them.” Nonetheless, if the EU enlargement and neighborhood policy

fails, then we can witness again the revival of essentialized, homogenized discourses about women's issues.

From the research I made, Albanian Women's League in Macedonia which in the 90's had over thirty subsidiaries all over the country, today is inactive. I found some of the women activists to work on the branches of the NGO; however their repertoire of activities was very poor. Some of the women I interviewed said that today, there are not too many international donors which would finance their projects. While another one told me that during the conflict, they had all worked on voluntary basis. Money was not an issue since they had to deal with much serious situations, which was the "national liberation". However, I found new women's NGOs that had opened after the war and are still quite active. An interesting finding in Macedonia was that after the war some women who had been active in the Albanian Women's League and other Albanian Women's NGOs had joined with Macedonian women's organizations. I found this to have happened even with Women Parliamentarian's Club. A possible factor for this might have been the promotion of the multicultural spirit after the conflict of 2001 and the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement 2001 which regulated the citizenship rights of Albanians in Macedonia.

My research on Kosovo and their activism today, showed that women's movement in Kosovo has developed in wider dimensions and it is more visible to the public. A possible explanation for this can be the presence of the international organizations and the access to more financial funds they provide for women's organizations. The strong agenda of the Kosovar government in reconstructing the country in each sector can also be a factor for improvement of women's position. Compared to the Albanian women activists in Macedonia, in Kosova I found the cooperation between women working in different sectors (politics, NGOs, business, media)

to have a closer collaboration among them. Women in politics had stronger positions too. As a result to that, very recently, the citizens of Kosova chose a women President to run the country.

Given that my research covers a considerable geographic area in the Balkans and also covers a long period of time (1990-2010), there are still need for further research to be performed in this field. First, interviewing women in Albania and hear their narratives, would add more to the frame of women's collaboration in the three countries and how they narrate the differences between them and the women from Kosova and Macedonia in terms of their activism and the negotiations of their identities. Since I used only two categories (gender and nation) in analyzing the identities of these women, adding other categories such as class and religion would enrich the intersectional analysis in this field.

Another interesting approach would be to conduct a research about the Albanian women's in the three countries and Serbian women's activism living in Serbia and other countries in Balkans in the period of war. Making a comparison between these women would be very interesting since it will narrate the events from two different perspectives.

Another interesting issue for further exploration is the aspirations for the myth of "Great Albania" and how this affects the development of Albanian women's activism today, especially when it is clear that there will be no EU enlargement for these countries in the near future.

Appendix 1: List of interviewees

Interviewee 1: NGO activist from Kosova. Her field of activism is women's emancipation through education. Holds a Bachelor degree. Age: between 51-78.

Interviewee 2: NGO activist from Kosova. Her field of activism is women in politics, media and business. Holds Masters degree. Age: 51-78

Interviewee 3: Politician from Macedonia. Member of Women's Parliamentary club. Holds a Bachelors degree. Age: 36-50.

Interviewee 4: NGO activist from Macedonia. Her field of activism is women's education and women and health. Holds Bachelors degree. Age: 36-50.

Interviewee 5: activist from Macedonia. Currently working as a doctor and NGO activist. She has been active in politics too. Her field of activism is women and politics and women and health education. Holds a Bachelors degree Age: 35-50.

Interviewee 6: NGO activist and a academic professor from Macedonia. Her field of activism is women's education and violence against women. Holds a Bachelors degree Age: 51-78

Interviewee 7: NGO activist from Kosova. Her field of activism is women's emancipation in rural areas, and women and business. Age: 24-35.

Interviewee 8: Human rights activists from Kosova. Her field of activism is human rights, women's empowerment and women's health. Age: 36-50.

Interviewee 9: Former politician and academic professor from Macedonia. Currently working in the political structures of the government and as a columnist for several newspapers. Her field of activism is women and diplomacy. Holds a. Age: 36-50.

Interviewee 10: Politician, doctor and human rights activist from Kosova. Her field of activism is women's rights and women and politics. Holds Masters Degree. Age: 51-78

Interviewee 11: NGO activist from Kosova. Her field of activism is women and politics and violence against women. Holds Masters degree. Age: 24-35.

Interviewee 12: Politician and a doctor from Macedonia. She has worked also as an academic professor. Her field of activism is women's education, women and health, and women and politics. Holds a Masters degree. Age: 36-50.

Interviewee 13: NGO activist from Macedonia. Her field of activism is women and politics, women and folklore. Holds a Bachelors degree. Age: 51-78.

Interviewee 14: NGO activist from Kosova. Her field of activism is women in business and women's economic empowerment in the private sector. Holds a Bachelors degree. Age: 24-35.

Interviewee 15: Academic professor and politician from Macedonia. She is a former NGO activist. Field of activism, women's emancipation, women and politics, and women's health education. Holds a Doctoral degree. Age: 51-78

Interviewee 16: NGO activist from Kosova. Her field of activism is women and human rights. Holds a Bachelors degree. Age: 24-35.

Interviewee 17: NGO activist from Macedonia and columnist. She is also very present in the media. Her field of activism is human rights, women and politics, and women in the media. Holds a Bachelors degree. Age: 36-50.

Interviewee 18: NGO activist from Kosova. Her field of interest is women and education, and women and politics. Holds a Bachelors degree. Age: 51-78.

Interviewee 19: Academic professor, human rights activist and a columnist from Kosova. Her field of interest is human rights with a special focus on women's rights. Holds a Bachelors degree. Age: 51-78.

Interviewee 20: Academic professor from Macedonia. She is a former NGO activist. Her field of interest is women and politics, women's emancipation, human rights. Holds a Doctoral degree. Age: 36-50.

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