

**Memories of the “liberation of Kosovo” among Albanian-
speaking activists in Switzerland**

Narrating transnational belonging to the nation

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by

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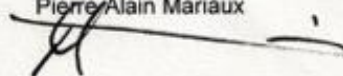
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Le doyen
Pierre Alain Mariaux



Abstract

The Albanian-speaking population living in Switzerland mobilised massively on behalf of the national cause in Kosovo in the 1990s. After the end of the conflict, that saw the departure of the Serbian forces from Kosovo (1999), some of the Albanian-speaking activists from Switzerland returned to their homeland. Many others remained in Switzerland, where they largely diminished or terminated their homeland engagement. Since the end of the war, very little attention has been paid to these former champions of the national cause in Switzerland. Furthermore, there is also very little literature on the memories of the mobilisation in Switzerland and the related discourses of belonging to the “Albanian nation”. The situation differs in Kosovo where several researchers have analysed the memorialisation of the recent past.

This dissertation explores the narratives of homeland engagement related by Albanian-speaking former activists who engaged on behalf of the national cause in Kosovo from Switzerland in the 1980s and 1990s. In particular, it scrutinises how they narrate national belonging in their memories of the quieter post-war years (after 1999). As such, this study falls within the field of research on nationhood and ethnicity that examines how people negotiate and reproduce nationhood away from extreme situations of nationalist movements and warfare. Furthermore, this research analyses the narratives with a transnational perspective as it focuses on how the interviewees mobilise and negotiate different discourses of national belonging embedded in the different social spaces they inhabit at the local, national, transnational and international levels.

This research mainly relies on oral history interviews conducted with former Albanian-speaking activists who were active on behalf of Kosovo in Switzerland in the 1980s and 1990s. Of the fifty former activists who participated in this research, seven were interviewed in Kosovo and the rest in Switzerland, where most of the research participants still reside on a fixed or irregular basis. The interviewees told me about their trajectory as activists on behalf of the national cause, their vision of Albianness and their position in the evolving “Albanian nation”.

The thesis is chiefly composed of three articles. They highlight the trajectories of the former activists from the years of engagement in the 1980s and 1990s to the search for a new status during the post-war period. While the thesis accounts for the negative image of the Albanian-speaking population in Switzerland, it also shows how they feel excluded and forgotten in post-war Kosovo. Moreover, the research demonstrates how the former activists use narratives of

homeland engagement to reconfigure the symbolic categories and boundaries that delimit the “Albanian nation” and seek to enhance their own position. The thesis thus underlines the evolution of the narratives of belonging as an adaptation of the transnational situation of the activists, from the period of “hot” nationalism during the years of engagement to the milder forms after the end of the war.

Keywords: Albanian-speaking migrants, Switzerland, narratives, nationhood, transnational perspective

Résumé

La population albanophone vivant en Suisse s'est massivement mobilisée pour la cause nationale au Kosovo dans les années 1990. Après la fin du conflit, qui a vu le départ des forces serbes du Kosovo en 1999, certain.es des militant.es albanophones de Suisse sont retourné.es dans leur patrie. Beaucoup d'autres sont resté.es en Suisse, où ils/elles ont largement diminué, voire même mis fin à leur engagement dans leur patrie. Depuis la fin de la guerre, très peu d'attention a été accordée à ces ancien.nes militant.es de la cause nationale en Suisse. De plus, il existe très peu de littérature sur les souvenirs de la mobilisation en Suisse ainsi que sur les discours d'appartenance à la "nation albanaise" qui s'y rapportent. La situation est différente au Kosovo, où plusieurs chercheur.ses ont analysé la commémoration du passé récent.

Cette thèse explore les récits de l'engagement de la patrie racontés par d'ancien.nes militant.es albanophones qui se sont engagé.es au nom de la cause nationale au Kosovo depuis la Suisse dans les années 1980 et 1990. En particulier, elle examine comment ces personnes racontent l'appartenance nationale dans leurs mémoires des années plus calmes de l'après-guerre (après 1999). Ainsi, cette étude s'inscrit dans le domaine de la recherche sur la nation et l'ethnicité qui examine comment les individus négocient et reproduisent l'idée de la nation loin des situations extrêmes des mouvements nationalistes et de la guerre. De plus, cette recherche analyse les récits dans une perspective transnationale. Elle se concentre sur la façon dont les personnes interviewées se mobilisent et négocient différents discours d'appartenance nationale ancrés dans les différents espaces sociaux qu'elles habitent aux niveaux local, national, transnational et international.

Cette recherche s'appuie principalement sur des entretiens d'histoire orale menés avec d'ancien.nes activistes albanophones qui ont été actif.ves au nom du Kosovo en Suisse dans les années 1980 et 1990. Sur les cinquante ancien.nes militant.es qui ont participé à cette recherche, sept ont été interviewé.es au Kosovo et les autres en Suisse, où la plupart des participant.es à la recherche résident encore de façon fixe ou irrégulière. Les personnes interrogées m'ont raconté leur trajectoire en tant que militant.es de la cause nationale, leur vision de l'albanité ainsi que leur position dans la "nation albanaise" en transformation.

La thèse est principalement composée de trois articles. Ils mettent en lumière les trajectoires des ancien.nes militant.es depuis les années d'engagement dans les années 1980 et 1990

jusqu'à la recherche d'un nouveau statut dans l'après-guerre. Si la thèse aborde l'image négative de la population albanophone en Suisse, elle montre aussi comment ses membres se sentent exclu.es et oublié.es dans le Kosovo de l'après-guerre. De plus, la recherche démontre comment les ancien.nes activistes utilisent les récits de l'engagement de la patrie pour reconfigurer les catégories symboliques et les frontières qui délimitent la "nation albanaise". Ainsi, ces ancien.nes militant.es cherchent à améliorer leur propre position actuelle. La thèse souligne l'évolution des récits d'appartenance comme adaptation à la situation transnationale des militant.es, de la période du nationalisme "chaud" pendant les années d'engagement, aux formes plus douces après la fin de la guerre.

Mots-clés: migrant.es albanophones, Suisse, récits, nation, perspective transnationale

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Farquet, Romaine (2014). 'Demonstrating for a Kosovo Republic in Switzerland: emotions, national identity and performance', *Nations and Nationalism* 20, 2: 277–296

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1 Introduction

1.1 Exploring ethnicity and nationhood in the memories of Albanian-speaking former activists in Switzerland

The Kosovo War (1998-1999) and the following withdrawal of Serbian forces from Kosovan territory represent one of the “hottest” and most tragic instances of nationalism in Europe since the Second World War. This conflict occurred at the end of a decade of nationalist claims, politics and warfare in Yugoslavia. It constituted the conclusion of the struggle for independence conducted by the Albanian-speaking population amid a situation of large-scale human rights violations. The mobilisation to “free Kosovo” from the “Serbian occupation” took place not only in the former Yugoslavia but also among the Albanian-speaking population living across Europe, especially those in Germany and Switzerland (Hockenos 2003). In Switzerland, several Albanian-speaking men and women from the former Yugoslavia organised and led a mass mobilisation for their homeland. They held demonstrations on behalf of Kosovo in the streets of Swiss cities, collected money to support their family and institutions at home and organised an armed insurrection in the homeland (Hockenos 2003, Perritt Jr. 2008, Dahinden and Moret 2008, Torche 1989).

Despite this large mobilisation, only little research has been carried out on the Albanian-speaking population living in Switzerland. A few scholars have analysed the evolution of the ethnic and national consciousness and identification among Albanian-speaking migrants since the first *gastarbeiter* arrived in the 1960s in Switzerland (see for example von Aarburg and Gretler 2008, Dahinden 2013). They have demonstrated how the sense of great solidarity and cohesion that bound Albanian-speaking migrants in Switzerland during the war has given way to increasing individualism in the post-war years (Dahinden and Moret 2008). At the same time, many migrants reoriented their activities away from their homeland and towards their “integration” in Switzerland, where the Albanian-speaking population often suffers from negative stereotyping and marginalisation (Dahinden and Moret 2008, Burri Sharani et al. 2010). No scholar has, however, analysed the fate of the former activists although they are well-known for having played an important role in the politics of their country throughout the 1990s (Hockenos 2003, Judah 2001). Moreover, the memories of the mobilisation in Switzerland and the related national and ethnic identification processes remain unexplored. In Kosovo, on the contrary, the processes of construction of new memories and the associated post-war struggles for power have been at the centre of several academic projects (see for example Schwandner-

Sievers and Ströhle 2012, Schwandner-Sievers 2010b, Krasniqi 2009, Luci and Krasniqi 2006, Di Lellio and Salihu 2014).

In this PhD study, I address this gap by focusing on the memories of homeland engagement among former Albanian-speaking activists in Switzerland. I scrutinise the stories of the mobilisation of the 1980s and 1990s in Switzerland from the point of view of the main actors: the activists themselves. More specifically, I wish to study how they narrate belonging to the “Albanian nation” in these memories. I thus explore how they craft the “Albanian nation” and Albanianess (i.e. what it means to be Albanian) and how they position themselves towards these constructions. Moreover, I also scrutinise how they construct nationhood, with the help of narratives of their past engagement on behalf of the nation, to negotiate their symbolic position in Switzerland but also in Kosovo. I am thus interested in studying how they use these memories as resources in order to construct categories, and position themselves in the different fields that they inhabit.

In this research, memories, and more precisely narratives, of the past engagement hold a central place. Numerous scholars have demonstrated how individuals craft their sense of self, of belonging and of their position in the society via narratives (Yuval-Davis 2011, Somers 1994). By telling stories, they link and order different parts of their life and constitute, directly or indirectly, their membership to different collective entities (Yuval-Davis 2011). Through these stories, individuals define who belongs to the “Albanian nation” and who does not. They also attribute distinctive roles in the “nation” to different individuals and groups, including themselves. Hence, in the narratives of the past, they have an opportunity to redraw the boundaries of belonging (see for example Kolsto 2005, Smith 2005, Wimmer 2008a).

Epistemologically, this PhD thesis also integrates a very important feature of contemporary research in social sciences: the criticism of “methodological nationalism”, which is conceived as the long-lasting, widespread tendency for researchers unconsciously to take the nation-state as the natural unit for analysing social phenomena (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003). To avoid this nationally-bounded perspective, I have adopted a transnational perspective that helps to shed light on phenomena that would otherwise have been overlooked (Dahinden 2017). This lens helps, in particular, to consider how former activists draw on all of the different discourses available at the local, national, transnational but also international levels to narrate their belonging to the “Albanian nation”.

Methodologically, the dissertation is mainly based on oral history interviews with Albanian-speaking individuals from the former Yugoslavia who were active on behalf of the “Albanian national cause” in Switzerland in the 1980s and 1990s. This method makes it possible to consider different discourses about the “nation” in the long term and also collect narratives that include at least two different times: the time of the telling and the time of the told events. Hence, the research links the time of “hot nationalism” of the 1980s and 1990s, in which the research participants massively mobilised on behalf of the national cause, with the quieter post-war and post-independence period (2008). As such, this PhD study falls within the line of research that analyses the reproduction of national belonging by ordinary people at a micro level and away from extreme forms of nationalism (Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008, Billig 1995, Antonsich and Skey 2017b).

The outcome of this research is a thesis by publication: three articles constitute the main body of the dissertation. These three articles scrutinise how the former activists narrate their transnational belonging to the “Albanian nation” in different domains. The first article focuses on the demonstrations held in Switzerland during the 1980s on behalf of the Albanian national cause. It describes how the participants reached a state of communion and sensed their increasing identification with the “Albanian nation” while demonstrating in the streets of Switzerland. It explores how they explain the emotions and sense of cohesion they experienced during these demonstrations. The second article reports the complaints expressed by the former activists in Switzerland regarding their perceived lack of recognition in post-war Kosovo. It examines how they use their narratives of the past engagement as a means of symbolically changing the alleged adverse categories produced in Kosovo. The third article scrutinises how the former activists attempt to craft a new, more modern construction of the “Albanian nation” in Switzerland. Moreover, the article also identifies and reports different forms of belonging to the “Albanian nation” based on masculinity discourses.

This PhD dissertation thus relies on and complements two main fields of study: the research area on Albanianness and Albanian-speaking migrants in Switzerland as well as the literature on ethnicity and nationhood. These two fields of scholarship dedicate a large space to the study of memory. In addition, this thesis attempts to root the general understanding of these topics in a transnational perspective in order to grasp the full complexity of the phenomena scrutinised. Before examining in further detail the epistemological and theoretical frameworks that

undergird this study, I will describe in the next section the “journey” that led me to conduct this study.

1.2 The journey to the PhD thesis

During and immediately after the Kosovo conflict (1998-99), several academics but also journalists scrutinised the role of particular “Albanian” figures and organisations in Switzerland. At the time, there was a general awareness in Switzerland that the large “Kosovo Albanian” population and some of its leaders in the country had played an important role in the “Kosovo crisis”. As a young woman studying international relations in Geneva at that time, I was interested in these events and followed the news and media reports about this topic.

Against this background, in 2004, some years after the end of the conflict, I completed an internship at the International Organisation for Migration in Geneva, after having received a master’s degree in Migration Studies. Both the postgraduate university programme and the internship concentrated largely on the “Migration-Development Nexus”, a trendy concept at that time that basically postulated that migration could contribute to development in the country of origin of the migrants. I was however far more interested in the role of migrants in the political situation of their homeland.

During the same year, I started working at the Swiss Asylum Appeal Commission (that was later integrated into the Federal Administrative Court) as a country analyst. There, I was responsible for answering questions and writing reports about the human rights and security situation in the Balkans. I started learning Albanian and began to study the political situation in Kosovo as well as the Albanian-speaking population in Switzerland. I was relatively surprised to discover that very little had been written on the Albanian-speaking population in Switzerland and their homeland engagement. Via one of my teachers of Albanian, I also started learning more about “Albanian traditions and history” as well as about the everyday difficulties that she faced in Switzerland.

Finally, I made the leap and decided to register for a PhD in 2006, with the objective of scrutinising the mobilisation of the Albanian-speaking population in Switzerland. Although I was planning to write a historical work, I also envisaged relying on the theoretical literature on “political transnationalism” among migrants (Martiniello and Lafleur 2008, Ostergaard-Nielsen 2003a). I planned this PhD as a monography in the institutional field of history, and thus started working within a historical approach, based on the collection and critical analysis of historical sources. I assembled different types of written sources deposited in archives or shared by former activists. I also started discussing the topic with a few Albanian-speaking acquaintances and

with specialists of the Balkans. Furthermore, I decided to carry out oral history interviews with former activists. I felt fortunate that the main actors of my research were still alive. To my surprise, my intention to interview the actors of the mobilization in Switzerland was not particularly appreciated within the Department of History of my institute in Geneva.

After this negative academic assessment regarding my intention to conduct oral history interviews, I left my home university for UCL's School of Slavonic and East European Studies in London in late 2008. I spent six months there as a visiting PhD student. I brought with me an enormous stack of copies of the archival material that I had collected as well as digitalised material. Initially, I planned to dig into the archival documents and find a way to start interpreting them. Furthermore, I also needed to think of a solution regarding the lack of understanding about the value of oral history in my home university department. In London, after getting lost in many different theoretical orientations, I decided that I wished to concentrate on the activists' subjectivities and enquire about their meaning-making processes during the mobilisation. For this reason, it was vital that I conducted oral history interviews. I thus decided to change both my supervisor and my home university simultaneously.

I restarted my PhD within the *Maison d'analyse des processus sociaux* in Neuchâtel in the academic year 2009-2010, away from the historical department. I was still planning to reconstruct the past understanding, emotions and values that guided the mobilization. Slowly, however, I became more attracted to an approach that privileged the consideration of the narratives of the past engagement for their present meanings about the narrators and their social environment. I abandoned my focus on the activists' past subjectivities to consider their present ones. This move occurred as I started contacting participants and conducting the initial interviews. I soon realised that the former activists circulated, defended and promoted different versions of their past engagement. It became more relevant for me to concentrate on the present-day creation and defence of these narratives than on reconstructing the past.

Following this focus change, I also gradually adapted my theoretical and epistemological approaches to suit the research needs. In particular, through the interviews I conducted with former activists, I faced different issues regarding how the respondents narrated their past engagement. Many questions emerged; for example: How and why did the respondents choose to mention or avoid certain events, activities and relationships? How did they compose the story they told me in terms of its structure? Why did some interviewees insist on certain topics while

others completely skip these? Why did I record contradictory arguments and discourses regarding the past events? This made me enquire about the construction of narratives, mainly in oral history and memory theories (Abrams 2016, Somers 1994, Portelli 1991). I began to perceive the interviews from a more interpretivist and constructivist perspective. Given all of the different interpretations and views of the past engagement that I recorded, I began reflecting on the processes that lead to the specific meaning constructions expressed. I tried to understand how the research respondents created, negotiated and conveyed their narratives (Schwandt 1994), and so regarded the interviews as a form of “social action” that takes place in a specific time and place and that includes a teller and a listener (Tonkin 1992: 97).

Furthermore, as I decided to concentrate on the personal memories of the mobilisation, I understood that I needed to refine my interests and find a key domain of analysis. The objective to concentrate on nationhood and ethnicity issues started to emerge during the interviews and encounters with former activists as the fieldwork was progressing as well as during the subsequent phases of analysis and writing.

I started to research and write the first article presented in this thesis as I was still conducting the interviews. At the time, in 2011, several of the interviewees were busy organising the commemoration of 30 years since the first demonstration on behalf of Kosovo in Switzerland. The topic “demonstrations” was therefore very present in our interviews and conversations. As a consequence, I decided to tackle this theme in an article.

The second article stems from two main observations. On the one hand, as I was conducting the interviews, I often experienced slight discomfort because the research participants saw my PhD work as a chance for their engagement to be widely recognised. This was however not the objective of my study. I was struck by their disappointment at not being thanked in their homeland for their alleged “sacrifice”. On the other hand, during my three short visits to Kosovo, every time I mentioned the subject of my research to occasional conversation partners, I faced relatively negative reactions. In Prishtina, I heard many demeaning discourses about the “Albanians” in Switzerland, who were often qualified as tasteless cowards who had not played any role in the “liberation”. I was long puzzled by these two opposing positions, but it took me a lot of time to find a clear way to reconcile them in an article.

Finally, the third article, that includes a large gender perspective, is the consequence of two main types of experience. First, I had my first child in 2009 and my second one in 2012. These births made me strongly aware of the different roles and chances linked to being a “woman” in society. As such, I became far more conscious of the issues linked to gender. Second, as I was invited to several parties, commemorations and political events organised by the research participants, I could also sometimes observe sharp differences in terms of men and women’s participation in these events. These reasons triggered my interest in focusing on the role of gender conceptions in the construction of the narratives of homeland engagement.

One of the main difficulties that arise when writing an article-based PhD thesis is to find a way to link the different articles in a consistent and meaningful way. The problem is that they were not necessarily produced with the objective of cohering with each other. Indeed, the three articles presented in this thesis were written at different periods of reflection about the interviews collected and the research in general. This evolution is particularly mirrored in the topic focus and the theoretical frameworks used. Moreover, the successful publication of an article also partly depends on the existing opportunities, including the choice of topics such as nationalism and performance that can be considered popular in a particular time and with a specific scholarly domain. Then, by writing and rewriting the same piece, I sometimes distanced myself from my initial interpretations and ideas that could have been more easily linked to other articles.

Finally, I have found it particularly difficult to integrate the journal reviewers’ comments into my articles as I sensed that I had partly to pervert my words, interpretations and references in order to ensure that the articles were endorsed. This was particularly the case with the first article presented in this dissertation, that pertains to emotions, performance and national identification. Early in the fieldwork, several former activists told me about participating in demonstrations, the startling emotions experienced in those moments as well as the role of these demonstrations in increasing their attachment and identification to the “Albanian nation”. My initial goal was thus to report and analyse these powerful discourses according to the theory on performance and national identification as well as the participants’ own explanations. However, after two rounds of corrections and comments provided by the main reviewer, I finally renounced and modified the article in order to include his core interest. I thus added a new focus on the possible contribution of oral history to addressing questions of affect and identification. After making these modifications, I definitely felt compromised as I no longer believed that the

article fully reflected my opinion. In the third article, the reviewers asked for less profound changes. In that case, I however felt obliged to add a certain number of references that I considered irrelevant to the article but that seemed to matter to one of the referees. In fact, my experience of submitting articles to scholarly journals was quite ambivalent. On the one hand, I learnt a lot from some of the reviewers' comments I received, especially regarding how to structure my papers. I also appreciated the idea that the results of my research could be relatively rapidly disclosed in journals that are published online and did not have to wait years before completing a dissertation manuscript and the ensuing book publication. On the other hand, I felt that I had to comply very accurately with all of the reviewers' recommendations and requested changes in order to increase my chances of being published, so I felt generally more constrained to accept several remarks which I found inappropriate and change my text, as I was dependent on my work being accepted for publication due to the particular form of PhD chosen.

This PhD thesis is the result of this long journey. Over the years, I have changed my initial study focus, become familiar with the constructivist approach, deepened my knowledge of oral history, memory and nationhood study, and finally experienced the challenges associated with academic publishing.

1.3 Outline

The thesis starts (chapter 2) by presenting a brief historical overview on Albanian nationalism in Kosovo, the migration history of Albanian-speaking individuals to Switzerland as well on the transnational mobilisation in Switzerland on behalf of the Albanian national cause in Kosovo. The objective of this chapter is to provide enough historical knowledge in order to understand the study.

Chapter 3 provides the general epistemological and theoretical background that undergird the study. In particular, it emphasises the constructivist and transnational approaches adopted to conduct the research and analyse the data. It also presents the main theoretical features integrated in the articles, stemming mainly from the field of ethnicity and nationhood as well some of the literature on nationhood in post-war Kosovo and among Albanian-speaking migrants in Switzerland. I conclude the chapter with the research questions that lead the study.

Chapter 4 outlines the ethical and methodological choices made to collect and analyse the data. In particular, it describes the benefits of turning to oral history when analysing processes of sense-making amid different discourses of the past. In this chapter, I also provide information on how the data were collected and analysed. More specifically, I mainly describe the planning and conducting of the oral history interviews with the Albanian-speaking former activists. Finally, I discuss some of the ethical questions related to a study that involves interviews about sensitive topics.

Chapter 5 constitutes the core of the dissertation. In this chapter, I first expose how I integrated and operationalised the theoretical frameworks within each article. I also introduce the three articles. The second part reproduces each article.

Finally, the conclusion summarises the main findings and replaces them within their theoretical and methodological framework. It also considers the limits of the research and highlights its main contributions.

2 Historical background: Albanian nationalism, Kosovo and Albanian-speaking migrants in Switzerland

This chapter provides the historical background of the thesis. It starts by presenting a short history of Albanian nationalism, with a focus on the territory of Kosovo. Then, it will briefly articulate the history of the migration of Albanian-speaking people to Switzerland. Finally, it will outline their transnational activism in Switzerland in the years 1980s and 1990s. The goal is not to offer a state-of-the-art review of the literature in these fields but to provide background information to situate the activists' narratives in their historical contexts and so be in a position to apprehend the direct references they make about various entities, stories, figures, arguments and values.

2.1 Albanian nationalism, nation-building and the independence of Kosovo: a brief history

This PhD study analyses the narratives of mobilisation of Albanian-speaking migrants in Switzerland on behalf of their homeland. In their narratives, these men and women tell about numerous historical events and episodes that relate to the direct context of engagement in the 1980s and 1990s and also to earlier events in the former Yugoslavia. The objective of this section is neither to provide a detailed and comprehensive historical account of the region nor to review its historiography but rather provide sufficient historical background in order to understand the study. For this purpose, I have chosen to concentrate on three main historical periods: 1) the birth of Albanian nationalism in the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century; 2) Kosovo under socialist Yugoslavia and especially the years extending from the 1970s to the 1990s; and 3) the post-war years. The first period is important because it saw the development and slow spread of the idea of an “Albanian nation” in the Balkans. Then, although this PhD dissertation was written in the post-independence years, it collected and analysed memories of the “liberation” struggles that were conducted in the 1970s and especially in the 1980s and 1990s. Hence, the period from the 1970s to the 1990s constitutes the central timespan covered in the interviews. Finally, as the study took place during the post-war years, some insights on this period are also needed.

This outline is mainly based on historical works published by Balkans experts. This scholarship, however, too often chooses to highlight divisions, conflicts and nationalist claims in a dual perspective of Albanian vs Serbian national and territorial claims over the centuries, thereby overlooking the peaceful times and situations in which ethnic or national relationships did not

matter. Furthermore, this outline is also based on my own selection of topics that I wish to mention, develop or ignore, according to my own sensibility and understanding. Many other narratives and facts of the past could obviously be reported here. Hence, in no way do I claim to provide “objective knowledge” about the political situation and evolution of ethnic or national identification among Albanian-speaking people in the Balkans (Munslow 2004: xii). Rather, I wish to convey some of the discourses about the past that relate to the particular situation of Albanian-speaking activists in Switzerland and to their engagement. These discourses help to situate these people and their narratives in a broader context.

2.1.1 The birth of Albanian nationalism

The first significant period in terms of the development of nationalism in the Balkans started with the decline and dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire during the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century, as various uprisings and territorial separations from the Empire occurred in the European provinces (Quataert 2005).



(Source: Encyclopædia Britannica, *The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire 1807-1924*, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Balkans/Formation-of-nation-states>)

During the 19th century, Albanian-speakers who remained in territories under Ottoman rule lived in different administrative units of the Empire, among which the vilayet of Kosovo, that broadly included the actual Kosovo as well as territories situated in modern Serbia, Montenegro, Albania and Macedonia (Clayer 2007). Here, too, local uprisings against the Ottomans grew as the Empire's rule weakened, although the majority of Muslim and Albanian-speaker inhabitants for a long time favoured some sort of autonomy within the Empire, rather than independence (Vickers 1998). In a defensive move, efforts were made to unite the different movements that opposed the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire and the annexation of its last European territories by the new Balkan states (Clayer 2007). Among the various endeavours, the Prizren League, founded in 1878, has been remembered as a founding event in Albanian history (see for example Dérens 2006, Clayer 2007). Delegates from Kosovo, Western Macedonia and also a minority of Southern Albania leaders attempted to unite the Northern and Southern Albanians as well as defend the integrity of the territory where Albanian-speakers lived (Vickers 2013). As Prizren is situated in Kosovo, Kosovo later started to be considered the cradle of Albanian nationalism although, in 1878, the Prizren League probably constituted a military endeavour rather than a nationalist effort to unite all “Albanians“ (Clayer 2007). Eventually, following a series of Ottoman defeats at the height of the first Balkan war, Albania declared its independence on November 28, 1912 (Vickers 1998). The independence of the state was recognised a year later and its borders corresponded approximatively to the current ones (Dérens 2006). The present territory of Kosovo was ceded to Montenegro and Serbia (Judah 2008).

In parallel to the creation of new states in the territories of the Ottoman Empire, the ideology of nationalism entered the Balkans during the 19th century, largely on the impetus of the European Great Powers (Hagen 1999, Malesevic 2012). During the 19th century, Albanian nationalism first largely developed among Albanian-speaking people in Greece, Italy, Romania and in the Southern Albanian regions (Clayer 2007). It only began to spread slowly to a wider population in the second part of the 19th century (Clayer 2007). The lack of a state that was able to “nationalise” its people was the main reason for this slow take-up (Clayer 2007). Moreover, given the multiconfessionality of the populations, Albanian nationalist entrepreneurs often intentionally underlined the importance of a common language and also of common ancestors, customs and blood (Clayer 2007).

The *Albanian Renaissance Movement* of the 19th century, the *Rilindja Kombëtare*, sought to develop literary and intellectual sources for the creation of the “Albanian nation” (Nixon 2010). As nationalist pioneers endeavored to create national myths, they drew on the Medieval legend of Skanderbeg, which represented a perfect narrative for the creation of a national hero (Nixon 2010, Misha 2002). According to the myth, Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeg was an Albanian nobleman and Ottoman vassal who turned against the Ottomans (Nixon 2010). Between 1444 and his death in 1468, he led successful military rebellions against the Ottoman armies from his fortress of Krujë, north of the present city of Tirana (Nixon 2010). The myth of Skanderbeg reflected the “continuous resistance” against Albanian enemies throughout the centuries (Misha 2002: 43). At the same time, the myth also described the “sublime sacrifice of the Albanians in defending Europe from Asiatic hordes”, an interpretation that attempted to attract the support of the European Great Powers (Misha 2002: 43).

A similar endeavor was made during the 19th century by Serbian nationalists who drew on the legend of the Battle of Kosovo of 28 June 1389 to construct a unifying national narrative (Bieber 2002). The myth centers on a battle that opposed the Christian armies composed of a variety of Balkan people under Serbian leadership against the Ottoman armies in Kosovo Polje, close to the actual city of Prishtina. Although the battle probably ended without a clear victor, the Serb historiography remembers it as a Serbian defeat (Bieber 2002). The myth thus provided a history for the “Serbian nation”, establishing a link between the present and past “Serbs”, but also supported Serbian claims to the Kosovan territory by recalling the Serbian presence there since medieval times (Bieber 2002). Over time, the myth, however, evolved and was interpreted differently according to the new circumstances and needs. For example, in the 1990s, the Serbian nationalist leaders asserted that the Serbs had sacrificed themselves at the Battle of Kosovo in order to preserve European values and civilization against the Ottomans (Antic 2005).

Finally, although both Albanian and Serb nationalisms developed in the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th centuries, the majority of the population at the time still had very little or even no consciousness of the notions of a “nation” (Malesevic 2012). In Kosovo, the idea of an Albanian nation and national identification started to burgeon in Tito’s Yugoslavia (Clayer 2007).

2.1.2 Kosovo in Yugoslavia



(Source: Encyclopædia Britannica, *The Historical Boundaries of Yugoslavia from 1919 to 1992*, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Bosnia-and-Herzegovina/Cultural-life>)

From World War I to World War II

While Kosovo was divided between Austro-Hungary and Bulgaria during the First World War, it returned entirely to Serbia in 1918 (Judah 2008). It was included in the newly-formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (officially called Yugoslavia after 1929) that was dominated by the Serbian Karadjordjevic monarchy (Judah 2008). While the war resulted in numerous, tragic casualties within the Serb population, army and authorities, the post-war years saw the brutal establishment of the Serbian authorities and forces in Kosovo (Judah 2008).

Between the first and second world wars, the Belgrade government attempted to change the demographic composition of Kosovo by implementing a program of Serb colonization (Vickers 1998). On the one hand, the colonists received benefits, such as land, free tools, the free use of public forests and pastures, tax exemption for three years and sometimes even houses (Vickers 1998). On the other hand, the authorities fostered the emigration and deportation of thousands of Albanians to Turkey (Vickers 1998).

During the Second World War, Kosovo was divided between Italy and later Germany, Albania and Bulgaria (Judah 2002). Albanians in Kosovo were now allowed to raise the Albanian flag and Albanian language was used in schools and local government (Dérens 2006, Vickers 1998). In turn, the Slav population felt terror as they were considered by the Germans, Italians and many Albanians to be the “enemy within” (Vickers 1998: 123). With the defeat and departure of the occupying powers at the end of the war, Yugoslav forces returned to Kosovo (Judah 2002).

Kosovo in the socialist Yugoslavia

In the summer of 1945, Kosovo was annexed to Serbia, itself a constitutive unit of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia under Tito's leadership (Judah 2002). As Tito broke with Stalin in 1948, the Albanian communist ruler Enver Hoxha decided to side with the Soviet power. After the break with Stalin, Belgrade started to consider Albanians as "ideological enemies harbouring spied infiltrated from Albania" and arrested them in their thousands (Vickers 1998: 154).

The severe climate of repression softened with the fall of the Minister of the Interior Aleksandar Rankovic in 1966. For many Kosovo Albanians, the period stretching from the end of the 1960s up to 1981 represented a sort of "golden age" (Dérens 2006: 74), as the Yugoslav authorities agreed to grant ever-greater autonomy to the province, increase the number of "Albanians" within the authorities of the province and founded a university in the Albanian language (Kubo 2011). Politically, Kosovo gained a very large autonomy with the constitutional reforms of 1968 and 1974 (Judah 2008). While the autonomous province of Kosovo still formed part of the Republic of Serbia, it enjoyed almost the same rights as the other federal units: it possessed its own parliament, government as well as police, and sent deputies to the Yugoslav and Serbian assemblies (Judah 2008).

At the same time, the province underwent enormous changes in terms of education and culture (Vickers 1998). A very intense cultural life in the Albanian language developed, especially in Prishtina, where numerous books were edited, movies and documentaries were produced and where the national theater enjoyed great success (Dérens 2006). Under the guidance and support of the Albanian state, Albanian-speaking Kosovans started to discover the Albanian culture, language and history, and develop a consciousness of "*one Albania*", in cultural terms at least (Kostovicova 2003: 45).

Over the years, a new generation of Albanian-speaking leaders emerged, thus replacing the numerous "Serbs" and "Montenegrins" who had overwhelmingly dominated every political and administrative institution in the province in the post-war years (Dérens 2006). At the same time, a "middle-class" developed in Kosovo urban centers where it could start enjoying the pleasures of modernisation, mobility and increasing standards of living (Ströhle 2016: 119). While the underdeveloped city of Prishtina slowly became a modern town, the economic situation of the province and countryside however still remained relatively gloomy compared to the rest of the

country (Judah 2008). So, as a “middle-class” was developing in Kosovo urban centres, an “underclass” emerged mainly in the rural areas (Ströhle 2016: 121). Those excluded from social mobility sought different solutions: migrating to urban centres within the country, moving abroad and becoming a *gastarbeiter*, and counting on family solidarity (Ströhle 2016). Many of the most underdeveloped regions later became the heart of the armed resistance against Serb forces in the 1990s (Ströhle 2016).

The “golden age” abruptly ended in the province as mass demonstrations with a nationalist tone spread across Kosovo and Macedonia between March and May 1981. At the same time, several incidents were also registered in Montenegro, Southern Serbia and even in Zagreb (Mertus 1999). Starting as a small student demonstration against the poor condition of the university canteen, the protests became a mass movement, concentrated on the situation of the “Albanians” in Kosovo and Macedonia (Mertus 1999). Although many demonstrators asked for the union of Kosovo with Albania, the main demand that crystallised in this period of unrest was a “Kosovo Republic” (Judah 2008). Albanian-speaking demonstrators thus called for an “equal status” for Kosovo with the other republics. Among the demonstrators, some students came from underground organisations that shared an “Enverist” orientation (Mertus 1999, Dérens 2006). They were sympathetic toward the Communist Albanian head of state, Enver Hoxha, and trustingly praised his alleged achievement of an egalitarian society, as they were unaware of the severe poverty and grave human rights situation in the sealed country (Vickers 1998). Despite their Enverist inspiration and rhetoric, these groups mainly pursued nationalist goals as they dreamed first of uniting all “Albanians” under a single state or a Yugoslav Republic (Judah 2001). Although the exact role of these underground groups during the protests is unclear, it appears that the demonstrations contributed toward raising and fostering a generation of nationalist leaders inspired by a Marxist-Leninist ideology (Judah 2008, Dérens 2006).

The authorities responded by violently crushing the unrest. According to the Yugoslav media, 11 people died up to the end of April, while Amnesty International reported as many as 300 deaths and some individuals estimated the death toll to almost 1,000 (Dérens 2006: 93). The authorities also condemned the demonstrators and leaders with, at times, long jail sentences. According to a 1986 survey, 1,200 people received long prison sentences and 3,000 received prison terms shorter than three months (Malcolm 1998: 334-335).

Following the 1981 events, a general atmosphere of distrust and hostility against the state developed among Albanian-speakers (Dérens 2006). The authorities harshly repressed the Albanian-speaking population with widespread arrests and police questioning (Judah 2002). Throughout the years, these measures contributed toward uniting the Albanian-speaking population and creating a divide between Serb and Albanian people (Judah 2002, Dérens 2006). At the same time, the emigration of the “Serb” population intensified. Poverty, underdevelopment, years of positive discrimination in favour of the “Albanians” and against the “Serbs”, the growing feeling of insecurity and the experience of harassment and animosity throughout the 1980s were some of the factors that explain these departures (Kostovicova 2003, Judah 2002, 2008).

Amid an increasingly nationalist climate in Serbia, the emigration of the “Serbs” and “Montenegrins” became a major question not only in Kosovo and Serbia but also at the level of the Yugoslav state (Vickers 1998, Kostovicova 2005). The emigration issue thus became linked to broader nationalist claims, in particular to the demand to unify the “Serbian people” through the abolition of the autonomous status of Kosovo (Kostovicova 2005). In parallel, after Tito’s death in 1980, the Yugoslav state suffered from increasing economic hardship and political struggles over the distribution of power between the federal state and the republics (Woodward 1995). Taking advantage of the popular resentment against the “unfair division” of the Serb people and the general situation of crisis within the Yugoslav state, Slobodan Milosevic succeeded in rising to power in Serbia (Dérens 2006).

In Kosovo, different measures were adopted during the years 1988-1989 in order to abolish the province’s autonomy (Vickers 1998). As Kosovo became directly ruled by Belgrade, the Albanian-speaking population saw its condition worsening following the increasing police repression and adoption of several discriminatory laws against the Albanians in the province (Vickers 1998). One of these resulted in the general removal or resignation of Albanians from state jobs. People were sacked across all sectors: medical personnel, civil servants, journalists and even industrial workers (Clark 2000). Important changes were also made in the field of education, with measures such as the enactment of ethnic segregation in educational buildings, the imposition of a unified Serbian school curriculum, the closure of schools, teachers’ dismissal and the closure of the University of Prishtina for Albanians (Vickers 1998, Clark 2000, Kostovicova 2005).

Soon, a new form of resistance, linked to a new, successful movement emerged from among the Albanian intelligentsia. A strategy of non-violence, mainly promoted by the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), began to be supported by the vast majority of Albanians in the province. The LDK, under the leadership of Ibrahim Rugova, a literature professor, overwhelmingly dominated the political life of Kosovo until 1997-1998 (Maliqi 2012, Judah 2002). The main objective of the movement was the independence of Kosovo. A strategy of non-violence appears to have been adopted in response to the disproportion between the forces on the respective Albanian and Serbian sides, with the goal of avoiding a blood bath (Maliqi 2012). In addition, the LDK attempted to build parallel structures for the Albanians, among which the two main substantial sectors were education and healthcare (Judah 2002). The teachers became paid through parental contributions, financial support from Albanians living abroad and volunteer tax collection in Kosovo (Clark 2000: 98). Finally, Ibrahim Rugova pursued a politics of internationalisation of the Kosovo question, seeking support from the United States and other world powers (Maliqi 2012).

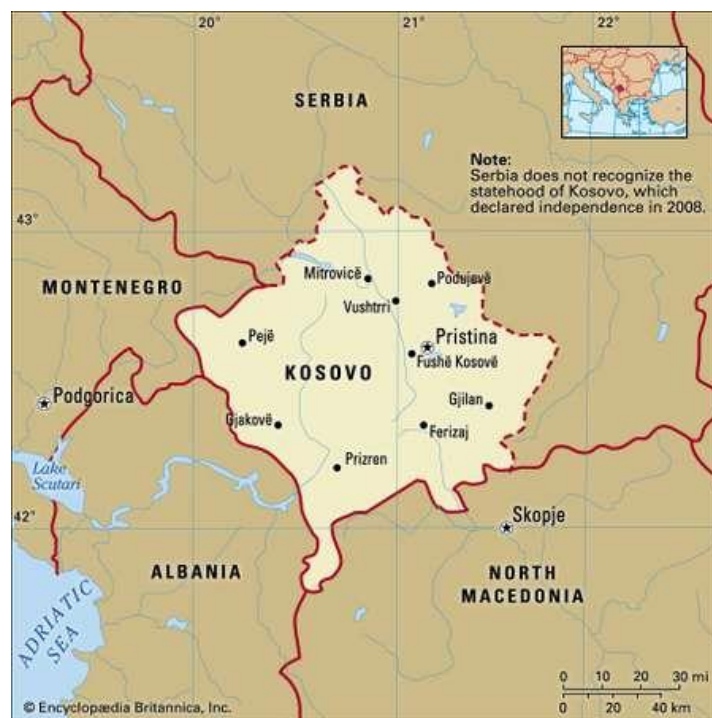
The strategy of non-violent resistance started to be called into question and challenged after the Dayton agreement of 1995 that ended the war in Bosnia but did not address the Kosovo question, contrary to the hopes shared by most Albanians. Furthermore, at the end of 1997, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), a small guerrilla group, started to become known in the province via its attacks against Serb police officers and “Albanian collaborators” (Judah 1998). The creation of the KLA is usually attributed to members of the former underground nationalist groups with an enverist orientation that developed in the 1970s and 1980s in the former Yugoslavia and whose militants often fled to Switzerland or Germany where they continued their activism (Judah 2002). While the KLA initiated an armed uprising against Serbian and Yugoslav forces in Kosovo, it also targeted Ibrahim Rugova and the parallel institutions, judged as too passive (Maliqi 2012).

In 1998, the death of Adem Jashari caused a shock wave that spread through the Albanian-speaking population (Pettifer and Vickers 2007). Jashari was a farmer and well-known resistant. He died along with his extended family of over 50 people on 5 March 1998 after an attack by the Yugoslav security forces. His death generated exceptional support for the armed resistance and, rapidly, thousands of volunteers joined the KLA (Bekaj 2010). He also became a KLA symbol after his death, although it is debated whether he formally belonged to the guerrilla group (Pettifer and Vickers 2007). During 1998 and 1999, the confrontation between, on the

one side, the KLA together with other armed forces consisting of Albanians and, on the other side, the Yugoslav forces developed into a larger conflict that was finally concluded by NATO's air intervention from March to June 1999 (Kola 2003).

Post-war Kosovo

At the end of the war, a large peace mission entered Kosovo. As the Kosovo Force (KFOR) took the lead regarding military issues, the United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK) received full powers regarding executive, legislative and judicial matters (Mehmeti and Radeljic 2016). The Albanians saw the establishment of United Nations rule, after the numerous years of repression, as a “liberation” (Dérens 2006: 336). Amid a poorly-managed reconstruction, Kosovo however soon became “an aid-dependent territory, with a rather problematic political future” (Mehmeti and Radeljic 2016: 7).



(Source: Encyclopædia Britannica, *Kosovo*, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Kosovo>)

Over the years, the Albanian-speaking population started to feel disenchanted with the stagnant political situation, comparing ever more frequently the UNMIK with a “colonial” administration (Dérens 2006: 333). As the negotiations over the status of Kosovo failed, Kosovo unilaterally declared its independence on 17 February 2008 with the support of the United States and numerous European states (Džihic and Kramer 2009).

Today, the majority of the population of Kosovo appears dissatisfied with the economic and political situation of the country (Yabanci 2016). They criticise the political institutions, parties and administration for their lack of legitimacy and corruption (Yabanci 2016). Furthermore, there is still no political solution to the status of Kosovo, as Kosovo and Serbia still have not succeeded in signing a comprehensive agreement that normalises their relations (Gashi and Novakovic 2017), although Kosovo has been recognised by more than 100 countries worldwide (World Bank 2018). Finally, Kosovo's economic situation still looks bleak. The country has an unemployment rate of 30% (Kosovo Agency of Statistics 2018), an average net salary of 471 Euros (Kosovo Agency of Statistics 2017) and, in terms of its per capita GDP, it comes third lowest in Europe, after Moldova and Ukraine (International Monetary Fund 2019). Furthermore, the country's economy, especially its domestic consumption, relies heavily on remittances from Kosovars living abroad (World Bank 2018). In 2017, personal remittances constituted more than 15% of the country's GDP, while it counted for 20% in 2006 (World Bank 2017).

This section briefly traced the history of the birth and spread of the ideas and claims of the "Albanian nation" in the Balkans, with a particular focus on the territory and population of Kosovo, as well as on the evolution of the political, economic and border situation there. While the idea of an "Albanian nation" was born in the 19th century, it was only during Tito's Yugoslavia that this started to take a firm hold among Albanian-speakers in Yugoslavia (Clayer 2007). In particular, the educational and cultural boom of the 1970s contributed toward spreading the sense of one "Albanian people" (Kostovicova 2003). Furthermore, Albanian-speakers were drawn together and started to feel more united as they faced several waves of oppression, first after the 1981 demonstrations and second after the abolition of the autonomous status. The increasingly nationalist climate in Serbia, and the discriminatory policies against the "Albanians" contributed toward increasing group identification and feelings, and oriented the everyday relationships. After the conflict, the Serbian authorities were forced to leave Kosovo, a departure seen as the "liberation" by the Albanians.

2.2 Migration of Albanian-speaking migrants to Switzerland: background

The goal of this section is to provide background information on the migration history of Albanian-speaking individuals from Yugoslavia to Switzerland. This section is based on the very sparse scholarship that has focused on this theme. I divide this brief overview into four main migratory phases: 1) the 1960s to 1981; 2) the 1980s; 3) the 1990s until the end of the Kosovo War, and 4) the post-war years. These four phases diverge in terms of the types of migrants leaving the country and their reasons for emigrating. The key factors explaining these four phases are to be found in Yugoslavia, particularly in the political, economic and security situation there as well as in Switzerland, where immigration and economic policies have also played a role.

The initial phase started in the late 1960s, after Yugoslavia had authorised and even promoted the emigration of its citizens to work abroad in order to combat the high unemployment (von Aarburg 2002, von Aarburg and Gretler 2008). At the same time, Switzerland, like other European states, was increasingly dependent on foreign workers to supply its booming economy (Schmid 1983). Yugoslavia thus became one of the most important countries of recruitment, after Italy and Spain, for Switzerland in the 1960s (Dahinden 2013). The first Albanian-speaking workers in Switzerland were mainly young men who originated from the countryside and moved abroad in order to assist their family in Yugoslavia financially (Maillard and Leuenberger 1999). They usually found employment abroad via family and village relationships (von Aarburg 2002). Their financial contribution often served to buy a tractor or build a house for their family (von Aarburg 2002). In Switzerland, they obtained a work permit that was limited to nine months and was renewable annually (Burri Sharani et al. 2010).

Ten years later, probably dozens of thousands of Albanian-speaking men from Yugoslavia were employed in Switzerland, working in low-skilled sectors such as agriculture, construction and the hotel industry (Maillard and Leuenberger 1999). These young *gastarbeiters* usually understood their stay in Switzerland to be temporary, as they envisioned their future life in Kosovo rather than abroad (von Aarburg 2002). As a result, they rarely sought to improve their social position in Switzerland by learning the local languages or seeking better employment (Maillard and Leuenberger 1999). They generally did not attract attention in Switzerland, where they lived a very quiet, modest life, worked hard and saved their money to send to their family back home (Dahinden 2005a).

The second phase corresponds mainly to the 1980s. The Albanian-speaking population in Switzerland, hitherto almost exclusively constituted of male seasonal workers, started to diversify following the deterioration of the economic and political situation in Yugoslavia. Firstly, because of the grave degradation of the Yugoslav economy and currency, the wages earned outside the country became much more valuable, which led urban, educated men to move abroad to find employment (von Aarburg 2002). Secondly, the violent repression of the 1981 demonstrations drove many young activists, mostly university students, into exile (von Aarburg 2002). When they fled the country, they often found asylum in Switzerland or in other European countries. Over the next few years, they were joined by dozens of other political refugees escaping Kosovo, as the province was hit by mass police oppression (Judah 2002). The authorities were particularly chasing activists belonging to the small underground groups that mobilised around an Albanian nationalist but also a Marxist-Leninist ideology (Judah 2002). The members of these groups perceived Albania to be their motherland and cherished its leader, Enver Hoxha, who pursued a strict Marxist-Leninist orientation.

Third, at the end of the 1980s, as the situation of the “Albanians” in Kosovo degraded even further with the abolition of the autonomous status of the province, a new phase of emigration started. This renewed period of repression drove dozens of thousands of Albanians to seek asylum in Switzerland, other European countries and the United States (Dahinden 2013). The number of urban, skilled individuals entering Switzerland thus steadily increased (Dahinden 2013). During this same period, numerous young Albanian-speaking men also fled to Switzerland in order to avoid doing military service in the Yugoslav army that was at war (Burri Sharani et al. 2010). Most of the asylum seekers who arrived in Switzerland in the 1990s, however, saw their application declined (Burri Sharani et al. 2010). Given their non-readmission by the Yugoslav state, they remained in Switzerland, where they often lived in a precarious status and difficult socio-economic conditions (Burri Sharani et al. 2010).

At the end of the 1980s, many seasonal workers also started to receive more stable work permits that gave them the right to family reunification (Burri Sharani et al. 2010). Although they had not initially planned to exercise this right, their wives and children started to join them in Switzerland as a result of the severe economic and political situation in Yugoslavia (Dahinden 2010b). Family reunification became an important emigration possibility, along with asylum seeking, after 1991, as the Swiss state changed its immigration policies and Yugoslav citizens were no longer granted work permits in Switzerland (Dahinden 2010b). Finally, a population

of 50,000 asylum seekers from Kosovo, who had fled the conflict, arrived in Switzerland between 1998 and 1999, the majority of whom returned home after the war ended in 1999 (Burri Sharani et al. 2010, von Aarburg 2002).

Thus, from the 1960s to the end of the war, Switzerland mainly represented a temporary country of residence for both workers and refugees. While the former temporarily stayed abroad to support their families back home, the latter awaited better political times in order to return to Yugoslavia or a “free Kosovo”. However, as the possibility of returning became real after the end of the war in 1999, and even more after the 2008 declaration of independence of Kosovo, many migrants were forced to acknowledge the strong ties they had developed to the country while living in Switzerland and decided instead to commit to their integration there. After having massively mobilised economically and politically on behalf of Kosovo, they also felt that they could finally start to enhance their own situation. As a result, the naturalisation of citizens from Kosovo in Switzerland has risen constantly over the last few years¹. They also endeavoured to strengthen their links with their place of establishment through measures like increased real-estate acquisition in Switzerland and a corresponding decrease in Kosovo as well as the rising support for children’s education in Switzerland (Iseni 2013).

Finally, since the end of the war, the emigration of Kosovars to Switzerland has massively decreased and family reunification has been the chief mode of emigration (Burri Sharani et al. 2010). These are mainly young people who move to Switzerland where they marry a holder of a residence permit (Burri Sharani et al. 2010). Today, the Albanian-speaking population from the former Yugoslavia is one of the most numerous immigrant groups in Switzerland, probably consisting of more than 200,000 people².

The former activists who participated in this research stem from the three first phases of emigration. Although some of them had already arrived in Switzerland by the late 1970s, most of them left Yugoslavia during the 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s. While the migration history constructs relatively fixed classifications for emigrants, such as “the workers” who left

¹ For example, in 2011, 2,518 Kosovar citizens became Swiss compared to 3,474 in 2017 (Federal Statistical Office 2018).

² No accurate data on the Albanian-speaking population from the former Yugoslavia in Switzerland exist, as these persons are categorized under various nationalities in the official statistics: Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Macedonia and Switzerland for those naturalized. At the end of 2014, 99,799 Kosovo citizens were living permanently in Switzerland (Federal Statistical Office 2016). This number also includes non-Albanian speaking Kosovans, who represent a small percentage, but excludes Albanian-speaking citizens from Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia. An oft-cited estimation mentions 270,000 “Albanians” in Switzerland (Kajtazi 2012: 11).

for economic reasons, or “the wives” who joined their husbands, the interviewees often blurred these categories and reveal their complexity. For instance, men who arrived as seasonal workers often saw themselves as the “victims” of the discriminating politics of the Yugoslav state that deprived Kosovo Albanian inhabitants of economic opportunities and hence of the chance to lead a “normal” life. Women did not simply join their husband in Switzerland, but courageously decided to leave their family and the familiar situation in Kosovo in order to start a new life abroad. I will further develop the profiles of the study participants in chapter 4, section 2.1.

2.3 Homeland mobilisation among the Albanian-speaking population in Switzerland

To conclude this chapter, I will succinctly outline the transnational mobilisation on behalf of Kosovo that developed in Switzerland during the 1980s and 1990s. The objective, again, is to provide information about the participants' backgrounds insofar as it helps understand the particular themes, historical facts, organisations and figures discussed in this study, particularly in the articles.

Numerous journalists, historians and experts on transnational politics have underlined the enormous engagement among Albanian-speaking migrants, particularly in Switzerland and Germany, on behalf of their homeland in the 1980s and especially the 1990s (see for example Iseni 2013, Moore 2010, Chiclet 2000, Hockenos 2003, Koslowski 2005, Koinova 2013). Despite this widespread acknowledgement, little is known about the mobilization of "Albanians" abroad, especially in Switzerland. Furthermore, the interviews carried out and the material collected for this research have demonstrated that there is little consensus among the former activists abroad regarding their understanding of the past. Under these circumstances, I will attempt to present a brief history of the engagement from Switzerland that will follow as much as possible the facts that were widely reported and the consensual interpretations. The goal of this section is not to get involved in historical debates but to offer some insights into the mobilisation of the research participants.

This section is partly based on the existing literature on the homeland politics of Albanian-speaking people from the former Yugoslavia, and on Kosovo or Yugoslav history. It is also partly rooted in the data collected through the interviews conducted and some of the publications assembled as part of this study. The main reason for this choice is that few authors have researched in detail the activism on behalf of Kosovo in Switzerland. As a result, there is little knowledge on the important initiatives, organizations and key figures of the engagement. As the interviews conducted as part of this research reveal numerous new facets of the engagement that add to our existing knowledge, I decided to include some of the data in this chapter.

The engagement from Switzerland can be broadly divided into three main phases that largely depended on the political situation in the migrants' homeland as well as on the configuration of the Albanian-speaking population in Switzerland. First, the engagement on behalf of Kosovo

in Switzerland chiefly started at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, as important figures from the underground nationalist groups, such as the journalists Kadri Zeka, and Hydajet Hyseni fled to Switzerland and Germany (Rashiti 2010, Oral History Kosovo 2015). After the demonstrations of 1981, numerous activists from clandestine groups who were escaping long jail sentences or even, in certain cases, potential assassination in Yugoslavia fled the country (Judah 2001, Rashiti 2010). In Switzerland, these refugees largely contributed toward establishing various Albanian cultural clubs and associations across the country (personal communications). They also founded several transnational political organizations that linked the members across Europe back with Yugoslavia (Judah 2001, Pettifer 2001). During the 1980s, the activists concentrated on building and strengthening their organisational structures, sensitising the *gastarbeiter* regarding the national cause, publishing various newspapers and propaganda material as well as organising demonstrations across Europe in order to show their solidarity with the “Albanians” in Yugoslavia and denounce the “injustices” committed by the Serb and Yugoslav regimes there (Rashiti 2010). The activists in Switzerland also offered support to the families of political detainees and victims of political assassinations in Kosovo (personal communications).

At the time, most of the organisations were based on an Albanian nationalist and Marxist-Leninist ideology³ (Denaud and Pras 1999, Judah 2008). As Albania represented the motherland for the Albanian-speaking activists, they adopted the Marxist-Leninist ideology defended by Enver Hoxha, the Albanian communist head of state (Kola 2003). Moreover, during the 1980s, the activists in Europe visited from time to time the Albanian embassies in Vienna, Rome and Paris (Kola 2003). The research participants often explained that they received literature about the Albanian nation and history but also advice of restraint engagement. During the 1980s, most of the militants abandoned the goal of the union of Albania with the Albanian inhabited regions of the former Yugoslavia and agreed to fight for Kosovo⁴ to become a Republic (Denaud and Pras 1999, Judah 2008). Furthermore, most of the activists only considered non-violent forms of resistance against Yugoslavia, although some envisioned the possibility of turning to more violent means in the future, if needed (personal

³ For example, the official program of the Popular Movement for the Republic of Kosovo (Albanian acronym LPRK) explained: “The LPRK will also mobilize the Albanian people in the common struggle against any possible aggression by the imperialist superpowers or their vassals.” (author’s own translation) (LPK 1989: 22).

⁴ For some militants, “Kosovo” corresponded to the Yugoslav province of Kosovo. For others, it included the territories of Yugoslavia where Albanian-speakers live. In their program, the LPRK for example officially demanded: “The creation of the Republic of Kosovë within the framework of the SFRY, also including the territories populated mainly by Albanians in Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro.” (author’s own translation) (LPK 1989: 18).

communications). Finally, the activists operated with great discretion, fearing the presence of the Yugoslav secret services in Switzerland (personal communications).

Second, the political turmoil that struck Yugoslavia, and particularly Kosovo, at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s had considerable repercussions for the mobilisation of the Albanian-speaking population in Switzerland. During the 1990s, not only bold and motivated activists but the entire Albanian-speaking population from Yugoslavia in Switzerland massively mobilised for their homeland (Hockenos 2003). This engagement took multiple forms: humanitarian and cultural projects, financial transfers, political lobbying, information campaigns and the planning of armed resistance in Kosovo (Dahinden 2010b, Koinova 2010, Moore 2010). Under these circumstances, dozens of organisations were constituted across Switzerland, often connected to partner entities in Yugoslavia, Europe and also North America. In particular, several of the early activists of the 1980s joined the newly arrived refugees in order to create a branch of the LDK in Switzerland in 1990 (Latifi 2008). Quickly, the party expanded across Switzerland, with numerous members in every canton⁵. Apart from taking care of the extensive internal party life, its members engaged in various activities: the organisation of demonstrations, publication of various newspapers, leaflets and information material, networking with NGOs, lobbying Swiss politicians, the organisation of celebrations and the collect of donations (personal communications). The Kosovo government in exile was another important actor on the transnational political scene, partly established in Switzerland. While the Prime Minister in exile, Bujar Bukoshi, was established in Germany, its Minister of Information, Xhafer Shatri, was based in Geneva (Hockenos 2003). One of the main roles of the government in exile was to collect money from the Kosovo Albanians abroad in order to finance the parallel structures in Kosovo (Hockenos 2003). Thus, every canton had a commission, mainly composed of LDK activists, that was responsible for collecting this money (Latifi 2008). The rule was that every Kosovar had to contribute an amount equal to 3% of his/her income (Hockenos 2003). Other, smaller transnational political formations were also created, like the Christian Democratic Party of Kosovo and the Party of Democratic Prosperity, that gathered Albanians from Macedonia (personal communications).

Furthermore, while most of the leftist political groups of the 1980s ended their activities or created new platforms, one organisation, the Popular Movement for Kosovo (in Albanian:

⁵ According to one long-term leader of the LDK interviewed as part of this study, the organisation attracted up to 30,000 members in Switzerland in 1991, among which about 1,500 were active.

Lëvizja Popullore e Kosovës - LPK), opted to organise armed resistance against Serbia although it remained largely in a minority and at the margins of the Albanian-speaking population in Yugoslavia and abroad throughout most of the 1990s (Denaud and Pras 1999, Judah 2001). At the beginning of the 1990s, the LPK actually attempted to coordinate some of its activities with the LDK in a broad movement of resistance in Switzerland (Elshani 1992). These endeavours, however, did not last long and the two groups developed a relationship based on mistrust: with the LDK members accusing the LPK of being a group of “radicals” and “Enverists” and the LPK members judging the LDK militants as “too passive” and even sometimes as “collaborators of the Serb regime” (personal communications). During the war, the LPK members who had spent years in Switzerland came out of the shadows to occupy diverse leadership positions within the KLA ranks or operated as diplomatic representatives and spokespersons of the KLA abroad (see for example Denaud and Pras 1999). As many of these LPK members returned to Kosovo during or directly after the war, they took up immediately or in the following years high-level political positions such as Prime Minister, President, Minister of Foreign Affairs, MP or government advisor. Generally, most experts attribute a key role to the LPK in Switzerland and Germany in creating, supporting and financing the KLA (see for example Chiclet 2000, Koinova 2010, Judah 2001, Moore 2010). However, KLA members who operated in Kosovo tend to offer a different version of the creation of the guerrilla group and the roles of the different leaders and founders (Kola 2003). In Kosovo, observers and KLA protagonists remember how “village militia” started to emerge in the countryside in 1998 and called themselves KLA, although they operated rather independently from the LPK leaders abroad (Kola 2003, Hamzaj 2000, Judah 2001: 23).

Third, after the end of the conflict, the massive engagement on behalf of Kosovo was drastically reduced. The number of migrants’ organisations decreased and their focus mainly shifted from Kosovo toward integration in Switzerland (Dahinden and Moret 2008, Burri Sharani et al. 2010). While only a small number of migrants are still active today in the traditional political organisations like the LDK, others have started developing new forms of transnational projects and networks (Dahinden and Moret 2008, Iseni 2013). In particular, some leading members of the second generation have endeavored to create new structures and associations (Iseni 2013). These new projects reflect the particular situation of this younger population, that grew up in Switzerland and often feels distant from the country of origin of their parents, thus transmitting new values and self-understanding generated by their “in-betweenness” (Iseni 2013: 239).

The narratives produced as part of this study relate to these three phases of engagement. Among all of the interviewees, the men and women who were active during the 1980s in Switzerland give greater weight to the first phase. However, the research participants who were not in Switzerland or not active at the time usually also mention these years. Some of these interviewees for example conceive the 1980s as the beginning of “Albanian activism” in Switzerland and as the emergence of their organisation there. Others contrast the 1980s with the 1990s, for instance by comparing the “damaging”, “misleading” “leninist” organisations of the early years with the more “favourable”, “skilled” “democratic” LDK in the 1990s. All of the narratives largely include the second phase of the 1990s and the great diversity of activism engaged in during these years. While the role of political organisations such as the LDK and LPK play an important part in the narratives, they also describe the roles of other organisations in the humanitarian, cultural and sport fields. Finally, the post-war phase of engagement is less emphasised in the narratives of homeland mobilisation. Often, the research participants mention their recent activism after the end of the formally recorded part of the interviews. Sometimes, they compare the intense years of activism with the calmer post-war situation. For example, they emphasise the new orientation of their activism toward their life and family in Switzerland, their new initiative to represent the “Albanians” in Switzerland and their engagement in cultural events.

Before outlining the history of homeland engagement among Albanian-speaking migrants in Switzerland, this chapter also succinctly sketched their migration trajectories. These two sections complemented the first one, that provided an overview of the propagation of the the idea, awareness and feelings of belonging to the “Albanian nation” in Kosovo as well as an outline of the changes to the state borders and political dominance in the region. In the next chapter, I will provide further background to the study by scrutinising the epistemological and theoretical approaches that underlie this research.

3 Epistemological and theoretical background

This study analyses different narratives of belonging and constructions of the “Albanian nation” via a qualitative research framework. This qualitative work is based on particular philosophical and theoretical assumptions that help to guide the research and interpret the phenomena scrutinised. In this chapter, I will outline the main epistemological and theoretical perspectives adopted. I will start by presenting the social constructivist and transnational premises that underpin this study. I will then elaborate on the theoretical approaches of nationhood and ethnicity in which this study is rooted. These frameworks constitute the backbone of the main research questions that led this study. I will finally conclude the chapter with a review of the literature on nationhood and Albanianess in Kosovo and Switzerland. I will then be able to discuss the methodological aspects of the study in the next chapter.

3.1 Epistemological roots

Epistemology concerns the “study of the nature of knowledge and justification” (Schwandt 2007a: 87). In a qualitative research, the main objective is generally to get as close as possible to the views of the participants and their subjectivities (Creswell 2013). Researchers might follow different interpretative paradigms or frameworks in conceiving the participants’ perspectives (Denzin and Lincoln 2018). These frameworks can be understood as “beliefs [that] shape how the qualitative researcher sees the world and acts in it” (Denzin and Lincoln 2018: 19). These paradigms play an influential role because they impact on how the research questions are framed and the interpretations proposed (Denzin and Lincoln 2018). In the following paragraphs, I will outline the constructivist and transnational perspectives, the two main epistemological paradigms that support this study.

3.1.1 A constructivist perspective: implications for the research

The research is grounded in a constructivist epistemology. This perspective is based on the contention “that human beings do not find or discover knowledge so much as construct or make it” (Schwandt 2007a: 38). Individuals are active in developing assumptions, schemas and concepts in order to understand their experiences and continually modify these interpretations following new experiences (Schwandt 2007a). What does this mean for the research process?

First, for constructivists, there is no objective reality that exists out there, as in the realist approach (Guba and Lincoln 1989). This means that the researcher does not discover a reality

but, rather, participates in creating multiple ones. Indeed, individuals make sense of their experiences differently, according to their own subjectivity. This also means that each research participant as well as the researchers will not interpret the same experience in a similar way (Charmaz, Thornberg, and Keane 2018). Concretely, in the study, I have sought to uncover the numerous ways in which the research participants create and express their sense of belonging to the “Albanian nation”.

Second, this construction does not occur in a vacuum but, rather, in specific historical and sociocultural contexts in which shared discourses, understandings and languages are constituted and conveyed (Schwandt 2007a: 38). For constructivists, knowledge is thus situated. The specific conditions of its creation should be taken into account: the particular situation of the knowledge production as well as the time, place and social conditions in which it is produced (Charmaz, Thornberg, and Keane 2018). In this research, I have thus paid particular attention to the specific historical contexts, social environments and discursive universes in which the Albanian-speaking former activists create their narratives of homeland engagement and conceptions of Albianianness.

Third, in the research process, the data stem from the interaction between the researcher and the research participants (Guba and Lincoln 1989). The co-constructed data are the result of the encounter between two subjectivities (Charmaz, Thornberg, and Keane 2018). Researchers’ values and standpoints based on their academic environment, socioeconomic background and personal interest influence how they design a study, select theories, conduct the fieldwork and interpret their data (Charmaz, Thornberg, and Keane 2018, Guba and Lincoln 1989). The research participants’ values and standpoints, stemming from their own background, also play a role. This encounter of subjectivities is especially recognisable in interview situations, in which the interviewer and the interviewee interact in order to create meaning about specific experiences. Because values play such an important role, researchers need to acknowledge them (Guba and Lincoln 1989). In particular, researchers must reflect on their values and make them explicit during the whole research process (Charmaz, Thornberg, and Keane 2018, Guba and Lincoln 1989). In this research, I detail my own positionality in the methodological chapter (see chapter 4, section 3.2).

3.1.2 A transnational perspective: approach and definitions

This PhD research also follows a transnational epistemology, an approach that opposes the long-lasting conception in the social sciences of the nation-state as the fundamental unit of analysis (Lacroix 2018, Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003). Indeed, the nation-state model, that “posits a set of mappings or congruencies linking state territory, national territory, national culture, and citizenry”, has long appeared as natural within not only society but also the academic world, and in particular the social sciences (Brubaker 2010: 63). This has engendered a form of “methodological nationalism”: researchers have long conceived social phenomena according to the boundaries of the nation-state (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003). This national lens of enquiry has, however, been challenged during the post-Cold War period, with researchers analysing cross-border relations and adopting a *transnational* perspective (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003).

The concept of “transnationalism”, that emerged at the beginning of the 1990s, has occupied an important place in migration studies (Morawska 2006). The pathfinders of “transnationalism” started by observing how migrants frequently remained involved in their homeland while also being incorporated into their countries of settlement. As a consequence, they started pleading for a transnational perspective in migration studies (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). This approach departs from the long-assumed view of congruence between the boundaries of society and the nation-state (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). Yet, these early works attracted plenty of criticism because of their tendency to overstate the scope of transnational activities and spaces, to overlook the enduring powerful roles played by states and to lack clear definitions (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007).

These weaknesses were addressed in a second phase, with scholarship that sought to measure, define and theorise more precisely with regard to “transnationalism”, to clarify the social spaces involved and to distinguish the different transnational dimensions, domains and practices (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007, Dahinden 2017). By attempting to delineate this concept precisely, these works however ran the risk of isolating it from its environment and hence essentialising social phenomena that are grounded in specific sociohistorical contexts (Dahinden 2017).

Finally, the adoption of a transnational perspective to study social phenomena appears to represent a third phase (Dahinden 2017). This approach implies rejecting the nation and nation-state as the natural and most appropriate category for analysing a phenomenon. The adoption

of a transnational lens makes it possible to study numerous phenomena that occur across national borders, such as the connections between people, multiple identification processes, cultural production, the circulation of capital and goods and political engagement (Vertovec 1999). More broadly, this perspective allows us “to interrogate the territorial breadth and scope of any social phenomenon without prior assumptions” (Khagram and Levitt 2008: 5). Researchers are challenged to revise their traditional postulations when studying, for example, the family, social institutions and citizenship, by including a multi-layered, multi-site perspective (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). The outcome of this transnational turn is the development of new explanations and theoretical insights in social theory (Dahinden 2017).

In this vein, conceptually, this PhD research adopts an analytical approach that underpins the study of social phenomena using a transnational lens but does not aim to explore “transnationalism” as a phenomenon in itself. I have pursued two main strategies in order to avoid falling into the trap of methodological nationalism while studying narratives of national belonging among the Albanian-speaking former activists in Switzerland (Dahinden 2016). First, I consider important terms mentioned in the research, such as “the Albanian nation” or “the Albanians”, as categories of practice (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). This means that I do not understand them as concepts that help to analyse the data but, rather, conceive them as the data to study and explain (Dahinden 2016). As such, I seek to avoid normalising the “ethnicised” or “nationalised” vocabulary used by the research participants. Second, I also pursue a more processual and differentiated understanding of nationhood and conceive ethnic and national identification as the consequence of social processes (Dahinden 2016). My goal is to analyse the particular processes that led to the emergence and strengthening of these phenomena as well as to scrutinise the roles played by the different actors involved. For example, one can seek to understand the different processes that made Albanian-speaking workers from the former Yugoslavia start to identify as “Albanians” during the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s in Switzerland, abandoning or minimising other forms of local or national (Yugoslav) identification.

Not all migrants necessarily engage in transnational relations and exchanges with their co-nationals and homeland. Likewise, not all of them consciously identify with their homeland or a particular population situated abroad or spanning borders. Glick Schiller and Levitt (2007: 189) thus differentiate between “ways of being” that include actual connections as well as practices, and “ways of belonging” that concern identification. This research is mainly

concerned with this second component, scrutinising how the former activists express their “ways of belonging” to the “Albanian nation”.

Cross-border forms of identification and belonging do not develop in a vacuum. They are embedded in a particular transnational environment, variably called “transnational social space” (Faist 2010: 11), “transnational communities” (Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt 1999: 217) or “transnational social fields” (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2007: 188). Glick Schiller and Levitt (2007: 188) define “social fields” as “a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed”. These “social fields” are delimited by different types of boundaries. Only the empirical analysis can affirm the relative relevance of the national and transnational fields within migrants’ practices and narratives. The advantage of the concept is that it undermines the strict boundaries between the different local, national, transnational and global levels (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2007).

In their daily activities and connections within their very local environment, migrants are in contact with multiple discourses stemming from the institutions and people situated in various horizons. This research pays particular attention to the different discourses conveyed in the transnational spaces inhabited by the research participants. It considers how the former activists negotiate and transmit these existing discourses but also create new narratives. Furthermore, this particular transnational space stems from social relations. This means, on the one hand, that it is created by the migrants themselves who participate in the various cross-border (or not) linkages. On the other hand, the migrants are embedded in these multiple social relationships according to their gender, class and race/ethnicity (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2007). They might thus simultaneously occupy different positions within transnational social fields, resulting in different and, at times, conflicting practices or forms of belonging. In this vein, this research also insists on considering the different positions that the former Albanian-speaking activists occupy in the transnational social field that they inhabit.

3.2 Theoretical background

This research builds chiefly on various theoretical approaches developed in the field of nationalism and ethnicity studies, memory studies and oral history research. In this section, I will first outline the main theoretical insights that have emerged in the area of nation and nationalism since the 1990s. These insights constitute the background framework within which the study is set. They are important because they orientate my interests and frame my understanding of specific issues. On the one hand, they point to particular aspects of national phenomena that might be relevant to analyse: whether to study the rise of a “nation”, the ways people identify with the “nation” or their consumption of “the nation”. On the other hand, they offer tools for analysing specific issues, such as particular economic and political dynamics, that explain the emergence of a “nation”, the mechanisms that illuminate national inclusion and exclusion and the models that explain the persistence of the “nation” as a category of belonging. Then, I will consider in more detail the main theoretical foundations that I use in this work and especially in the three articles presented in this research. More precisely, I will scrutinise different bodies of literature, all of which treat different issues linked to nationhood and nation-building: narratives of the past, performance and emotions, and stigmatisation and masculinity. Finally, I will consider the literature on Albanianness and nationhood in post-war Kosovo as well as among Albanian-speakers in Switzerland.

3.2.1 Nationhood and ethnicity: the main issues of an evolving field of study

Since the 1970s and, even more markedly, the 1980s, the academic literature on nation, nationhood and ethnicity has undergone extraordinary development, giving birth to abundant concepts, theories and debates (Özkirimli 2017). Two main waves of research can be broadly delineated since the 1980s (Özkirimli 2017, Brubaker 2009, Antonsich 2015). A first trend comprises scholarship with a macro-analysis focus that traced the origins and proliferation of nations and nationalism over the long-term (Brubaker 2009). A more recent movement, that started in the post-cold war era, includes scholarship that focuses on far narrower topics and timely restricted processes (Brubaker 2009, Antonsich 2015). This PhD research relies mainly on the literature from this more recent period. In order to set the study in this particular context, I will review here four of the main developments that occurred relatively recently in the field of nation and nationalism study.

First, while, during the 1970s and 1980s, scholars concentrated on the the traditional research questions of “when” and “what” is a “nation”, in the 1990s, researchers also turned their attention to the “how” of a “nation” (Antonsich 2015). More specifically, the focus shifted from a macro-analytical perspective that explored the long-term rise and dissemination of “nations” to the analysis of narrower, time-restricted topics (Brubaker 2009).

During the 1970s and 1980s, scholars of nation and nationalism concentrated their research on explaining the birth of the “nation”. On the one hand, the primordialist and ethno-symbolist schools argued that “nations” existed before the creation of states (Anthias 2010). While the former understood “nation” or “ethnicity” to be intrinsic and natural to human beings, the later argued that nationalism is a modern phenomenon whereas the origins of “nations” are to be found in pre-modern ethnic communities (Ichijo and Uzelac 2005, Smith 2008a). On the other hand, the modernist approach emphasizes the modernity of “nations” and nationalism. “Nations” and nationalism emerged as a consequence of particular macro processes of modernisation, like industrialisation, secularism, capitalism and the development of the bureaucratic state from the 18th century onwards (Gellner 1983, Anderson 1989, Hroch 1985). Furthermore, the modernists recognised the artificiality of national traditions that are conceived as “invented” in order to provide the nation with a past which contributes towards its legitimatisation (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). Today, the modernist approach constitutes the “orthodoxy” within the study field of nationalism (Smith 2009, Antonsich 2015).

In the 1990s, scholars started to turn their attention away from the “when” question to focus on the “how” of the “nation” within a micro analytical perspective. This occurred as scholars originating from the social sciences rather than from history began to show greater interest in the subject (Antonsich 2016, Brubaker 2009). They particularly criticised previous works that mainly focused on the creation of the “nation” but, after its constitution, took it for granted that it continued as an homogeneous, fixed and bounded entity that inspires deep feelings among its members (Brubaker 2009). The newcomers attempted to analyse how nationhood continues to matter in people’s lives after the creation of nation-states or outside periods of extreme nationalism. They asked questions such as: how do ordinary people consume, perform and reproduce the nation in their practices and discourses (Billig 1995, Elgenius 2011a, Edensor 2002)? Or, how do different social segments of the population participate in national projects (Yuval-Davis 1997)?

This focus change from “when” to “how” led researchers to propose new paradigms for discussing and analysing national phenomena. Brubaker (2006), in particular, criticised scholars’ practice of treating “nation” and “ethnicity” as categories of analysis, which contributes towards reifying these notions and making them appear as existing entities. Instead, “nation” and “ethnicity” should be treated as categories of practice:

In this perspective, ethnicity is not a thing, an attribute, or a distinct sphere of life; it is a way of understanding and interpreting experience, a way of talking and acting, a way of formulating interests and identities. Nationhood, similarly, is not an ethnocultural fact; it is a frame of vision, a cultural idiom, and a political claim. (Brubaker, Fox, and Grancea 2006: 358)

Researchers should thus treat “nation” and “ethnicity” as the “object of analysis” rather than the “tool of analysis” (Brubaker 2004: 116). Research should thus not ask “what is a nation?”, a question that substantialises it but, rather, whether a “nation” works as a political claim or as a means of categorising people (Brubaker 2004).

Furthermore, by eschewing macro analytical perspectives, researchers saw the possibility of studying the variability of ethnic or national identification according to the context or precisely scrutinising the processes of group formation (Brubaker 2009). This move led them to consider nationhood and ethnicity in a more dynamic, processual way (Brubaker 2009). Wimmer (2008a, 2013), for example, sought to analyse how and why ethnicity becomes salient and matters in certain contexts, societies and periods but not others, and proposes an analytical model based on a boundary-making perspective to explain why ethnic group formation might develop in different directions (see chapter 3, section 2.4 for further details). This approach explains the variations as a consequence of the negotiations between the actors within influential contexts, characterised by particular institutional settings, power relations and political networks (Wimmer 2008a, 2013).

Agreeing with the basic assumption of the modernists, who contest the antique, natural and universal character of national phenomena, I also selected, for this research, a context-sensitive approach that does not conceive the “nation” as a bounded, static entity. More specifically, I approach the expressions of the “Albanian nation”, the “transnational Albanian nation” and the “Albanian nation in Kosovo” by denying its existence as a real, delimited entity (Brubaker

1996). I thus examine how ethnicity and nationhood, as a category of practice, are given meaning and transmitted in the narratives of homeland engagement (Brubaker, Fox, and Grancea 2006). I am interested in questions such as: how is this category constructed? Who participates in the construction? How do the historical and social contexts influence this construction? And in which circumstances is it evoked?

Second, while the scholarship on ethnicity and nationhood has expanded over time into two separate fields of study, it has recently become integrated into one specific area of research (Brubaker 2009). Nationalism has been conventionally understood as a principle, ideology, narrative, discourses, idioms or practices that link a defined group, considered as the “nation”, to some form of territorial self-governance (usually the state) (Gellner 1983, Malesevic 2006, Kumar 2010, Brubaker 1996, Anthias 2010). Gellner, for example, famously defined nationalism as “a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent” (Gellner 1983: 1). There now exist numerous ways to understand the notion of the “nation”. For example, while Smith (2002: 15) speaks of a “named community possessing an historic territory, shared myths and memories, a common public culture and common laws and customs”, Anderson famously defined it as “an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (Anderson 1989: 6).

The notions of “nation” and “ethnicity” involve similar aspects, such as categories, group formation, self-understanding and a feeling of belonging to a group that shares elements such as a common language, traditions, origins or territory (Westin 2010, Anthias 2010). The particularity of the “nation”, although a widely-disputed notion, is that it includes an “institutional dimension that is state-oriented – hence the notion of “nation-state”” (Jaffrelot 2003: 5). This is the main element that distinguishes the nation from ethnicity: “A nationalist holds that political boundaries should be coterminous with cultural boundaries, whereas many ethnic groups do not demand command over a state” (Eriksen 2002: 7). For some authors of nationalism studies, ethnicity might constitute a first step towards the creation of the “nation” (Jaffrelot 2003).

The traditional study field of ethnic studies has offered robust approaches to the processes of group formation and maintenance that have proved highly useful in the analysis of national phenomena (Jaffrelot 2003). This is particularly the case with Barth’s theory of ethnic boundaries maintenance, that affirms that ethnic groups do not constitute a bounded group of

individuals, linked through blood, race and long-lasting cultural similarities, such as a historical language but are, rather, the result of social processes (Barth 1969). From this standpoint, students should not focus on the groups' "cultural stuff" but rather on "the ethnic boundary that defines the group" (this theory is further developed in chapter 3 section 2.4).

During the last few years, the research on nationhood and ethnicity has increasingly resorted to common paradigms and theoretical concepts, such as categorisation, identification, boundary-making, invented traditions and imagined communities (Brubaker 2009). As a result, an integrated, multifaceted body of literature, that considers ethnicity and nationhood "as a *single integrated family of forms* of cultural understanding, social organization and political contestation", has developed (Brubaker 2009: 22).

Furthermore, although nationhood differs from ethnicity in terms of its links with self-governance or the nation-state, in many cases, however, it is relatively difficult to distinguish between ethnicity and nationhood claims (Calhoun 1993, Anthias 2010). As a result, some of the recent scholarship does not conceive these blurred distinctions as fundamental in explaining social processes but, rather, emphasises the numerous similarities and parallels among these categories (Brubaker 2009, Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008). Wimmer (2008a), for example, follows such a strategy. He defines ethnicity as "a subjectively felt sense of belonging" that relates to "cultural practices perceived as "typical" for the community, to myths of a common historical origin, or to phenotypical similarities" (Wimmer 2008b: 973). For Wimmer (2008b), ethnicity encompasses race and nationhood; hence, the belief that belonging to a group differs in terms of the markers chosen to establish the group. Under this definition, Wimmer (2008b) indicates the specificity of ethnicity and nationhood as categories of belonging: they usually differ from other categories, such as gender or class, as they relate to past elements, such as alleged common ancestors or specific discourses of historical events that serve to include certain individuals while excluding others.

Following this practice, I will not attempt strictly to delimit Albanianness as ethnicity or nationhood in this research. Although there exist some distinctions between these two notions, I prefer to concentrate on explaining the different processes of symbolic group formation and boundary-making encountered by resorting to theories that were originally developed within these two fields of study. Furthermore, I will concentrate on how people "talk about the nation",

make sense of their belonging to the “Albanian nation” and use Albaninanness according to their own habits, without imposing artificial boundaries (Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008).

Third, the new scholarship in nationalism studies has condemned the early approaches’ tendency to overemphasize the elite’s behaviour and the state structures while considering ordinary people as the passive recipients of the elite’s messages (Kaufmann 2017). They have also criticised the tendency to identify as “nationalist” only extreme phenomena, such as war situations that involve national liberation movements, while the “nation” is also ubiquitous in the banal processes of national reproduction (Billig 1995). Recent studies have sought to eschew this “top-down” or “vertical” (Kaufmann 2017: 6) approach, and have particularly focused on how non-elite individuals receive these messages and experience and negotiate nationhood. As a consequence, several scholars have pleaded for a distinct approach, that studies “nationalism from below” (Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008) and scrutinises phenomena such as “horizontal national dynamics” (Kaufmann 2017), “banal nationalism” (Billig 1995) and “everyday nationhood” (Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008). Fox and Miller-Idriss (2008: 537), for example, highlighted “four ways in which nationhood is produced and reproduced in everyday life”: 1- “talking about the nation” as the routinely discursive construction of the “nation”; 2- “choosing” the “nation” in the daily decisions; 3- “performing” the nation through rituals; and 4- “consuming” the nation through regular practices. These approaches underline the significance of human agency, as individuals play a central role in imagining, producing, negotiating and performing the “nation” (Antonsich 2015, Anderson 1989).

The theoretical stream that calls for more attention to the role of “non-elites” in the production, negotiation, performance and consumption of the “nation” has been criticised by several authors (Smith 2008b). Three main critical comments have been raised. First, these theoretical insights tend to oversimplify the complex reality through the use of dichotomies such as “banal” and “cold” nationalism or the “elites” vs the “ordinary people” (Skey 2009, Antonsich and Skey 2017a). Over two decades after the publication of *Banal Nationalism* (Billig 1995), Michael Billig (2017: 314) actually addressed this issue by admitting that talking about a “gradation” between cold and hot would better describe the reality. Concurrently, he also acknowledged that different temperatures of nationalism can be found simultaneously and in the same place (Billig 2017). Similarly, it is unclear who these “ordinary people” are and why they should be treated as a homogeneous group. As Smith (2008b) and Skey (2009) argue, one should scrutinise this population in more detail. Smith (2008b: 565) prefers, for example, to speak of

“various non-elites, not simply ‘ordinary people’”. Likewise, Skey (2009: 336) talks about “different constituencies that are seen (or not, as the case may be) to belong to the national community”. Second, in relation to these observations, these authors also call for a greater focus on the interactions between these “non-elite” people and the “elite” as well as among the “non-elites” (Antonsich and Skey 2017b). Finally, Smith (2008b) also criticises the concept of “everyday nationhood” due to its failure to consider the sociohistorical context in which national phenomena take place, in particular pointing to “the heritage of communities or the traditions of successive generations” (Smith 2008b: 565) that influence people’s sense of nationhood. For example, memories, values and symbols are transmitted and modified over the generations. Hence, Smith (2008b) also pleads for the adoption of a more dynamic approach that focuses on the development of nationhood over time.

This PhD thesis is inspired by this approach, as it studies how nationhood is reproduced and negotiated during the quiet years of post-independence Kosovo. Moreover, it also observes how the former activists renegotiate and redefine their (and others’) status in the post-war years. The study thus focuses on how men and women who were very active and often led the “patriotic agitation” in the 1980s and 1990s (Hroch 2000: 23) were compelled to seek new roles following Kosovo’s “liberation”. These individuals gained, to varying degrees, a superior symbolic position during the years of mobilisation but, during the post-war years, were forced to find a new place within the transnational space they inhabit. Consequently, I do not assume any a priori dichotomy between the “elites” and “ordinary people” in the nationalist projects and discourses, but prefer instead to approach the research subject and participants by focusing on how they construct and contest the symbolic hierarchies and positions. I wish to study how they attempt to become “elite” or dispute this status for others.

Furthermore, the scholarship on elites points to the relational nature of the notion: “elites exist in relation to other social groupings” (Salverda and Abbink 2013: 4). As a consequence, it is important to investigate the resources mobilised to create these distinctions: the development of specific norms, interests and practices that make elites unique and distinct from the “masses” (Shore 2002: 3). In order to rise to dominant positions, aspiring elites must define and impose new boundaries of distinction and foster a shared consciousness and self-understanding (Shore 2002). I am particularly interested in how such distinctions are crafted in the narratives of homeland engagement on behalf of the “Albanian nation”. In the specific field of nationalism, Hroch (2000) argued that, in order to understand the trajectory of specific national movements,

it is necessary to study the varying interests of the potential members of the “nation” in their socio-historical context. He particularly underlined the importance of the processes of social and symbolic differentiation that might lead specific groups to embrace the national cause as “possibilities of social ascent” (Hroch 2000: 181). In this study, this translates into scrutinising how the research participants adopt and support particular narratives of nationhood and of the “Albanian nation” in order to enhance their status. Moreover, the specific transnational position of the research participants, who often lead their life in Switzerland and their homeland simultaneously, might also play an important role in explaining their repositioning within the narratives of homeland engagement. Indeed, they do not necessarily enjoy the same status, hold the same interests or confront the same national discourses in their home and host countries respectively (Nieswand 2011). As such, they might face different challenges when seeking to renegotiate their position during the post-“liberation” years.

To summarise, I thus wish to explore how former activists who, for an important part, belonged to the “national elites” construct, challenge and oppose symbolic hierarchies, and also negotiate their status and seek to gain or defend a dominant position during the period of change following Kosovo’s “liberation” and independence. I am interested in how they craft their current position in the narratives of their past engagement of the nationalist struggles of the 1980s and 1990s, and use these memories of extreme forms of nationalism as a resource to negotiate their more routine forms of transnational belonging in the post-independence years.

Furthermore, by selecting oral history as the main method of enquiry for this study, I can guarantee a more historically sensitive approach, and thus accommodate the third criticism more effectively. A particular advantage of this method is that it allows the evolution of specific phenomena to be considered over a period of many years. For example, the participants are usually able to reconstruct their past awareness, attitudes and subjectivities, as well as “make a distinction between present and past self, and to objectify the past self as other than the present one” (Portelli 1991: 53). In the oral history interviews conducted as part of this study, the research participants navigate between the various past and current discourses of the “nation”, from which they build their own present understanding.

Fourth, scholars have recently also scrutinised the meaning and spread of the idea of nation and nationhood in the globalising world (Antonsich 2015, Özkirimli 2017). This has mainly taken the form of a double trend. First, researchers started to scrutinise the impact of globalisation on

the position and role of the nation-state. During the 1990s, in particular, many scholars, noting the on-going changes in the economy and technology, hypothesised the weakening of the nation-state and national governments (Wolf 2001, Mann 1997). More specifically, they underlined different phenomena: global capitalism undermining the nation-state, global threats to the human population requiring supranational answers and the emergence of transnational and cosmopolitan forms of belonging, as weakening national identification (Mann 1997). Several years later, the hypothesis that the nation-state would lose power as a consequence of globalisation has not been confirmed (Dahinden 2017, Antonsich 2015). While the state might be losing control over socio-economic relationships, it still plays a vital regulatory role, for example in the field of migration, where it has largely developed its institutions in the last few years (Dahinden 2017).

Second, scholars have also attempted to distance themselves from methodological nationalism by proposing that this model should be replaced by a transnational perspective (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003) (see chapter 3, section 1.2). Regarding the study of ethnicity and nationhood in particular, the post-1990s authors have, on the one hand, pointed to the emergence of non-exclusive categories, such as “hybrid” (Bhabha 1994) or “cosmopolitan” forms of identification and belonging (Glick Schiller, Tsypylma, and Gruner-Domic 2011). On the other hand, they have also highlighted “long-distance nationalism” (Anderson 1992), an exclusive form of belonging that includes, within the imagined nation, co-nationals living abroad. Glick Schiller (Glick Schiller 2005: 570) defines long-distance nationalism as “a set of identity claims and practices that connect people living in various geographical locations to a specific territory that they see as their ancestral home”. In fact, the notion of “long-distance nationalism” expands the classical concepts of nationalism and nation-states across international borders (Glick Schiller 2005, Skrbis 1999). Membership of the “nation” is thus not seen as limited by national borders: members of the “nation” living abroad are seen as maintaining some forms of loyal relationship and identification regarding their homeland (Glick Schiller 2005). Because of the distance between the home and host countries, long-distance nationalists are often said to conceive of the “nation” in a highly idealised, mythological form (Pryke 2003). For the same reason, “long-distance nationalism” often appears to be more virulently attached to nationalist principles than that lived in the homeland (Pryke 2003).

Numerous scholars have scrutinised the engagement undertaken by migrants on behalf of their home, such as external voting, lobbying for the home state in the country of settlement, the

financing of a political group in the homeland or planning an insurrection from abroad (see Emmanuelsson 2005, Ostergaard-Nielsen 2003b, Tatla 1999). According to Ostergaard-Nielsen (2001), such activities can be identified as “homeland politics”, a term that gathers together political activities that are directly related to the internal political matters or foreign policy of the homeland. The transnational activities and relationships have been greatly facilitated by technical innovations, such as the internet, satellite TV and mobile phones, which in turn have strengthened transnational nationalism (Glick Schiller 2005, Skrbis 1999). Skrbis (1999: 183) explains: “Our increased ability to transgress time and space enables a more efficient transmission of nationalism across the globe”. In the same vein, some researchers have underlined how migrants not only develop and maintain several forms of links with their homeland, but also engage simultaneously in both the host and homeland as well as possibly other countries (Mazzucato 2010, Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). They thus succeed in “living lives that incorporate daily activities, routines, and institutions located both in a destination country and transnationally” (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004).

The narratives of belonging expressed by the research participants largely fit the conception of “long-distance nationalism” and they speak of experiences of homeland politics and transnational simultaneity. Most of the research participants still conceive themselves as members of the “Albanian nation” even if they live outside Kosovo, although their understanding of Albanianess and “Kosovo” has developed considerably during the last few years. Moreover, they all engaged in homeland politics during the 1980s and 1990s: they sent money to their homeland, organised and participated in demonstrations in Switzerland to sensitise public opinion, contacted Swiss political personalities or planned armed insurrections in Kosovo. Some of them continued to engage in homeland politics even after Kosovo’s “liberation”, for example by maintaining relationships with the political parties in Kosovo. While living in Switzerland and sometimes engaging politically there, they continued to participate in the political debates in Kosovo. Moreover, some of the interviewees divide their time approximately equally between Kosovo and Switzerland. Other study participants have chosen a main country of establishment while returning regularly to the other country, where they often have family, friends and sometimes a house. In such circumstances, they frequently seek to nurture their social relationships and diverse interests in both places simultaneously.

The “diaspora” represents another important, widely-debated category of belonging that has been extensively connected with globalisation and transnationalism. The term “diaspora”

broadly designates groups or communities living outside their homeland (Faist 2010: 17). Diaspora studies concentrate on analysing questions of a community's distinctiveness and social practices (Faist 2010: 17). While this PhD study focuses on cross-border forms of identification and belonging, it does not directly consider the diaspora as a category of analysis. I prefer not to rely on the concept of "diaspora", because of its essentialising tendency. The risk associated with this concept is that it frequently conceives the diaspora as an existing, "distinctive community" and "unitary actor" with a "distinctive identity", while such an entity does not exist in reality (Brubaker 2005: 12). Rather than assuming any form of shared identification among the "Albanians" in Switzerland, I prefer to analyse the various identification processes expressed by specific Albanian-speaking individuals in Switzerland. I do, at times, however, resort to the term "diaspora", but as referring to a category of practice, as mentioned in the former activists' discourses themselves.

Finally, by adopting an epistemological perspective and corresponding methodology that are not structured by the nation-state, some authors have, for example, articulated new concepts such as the "deterritorialised nation-state" (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc 2006) or the "transnational nation-state" (Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001). These concepts aim to characterise specific nation-states that seek to include their members (migrants) living in another state who are considered an "integral and intimate part of their ancestral homeland" (Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001: 19). Concretely, numerous sending states have adopted a transnational character by developing policies and establishing institutions that target their nationals abroad in order to take advantage of their human, political and especially economic resources (Lacroix 2018). They have thus abandoned the traditional conception of the nation-state based on the idea of the congruence between the state and nation (Lacroix 2018).

However, the nation-state model continues to play an important role in crafting individuals' reality, defining for example who belongs or does not belong to the nation-state, and under various forms, such as formal citizens, as members of the nation-state without citizenship, or formal citizens living abroad (Brubaker 2010). This means that the research must take into account the potential influence of the categories imposed by nation-states on individuals' identification and environment (Dahinden 2017, 2016).

In line with these new insights, I seek to follow a transnational approach in order to analyse the narratives of belonging as related by the research participants who inhabit a transnational

environment. My aim is to adapt my analytical lens to their perception, which implies scrutinising the discourses of “Albanianness” that are shared at the different local, national, transnational or international levels.

The following sections will address in more detail the main premises that underpin the articles presented in this study.

3.2.2 Nation-building and narratives of the past

Narratives about a “national past” figure prominently in the majority of the nation-building scholarship that analyses the processes that contribute towards creating a sense of unity, belonging and loyalty to a common “nation” (Kolsto 2004). Nation-building traditionally includes an architectural image: the agents deliberately construct the “nation” as a house with different materials, plans, pace and steps (Deutsch 2010, Kolsto 2000). Nation-building involves also “national identification: citizens begin to see themselves as members of a national community and feel loyal to co-nationals, above and beyond their attachment to an ethnic group, a tribe, a village community, or a religion” (Wimmer 2018: 23). Scholars of both nationalism and memory studies have underlined the role of narratives of the past in the nation-building processes.

Myths in nationalism studies

The role of narratives and rituals of the past in the construction and strengthening of the “nation” has been a central topic for many researchers in the field of nationalism (see for example Smith 1999a, Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, Kolsto 2005). Scholars of the ethno-symbolist current, in particular, give a prominent place to such narratives in their analysis (Morden 2016). According to Smith (1999b: 61):

“Ethnic myths of descent figure prominently in the nationalist Weltanschauung. As a community of culture and a distinctive unity, the roots of a nation unique identity must reside in its origins and genealogy. In order to claim the new status of “nation”, a community’s spokesmen had therefore to advance a case which rested, at least in part, on the conviction of ethnic ancestry and common history.”

Since the age of nationalism in the late 18th century, no population endeavouring to be recognised as a “nation” has achieved this without some kind of myth of origin (Smith 1999b). These myths, traditions and symbols of the past are cultivated by “specialists” who transmit

them to the members of the “community” (Smith 2007). The modernist school also attributes a large role to mythical narratives of the past in nation-building processes. These narratives, along with elements such as education, bureaucracy and “invented traditions”, contribute towards establishing a form of shared, unified consciousness that creates and sustains the “imagined community” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, Anderson 1989, Gellner 1983). In particular, Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) offered a “presentist” approach based on “invented traditions” (Misztal 2003: 56). They argued that traditions, in the form of repeated, ritualised practices that entail continuity with a chosen past, are fabricated in order to establish and develop a sense of national belonging and cohesion, to foster institutions and power relations and to instil specific values, beliefs and behaviour (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983).

Scholars of nationalism, such as Smith (1999a), frequently consider a particular form of narratives of the past: the “myth”. Although there is no scholarly agreement on the definition of “myth” nor exactly how myths, narratives and stories differ (Gabriel 2015: 284), some particularities usually linked to the notion of “myths” in the scholarly literature are relevant to this study. First, myths consist of narrative forms, with other genres such as legends and folktales (Barthes 1966), and can thus be considered a sub-category of narratives (Bascom 1984). Second, Barthes (1957) pointed out the importance of not considering the direct subject of the message conveyed by myths but, rather, of seeking the second meanings attached to them. Based on previous historical material, the myths distort it in order to create new meanings (Barthes 1957). Third, mythical narratives display a particularly broad dimension: they convey “larger than-life, sacral meanings”, contrary to other types of stories that focus on lower level questions related to the “realities of mundane everyday life in all their commonplace regularity” (Gabriel 2015: 285). Finally, myths are very powerful because they naturalise beliefs, values and representations, turning them into shared, unquestioned social facts and norms linked to a particular time and society (Barthes 1957). For Barthes (1957), myths are used as an instrument to convey and instil particular representations of the world, usually by a dominant class.

Scholars of nationalism and ethnicity have attempted to underline precisely the various mechanisms involved and roles played by myths in the processes of categorisation that might contribute towards creating or strengthening different ethnic or national groups (Kolsto 2005, Schöpflin 1997). They have often relied on a boundary approach, although this is not always mentioned explicitly (Kolsto 2005). This approach is commonly attributed to Frederik Barth (1969), who conceived ethnicity as the product of a continual process of social interaction and

boundary negotiations, in which the “elites” make only a weak contribution (Kaufmann 2017). Barth (1969: 11) pioneered the claim that ethnicity does not emerge as a consequence of “the sharing of a common culture” between fixed and inherently distinct groups but, rather, is the result of processes of boundary definition and group constitution (Wimmer 2008b). In order to produce, preserve and challenge boundaries, individuals and collectives resort to “cultural stuff” (Barth 1969, Duemmler, Dahinden, and Moret 2010). Many scholars have thus demonstrated how myths represent a valuable means of constituting the “cultural stuff” (Barth 1969: 15) that helps to generate and define the ethnic and national boundaries (see for example Kolsto 2005, Duijzings 2000, Schöpflin 2000) (for further explanation, see chapter 3, section 2.4).

Myths help to craft clear separations and bring order to blurred cultural situations:

Mythical stories about differences of origin, about how groups have interacted and fought each other in the past, and so on, can function as substitutes or as bolsters for ‘real’ differences. They allow the members of the groups to suppress and ignore obvious similarities and blow out of all proportion certain differences between themselves and ‘the other’” (Kolsto 2005: 3-4)

Hence, these narratives about the past often describe the transmission through the generations of particular traits that define the inclusion and exclusion of a nation’s members (Schöpflin 1997, Dahinden, Duemmler, and Moret 2014).

In the Albanian case, for example, a story of “permanent national struggle” has been created (Malcolm 2002: 81). The centuries-long efforts to defend the “Albanian identity” and territories against first the Ottomans and then the Serbs and Yugoslavs are highlighted. Moreover, famous “national fighters” and leaders are remembered, from Skanderbeg in the 15th century to Hasan Prishtina, a leaders of the National Movement at the beginning of the 20th century, and finally to Adem Jashari at the end of the 20th century.

These mythical narratives offer fundamental values to a “nation” that can be embodied in the narrative’s main figure. They also provide sources for self-definition and a framework for interpreting the present as well as the future (Duijzings 2000). For example, the famous story of the “Battle of Kosovo”, which took place on June 28, 1389 between the Christian army under

the leadership of the Serbian prince, Lazar Hrebeljanović, and the Ottoman army on Kosovo Field, close to the real city of Prishtina, celebrates qualities such as heroism, sacrifice and suffering while condemning cowardice, according to the Serbian tradition. While the story relates how the Ottomans won the battle, the Christians are said to have won a moral victory. In the Bosnian war (1992-1995), the Bosnian Serb general, Ratko Mladic, became the new Lazar, while those who “committed treason” during the war were designated as ‘Vuk Brankovic’, the traitor in the epic (Duijzings 2000: 199-202).

Furthermore, these mythical narratives also help to create cohesion among the (potential) members of the “nation” by raising their awareness of their allegedly shared background and “common fate” (Armstrong 1982: 9, Misha 2002). In particular, powerful “historical” episodes of resistance can evoke intense emotions by stressing the members’ solidarity against a “foreign force”, thus emphasising the prominence of the perceived boundaries (Armstrong 1982).

Finally, scholars of nationalism have also highlighted the use of myths to foster political claims and enterprises (Kolsto 2005). Myths do not “function in any specific way of and by themselves” (Kolsto 2005: 30) but, rather, are created and propagated by individuals and groups who seek to support their own claims, gain legitimacy or assert authority (Kolsto 2005, Schöpflin 1997). For example, myths might support groups or individuals’ interests by equipping them with the means to mobilise a population. Myths represent powerful tools because they simplify the complexity, help create order from chaos and ultimately provide a particular image of reality (Duijzings 2000, Bottici and Challand 2006, Schöpflin 1997). Those who control the means of interpretation - in which myths play an important role - can gain symbolic power that enables them to make others understand the world, act within it and feel about it as a group according to the visions they offer (Bottici and Challand 2006). Myths can thus be exploited for various goals: to facilitate communication between rulers and the population, increase trust and solidarity among individuals and towards rulers, mobilise the masses, legitimate political acts and explain the political situation in simplified terms related to “us” against “them” (Schöpflin 1997, Duijzings 2000).

In this work, the data collected and analysed appear under a narrative form, but only occasionally as mythical narratives. Mythical stories are included in the broader narratives of the homeland engagement on behalf of the “nation”. They usually constitute durable “truths” about the “Albanian nation” that intersect with other types of stories that may or may not be

shared by a number of individuals. I consider the different myths and other narratives of the past, collected for their particular functions in nation-building processes, such as the creation of shared social norms and beliefs, the definition and maintenance of boundaries and the promotion of social cohesion (Kolsto 2005). I also understand them as stories that convey different actors' intentions and objectives within a particular sociohistorical context. Moreover, in this work, I will also scrutinise non-mythical narratives about the past (Kolsto 2005). I will discuss my approach further in the next section, that describes how I integrated memory studies insights into this study.

The “nation” in memory studies

Memory studies scholars have also acknowledged the great importance of recourse to the past in the nationalist discourses and phenomena (Brewer 2006, Hodgkin and Radstone 2009). When turning their attention to the links between different forms of shared remembering and the “nation”, they have offered explanations that parallel or complete the assertions proposed by nationalism scholars.

Since the end of the 1980s, there has been an important expansion of scholarship about memory (Roediger and Wertsch 2008, Pickering and Keightley 2013). While early researchers started examining personal memories, the field generally expanded to include a variety of aspects linked to more collective forms of memory:

The explanatory focus has generally been on how these forms of remembering operate as collective representations of the past, how they constitute a range of cultural resources for social and historical identities, and how they privilege particular readings of the past and subordinate others. (Pickering and Keightley 2013: 2).

Memory, understood as “the ways in which people construct a sense of the past”, has thus acquired at least two commonly shared meanings in empirical research (Confino 1997: 1386). On the one hand, it refers to “the memory of people who actually experienced a given event, such as the memory of Holocaust survivors” (Confino 1997: 1386). On the other hand, it indicates “the representation of the past and the making of it into a shared cultural knowledge by successive generations ” (Confino 1997: 1386).

While, in theory, these two forms of memory appear as distinct phenomena, they are frequently interrelated. Maurice Halbwachs, who introduced the concept of “collective memory”, particularly demonstrated the links between individual remembering and collective forms of memory (Miształ 2003). He highlighted how individuals remember as members of a group: their memories, that appear as individual narratives of the past, are socially constructed. Individuals’ remembering is influenced by their interaction and belonging to “groups”, such as the family, religious community or the nation (Halbwachs 1997). On the one hand, the social context is reflected in memories in terms of the events and stories that are being recalled (or forgotten) (Halbwachs 1997). On the other hand, it also impacts on the ways in which individuals recall their memories: “the terms in which we experience and recall an episode in our lives are provided by the language, conventions and values characteristic of the social groups to which we belong” (Poole 2008: 152). In this vein, Maurice Halbwachs (1925) asserted that the manner in which individuals reconstruct the past is affected by their present. Hence, their present interests, concerns, values and language, that derive from their group belonging, intermingle with the process of remembering the past. Finally, Halbwachs (1925) also emphasised that these shared memories, along with the traditions, not only constitute distinct images of the past but also define the general character of the group, its specific qualities as well as origins, and develop a common consciousness. Memories are important for a group because they ensure its cohesion and continuity (Halbwachs 1925). Halbwachs’ assertions have inspired numerous memory scholars (Miształ 2003), particularly his argument “that every group develops a memory of its own past that highlights its unique identity is still the starting point for all research in the field” (Miształ 2003: 51).

In the field of memory studies, the link between memory and the “nation” has been analysed from various perspectives. First, scholars studying the “history of collective memory” have noted that the demands for memories in the forms of commemorations, monuments and traditions that convey a “national past” flourished with the advent of the nation-state at the end of the 18th century (Miształ 2003: 27). As the (state) elites created and promoted new traditions, historians attempted to make the “nation” real and unique by providing it with a history that proved its continuity and cohesion (Olick 1998). These initiatives can be understood within the “invented tradition” approach, that conceives them as tools for instilling social cohesion and a feeling of national membership as well as to legitimise the new national institutions in cases where a nation-state has already been achieved (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983).

Second, numerous scholars have analysed the links between memory and diverse phenomena related to national identification. Memory researchers have in particular pointed to the deep, reciprocal connections between these two notions: “The core meaning of any individual or group identity, namely, a sense of sameness over time and space, is sustained by remembering; and what is remembered is defined by the assumed identity” (Gillis 1994: 3). On the one hand, these shared memories contribute towards defining a group and its boundaries, by “giving it a sense of its past and defining its aspirations for the future” (Fentress and Wickham 1992: 25). The memories create and maintain the “nation”, with specific values, beliefs and a vision of its place in the world. Indirectly, the individuals who identify with the “nation” are also provided with a sense of self and specific values. On the other hand, memory scholars also assert that individuals or groups’ self-understanding in a specific sociohistorical context impacts on how memories are constructed (Gillis 1994). As Tonkin explains, we “represent ‘our’ past, according to whom we recognise as ‘us’” (Tonkin 1992: 11). What is remembered depends on the evolving self-perceptions of individuals and groups within a web of power relationships, such as class and gender (Gillis 1994). Conceptions of nationhood and memories thus evolve over time in a “mutually constitutive” relationship (Levy and Dierkes 2002: 262). Jovic (2004: 107), for example, shows how, throughout the 20th century, the countries on the Adriatic coastline “faced several ‘circles’ of rethinking, about their national identities and official memories. In fact, the process of reinterpreting the past has been almost permanent, just as it was a change of political and national identities”.

Third, memory scholars as well as oral historians have embraced an approach similar to that recently advocated in nationalism studies by emphasising the multiplicity of memories and memory sources, but without necessarily separating the role of the elite and state-sponsored actors. Their focus lies on the connection between the various voices that construct and convey past experiences. Lynn Abrams (2016: 100), for example, remarks: “The task for the oral historian is to figure out how the interaction between personal [memories] and public [memories] occurs”. Similarly, Hodgkin and Radstone (2009: 169-170) explain: “To study memory in the context of the nation, then, is to engage very directly with the relations between individual and collective memory, between the subject and the state, between time and space [...]” They have thus underlined the connections between different registers of memory from shared memories, such as public, official and popular narratives, to individual recollections of the past, revealing the presence of contested and repressed memories as well as counter-narratives (Hodgkin and Radstone 2009, Abrams 2016).

Fourth, against this backdrop, memory scholars have also identified the disputed and power-related processes linked to the memorialisation of the past in a national context. This is particularly the case because memories are designed to encapsulate interests, values and desires, which are always contested, challenged and evolving (Misztal 2003). In this context, scholars have underlined the double process of remembering and forgetting that constitute national memories: “To construct a narrative of the nation implies a large task of suppression and denial of incongruous or undesirable elements” (Hodgkin and Radstone 2009: 170). What is remembered and forgotten depends predominantly on individuals, groups and institutions’ power:

public memory - whatever its unconscious vicissitudes - testifies to a will or desire on the part of some social group or disposition of power to select and organize representations of the past so that these will be embraced by individuals as their own. If particular representations of the past have permeated the public domain, it is because they embody an intentionality - social, political, institutional and so on—that promotes or authorizes their entry (Wood 1999: 2).

Hence, when individuals or groups, who do not occupy a dominant position in society, wish to see their experiences or memories remembered as part of the national memories, they need to be able to control the means to communicate their narrative and also to formulate them in a way that matches the political goals and orientations of important actors, such as political parties or elites (Kansteiner 2002). So, typically, widely-shared national memories tend to convey narratives that forget minorities and transnational perspectives (Paletschek and Schraut 2008). This means, for example, that national memories, historically linked with the advent of the idea of the nation-state in the 19th century, tend to exclude women and centre instead on a bourgeois male model (Paletschek and Schraut 2008). In order to include women’s experiences in the mainstream national memories, women would thus need to gain a higher status in the political and academic worlds (Paletschek and Schraut 2008).

In line with the extended literature on memory study, I consider the narratives created and analysed as part of this study for their role in constituting different forms of the “Albanian nation” by providing a specific past and values that are distinct from any other “national group”. Furthermore, I am also interested in how the former activists negotiate and combine different experiences, discourses and values in order to construct their own memory of the mobilisation

and forms of belonging. Finally, I pay attention to the specific past and present contexts in which the narrators are embedded, in order to understand the types of narratives produced.

In the following sections, I will scrutinise the theoretical backgrounds that are directly related to the three articles included in this thesis.

3.2.3 Commemorations and emotions: performing the nation

Nationhood and ethnicity are not only constituted via discourses but also through affect in the form of emotions, bodies and corporeal practices (Antonsich and Skey 2017b). For example, nationhood can be corporally felt and performed via dance, music or commemorations (Militz 2017, Sumartojo 2017). This literature forms part of the proliferation of scholarship concerned with the emotions and body in the social sciences since the mid-1990s, identified as the “affective turn” (Clough and Halley 2007, Athanasiou, Hantzaroula, and Yannakopoulos 2009, Bakko and Merz 2015). These works criticise the dominant linguistic approaches that tend to ignore sensory and material phenomena and concentrate instead on texts and discourses (Liljeström and Paasonen 2010, Bakko and Merz 2015). As part of this approach, researchers have in particular challenged the conventional perspective that opposes reason and emotion as well as discourse and affect via a highly diversified literature (Barbalet 2001, Athanasiou, Hantzaroula, and Yannakopoulos 2009, Koivunen 2010).

In the field of nation and nationalism studies, considerable interest has recently arisen in the various ways in which the “nation” is being experienced, enacted, and embodied through rituals and performances, such as national ceremonies and commemorations (see for example Uzelac 2010, de Regt, Jaspers, and van der Lippe 2017, Taylor Woods and Tsang 2014, Elgenius 2011a). There is no consensus in the literature regarding the definition of “rituals” and “performances”, two concepts that involve human action, bodily practices and meaning-making. Here, I will only address some of the most important elements pertaining to these two concepts.

Rituals can be very broadly understood as “a set of activities that construct particular types of meanings and values in specific ways” (Bell 2009: 82). Two essential elements define rituals. First, rituals not only convey but also construct meanings and values in a particular context: previous patterns are thus not only reproduced but also remodelled and reinterpreted (Bell

2009). Second, individuals create meanings by moving their body in a specific space: they concurrently experience and reframe the environment with their corporal practices (Bell 2009).

Victor Turner underlined the highly specific condition that might operate during ritual: “communitas” (Turner 1969). This is a particular state that occurs during the second of three phases of the ritual, the “liminal phase”, in which social differences and hierarchies are erased and individuals unite in a form of “communion” (Turner 1969: 96). The first stage, the “separation”, includes the detachment of individuals or groups from the conventional life. During the second phase, individuals lose their usual distinctiveness and character in order to receive and create “the knowledge and wisdom of the group” (Turner 1969: 103). New meaning is thus constituted or received through performance (Turner 1979, 1987). In the third phase of “aggregation”, individuals are brought back to the usual life “either at a higher status level or in an altered state of consciousness or social being” (Turner 1979: 467). Rituals might thus reinforce the prevailing hierarchy and rules or bring an opportunity to transcend them (Fox 2014).

The second concept, performance, can be understood as a particular type of symbolic action that is self-consciously and deliberately carried out by individuals in public (Bell 2009). Such actions can take place in a variety of settings, as advanced by Richard Schechner (2006: 2), one of the most prominent theorists in this field:

Performance must be construed as a “broad spectrum” or “continuum” of human actions ranging from ritual, play, sports, popular entertainments, the performing arts (theatre, dance, music), and everyday life performances to the enactment of social, professional, gender, race, and class roles, and on to healing (from shamanism to surgery), the media and the internet.

In the field of nation and nationalism studies, authors often fail to operate a clear distinction between ritual and performance (Uzelac 2010, Taylor Woods and Tsang 2014). They broadly focus on how the “nation” is experienced in various kinds of ceremonies and atmospheres (Taylor Woods and Tsang 2014). National commemorations can be found in various forms:

public rituals of remembrance and individual acts of recollection, the building of monuments and dedication of places of memory, the construction of museums and

the naming of streets, the visiting of such places, public debates over the meaning and significance of historical events, and the unspoken or gestural ways through which nationality is not so much represented as incorporated in the practices of everyday life. (Turner 2006: 206)

These acts, created to remember the “nation”, emphasise chosen pasts as constitutive of the present-day imagined nation. Furthermore, the “nation” is not only commemorated but also celebrated (Smith 2014). National holidays in particular celebrate the foundation of the nation, the birth of its constitution or its strengthening through revolutions with parades, anthems and flags (Smith 2014).

For a long time, scholars of nationalism either paid little attention to the role of performance in national phenomena, as they were focusing on a macro-level analysis, or tended to examine the forms taken by such creations as well the organisers’ intentions, usually recognised as an “elite” (Uzelac 2010, Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008, Taylor Woods and Tsang 2014). Several authors, particularly Anthony D. Smith (2014), have underlined the particular importance of such rituals in developing and maintaining national feelings, consciousness and solidarity in large societies. National rituals potentially affect the participants in diverse ways. First, rituals usually display and centre on art production as well as symbols, such as flags and anthems, remembrance monuments and government or parliamentary buildings (Smith 2014, Elgenius 2011b). These symbols are key because they allow the abstract notion of the nation to become more visible and accessible to people (Smith 2014, Elgenius 2011b). Second, the rituals are also seen as powerful because they contribute towards creating and drawing the boundaries of the nation: the performance together with its symbols tell the “members of the nation” who they are, how different they are from other “nations” and the importance of national recognition over other “nations” (Elgenius 2011b). Several scholars have highlighted how national performance can produce immediate feelings of solidarity, collective belonging and attachment to large abstract notions, such as ‘nation’ (Mosse 1975, Kertzer 1996, Spillman 1997).

Furthermore, performance scholars have also underlined the power of ceremonies to change individuals’ perceptions, views and understanding: “most performance theorists imply that an effective or successful ritual performance is one in which a type of transformation is achieved” (Bell 2009: 74). One of the particularities of such performances is that they appeal to all of the senses. According to Bell (2009: 60):

By marching with a crowd, crying over a tragic drama, or applauding an unconvincing politician, even the less enthusiastic participants of the audience are cognitively and emotionally pulled into a complex sensory experience that can also communicate a variety of messages. Hence, the power of performance lies in great part in the effect of the heightened multisensory experience it affords: one is not being told or shown something so much as one is led to experience something.

In the same vein, Turner explained the transforming potential of rituals organised by national authorities in “transcend[ing] all structural oppositions of chief and commoner, men and women” (Turner 1979: 472). As the ritual is led by “the national political structure”, content related “to the unity and continuity of the nation and the land” is distilled to create the “*communitas*” (Turner 1979: 472).

Until recently, academics working in the field of nationalism have tended to limit their endeavours to describing the various objectives and components of the rituals designed by an “elite” while inferring their cohesion-building and awareness-making roles (Uzelac 2010, Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008). Recently, however, various scholars have called for a better understanding of the role of commemorations at the level of those participating in these ceremonies and rituals (see for example Uzelac 2010, Alexander 2006, Mookherjee 2011, Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008). Fox and Miller-Idriss (2008) in particular have questioned the outcomes of national performances and the achievement of the much-sought after “collective effervescence” (Durkheim 1995/1912) of the audience. They have thus asked how it is possible to recognise and assess the success of a performance in terms of its impact on the audience (Fox 2014). As a result, it has now become essential to study how national ceremonies resonate within the audience.

Researchers have started to show the varied and, at times, unexpected outcomes produced by the symbols displayed in the commemorations and the whole performance. Indeed, the symbols produced are negotiated and interpreted by the audience in ways that are not necessarily foreseen by the organisers (Leal 2014, Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008, Elgenius 2011b). Moreover, the precise meaning instilled in commemorations might also be unacknowledged or unnoticed by the audience, while completely bypassing non-participants (Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008).

To summarise, two main positions emerge regarding the study of national performance (Taylor

Woods and Tsang 2014). Should students follow a top-down approach by studying the intentions of the organisers as well as the various components of the performance or, on the contrary, start with ordinary persons and analyse their reactions, particularly how they understand, use and negotiate the meanings of the symbols conveyed in the performances? In the end, however, it appears that it is important to study both perspectives in order to understand the phenomenon in its entirety (Fox 2014).

Finally, while scholars of the nation and nationalism have recently started to insist on the importance of analysing the effect of national commemorations in terms of the participants' identification processes, they have encountered difficulties in defining which phenomena to study as well as by which methods (Antonsich and Skey 2017a). What kind of data and knowledge do we wish to produce and how shall we analyse them (Timm Knudsen and Stage 2015)? In particular, how is it possible to analyse with qualitative research strategies "non-representational" processes which affect the body and take place between subjects (Antonsich and Skey 2017a, Timm Knudsen and Stage 2015)? Shall affect, emotions and feelings or rather the people involved in the performances be studied (Antonsich and Skey 2017a, Timm Knudsen and Stage 2015)? Only very recently have researchers in the field of nationalism started to resort to new methodologies in order to attempt to grasp the particular sensory experience, for example by immersing themselves in specific atmospheres (see for example Militz 2017, Sumartojo 2017). Much work is required in order to identify the affective processes to study as well as their methods (Antonsich and Skey 2017a).

In the first article presented, I included insights from the recently-developed field of research that links the "affective turn" with national identification. On the one hand, I aimed to capture a variety of experiences by focusing on individuals who occupied different positions in the demonstrations on behalf of the national cause: ordinary marchers, persons responsible for security, speakers and organisers. I examined their reported feelings during the marches as well as their explanations of these particular moments. On the other hand, I also focused on the possibility of using oral history as a methodology for studying the role of affect in national identification phenomena.

3.2.4 Boundary work strategies: responding to stigmatisation

In the last few years, several scholars have scrutinised in detail the responses given to stigmatisation by migrants and members of ethnic minorities around the world (see for example:

Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt 1999, Duemmler, Dahinden, and Moret 2010, Witte 2017, Morosanu and Fox 2013, Lamont and Mizrachi 2012, Holtz, Dahinden, and Wagner 2013). Following Lamont et al. (2016: 6), I conceive stigmatisation as “a wide range of subjective experiences, namely, incidents in which respondents experience[d] disrespect and their dignity, honor, relative status, or sense of self was challenged.” Such situations arise, for example, when people feel insulted, negatively stereotyped, underestimated, subjected to jokes, neglected or ignored (Lamont et al. 2016). This approach represents another way of exploring ethnicity and nationhood. In particular, it makes it possible to examine the consequences of the ethnic and national classification of individuals and the reactions they trigger in terms of ethnic, national or other forms of discursive constructions (Morosanu and Fox 2013, Dahinden 2012).

Migration scholars have in particular demonstrated how foreign-born people are often subject to stigmatisation and negative stereotypes in their country of settlement (see for example Morosanu and Fox 2013, Ryan 2010, Portes 1999). Migrants might be the target of different types of stigmatisation regarding, for example, their socio-economic status, occupation or legal condition (Morosanu and Fox 2013). In Switzerland, Italian migrants were stigmatised and ethnicised due to “what was perceived to be improper behaviour in public space” in the early years of migration between the 1950s and 1970s (Wessendorf 2008: 206). While stigmatisation against “Italians” has completely disappeared in Switzerland today, the “Italians” have been replaced by migrants of Muslim origin (Wessendorf 2008). They are perceived as unable to integrate fully into Swiss society on the grounds of essentialised constructions that focus on strict, unequal gender relationships and other family-related questions (Wessendorf 2008).

Responses to stigmatisation might be classified into two main types: situational reactions and boundary work responses (Witte 2017). The first category includes direct reactions to stigmatisation, such as confronting the stigmatisers and de-emphasising or ignoring the stigmatisation (Witte 2017). The second category does not include direct reactions to a particular act of stigmatisation but rather discursive strategies that situate one according to specific categories (Witte 2017). By scrutinising how individuals respond to stigmatisation, the researcher will be in a position to analyse the boundary negotiation processes (Lamont and Mizrachi 2012, Wimmer 2008a, Morosanu and Fox 2013). In this section, I will start by examining boundary work theory and then survey the different forms of possible responses. I will not, however, examine the situational reactions, as these were not important in this research, that was mainly based on interviews.

Academics have frequently resorted to a boundary approach to explain the different practices and discourses that result in national identification, national and ethnic positioning or ethnic and gender inequalities (Lamont and Molnar 2002). This approach makes it possible to avoid theories that see ethnicity as fixed and given by birth (Wimmer 2008a, Lamont and Molnar 2002). Based on the work of sociologists and ethnologists like Max Weber, Pierre Bourdieu and Frederik Barth, the boundary perspective recognises that “nation” or “ethnicity” are “not primarily conceived as a matter of *relations* between pre-defined, fixed groups [...] but rather as a process of *constituting* and *re-configuring* groups by defining the boundaries between them” (Wimmer 2008a: 1027). The boundaries are the result of the contests and negotiations between the actors within a particular social field over shared representations and social classification (Wimmer 2008a).

This theory has been complemented by sociologists (Lamont and Molnar 2002) and particularly by Jenkins (2008: 42), who has demonstrated the “internal-external dialectic” that produces both *group identification* and *categorisation*. On the one hand, in their relationships with others, individuals define common standards and develop a sense of group belonging with other individuals. On the other hand, they are (or not) defined and identified by others as a collective formation with particular traits, so identification is constituted by a double process of self-definition and external categorisation (Jenkins 2008). Self and external definition can be mutually reinforcing while, in some cases, they might not match (Jenkins 2008). Thus, people might be assigned to unwanted categories that they do not identify with or share. Furthermore, Barth (1969) has underlined how the boundaries can be constructed on varying “cultural stuff”. In the particular case of nationhood, the existence of a national “imagined community” (Anderson 1989) is commonly established around a constructed common past and traditions (see Hobsbawm 1995, Schöpflin 2000, Eriksen 2002). Frequently, these particular attributes are expressed through narratives that define who does and does not belong to the group (Somers 1994). Smith (2000: 67), for example, explained:

Of particular importance are myths, symbols, and memories of ethnic origins, election, homeland, and the golden age... Along with shared memories, these ancestry myths define the distinctive character of specific ethnies. The myth of being ancestrally related, even if it is purely fictive and ideological in character, endows the members of a community with a powerful sense of belonging.

Similarly, individuals within migrants' populations might develop narratives that offer a self-definition regarding a particular group and differentiate it from others. Such narratives are often based on a constructed history of the group. It creates the particular group on the basis of its perceived past as the "cultural stuff". Recently, two different concepts have emerged in order to distinguish these forms of meta-narratives: "diaspora memory" and "exilic memory" (Lacroix and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2013: 687). The former emerged in order to describe a collective representation of the past that "is not structured by a narration of the point of origin per se but, rather, is the outcome of a collective migratory trajectory, with the diaspora's sense of distinctiveness, and of forming a minority, having thus appeared throughout the course of their emigration" (Lacroix and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2013: 687). The "diasporic memory" contrasts with the "exilic memory", seen as a shared representation that emphasises forced emigration from the homeland (Lacroix and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2013). These two concepts testify to the current "imaginaries of belonging" (Huysen 2003: 150) constituted by the individuals sharing them. The type of memory chosen and the specific events remembered (and forgotten) reflect the group's position "towards the 'others', be they sending and receiving state authorities, or other diasporic groups" (Lacroix and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2013: 689).

Turning now to the responses to stigmatisation, scholars have demonstrated that individuals are not only the passive victims of external categorisations and attributions but that they also resort to various strategies in order to cope with and fight against the demeaning images applied to them. Andreas Wimmer (2008a), in particular, has underlined the malleability and changing-nature of boundaries and individuals' positions. Wimmer (2008a) identifies five types of ethnic boundary-making strategies, defined as "different ways in which individual and collective actors can relate to an existing, established mode of classification and closure, and how they can attempt to enforce their vision of the legitimate divisions of society" (Wimmer 2013: 44). These are: 1- the *expansion* of the boundary to incorporate further members; 2- the *contraction* of the boundary to reduce membership; 3- the *transvaluation* that implies a normative change; 4- individual or collective *boundary crossing*; and 5- *blurring* the boundaries by emphasising other attributes of belonging (Wimmer 2013). While the first two strategies seek to modify the position of the boundaries, the latter three do not challenge their location but, rather, attempt to change their meaning or influence by contesting the hierarchical order of the categories, shifting one's location in respect to the boundary or asserting other categories besides ethnicity (Wimmer 2008a). As this last strategy reveals, migrants might respond not only in ethnic or

national terms but also according to other categories, such as class, gender, religion or profession (Dahinden 2012).

Research shows that stigmatised people are not free to choose which strategy they wish to follow. They are especially constrained by the context in which they are embedded. Indeed, as emphasised by several authors (Wimmer 2008a, Dahinden and Zittoun 2013), boundary work does not occur in a vacuum but in a specific environment that influences individuals' responses. First, the capacity to impose, resist, maintain and affirm self-definition and external categorisation rely on the power relations developed in the specific contexts (Duemmler, Dahinden, and Moret 2010). For example, in Switzerland, there exists a widely-shared and institutionalised picture of the "Albanians" based on negative and essentialised notions of culture, tradition and gender (in)equality (Duemmler, Dahinden, and Moret 2010). Given the very broad acceptance and normalisation of the boundaries that exclude Albanian-speakers from the majority group, individuals face great barriers when attempting to change this situation (Duemmler, Dahinden, and Moret 2010). Second, people rely on the discourses available in their environment to craft their responses. For example, with regard to migration, they might rely on the "political traditions and public narratives" shared in their immediate surroundings as well as on the further discourses on migrants conveyed in their national and transnational environments (Dahinden, Duemmler, and Moret 2014: 34).

Finally, a review of the literature within migration studies on stigmatisation shows that the majority of scholars continue to focus on the situation of migrants in their country of settlement despite the transnational turn in migration studies. They concentrate on the different forms of discrimination and stigmatisation as well as the responses to these acts in the country of settlement of migrants. In some cases, researchers have turned to analyses that incorporate the transnational character of the responses made to stigmatisation in the country of establishment. Landolt et al. (1999), for example, demonstrate how the hostile reception of Salvadorians in the United States in the 1980s strengthened their need to sustain a relationship with their homeland. Several scholars have also demonstrated the tensions, divisions and misunderstandings between migrants and non-migrants originating from the same country (see for example: Morosanu 2012, Wessendorf 2007). Scholars have, however, only rarely looked in detail at the responses given to these differences and more specifically the stigmatisation in both the country of origin and the transnational space in which the migrants' practices might be embedded. Only very recently has a researcher underlined the "double-sided othering" of migrants in both the home

and host countries and scrutinised the responses to stigmatisation (Genova 2017: 37). This article has shown that migrants must negotiate their position contextually between their countries of establishment and origin respectively (Genova 2017).

In the second article presented in this study, I examine the narratives of homeland engagement as one type of response made by the former activists to the stigmatisation in their homeland. Based on Lamont et al. (2016: 6), I conceive a particular form of stigmatisation: the challenges to the “relative status” of the former activists through situations of neglect, lack of recognition and stereotyping. Following Wimmer (2008a), I conceive the responses to stigmatisation as boundary-work strategies and follow the typology that he suggests. I thus scrutinise the strategies adopted by the former activists in order to be accepted into the “Albanian nation”. Moreover, I add a transnational perspective to the analysis by considering the forms of stigmatisation and responses that occur in a social field that broadly stretches between Switzerland and Kosovo.

3.2.5 Gender and nationalism: revealing the masculinised nation

The literature on nationalism has long ignored gender issues, focusing mainly on the state bureaucrats and apparatuses or intellectuals in order to explain how ethnic and national ideologies spread and boundaries emerge (Yuval-Davis 1997). In the 1980s and 1990s, feminist scholars began to address this gender blindness by following two main strategies (Mayer 2000, Yuval-Davis 1997, Nagel 1998). On the one hand, they began uncovering the roles of women in national politics and movements (Nagel 1998). On the other hand, they inquired about the widespread exclusion of women from the political world (Nagel 1998). This pioneering literature has shown, that, in most cases, women are required to play traditional, subordinate and supportive positions in national projects (Nagel 1998). Nira Yuval-Davis’ (1997) seminal work, *Gender & Nation*, played a particularly important role in bringing to light the relationship between women and national phenomena (Özkirimli 2017). Although Yuval-Davis (1997: 1) recognises that the “constructions of nationhood usually involve specific notions of both ‘manhood’ and ‘womanhood’”, she mainly focused on the particular roles played by women in nationalist projects. In this vein, Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias (1989) identified five main ways in which women participate in the nation: 1- as biological reproducers of the members of the ethnic or national collective; 2- as the reproducers of the ethnic and national group boundaries; 3- as key participants in the reproduction and transmission of the collective’s

ideology and culture; 4- as symbols and signifiers of national differences' and 5- as participants in national, economic, political and military struggles.

In this initial wave of scholarship that linked gender and nationalism, most authors focused on the various roles played by women while almost completely failing to study men (Nagel 1998, Mayer 2000). As a consequence, at the end of the 20th century, several researchers started calling for more attention to be paid to men and masculinity in the studies of nation and nationalism (Nagel 1998, Mayer 2000). A new field of research, focusing on men and masculinity in relationship to the nation, nation-building and nationalism, thus emerged. Many of the pathfinders first endeavoured to demonstrate a strong link between masculinity and the nation. Historians, for example, demonstrated how nationalist movements of the 19th century developed at the same time as a new form of hegemonic Western masculinity and how these new forms were integrated into the growing national ideology and representations (Mosse 1996). George Mosse (1996: 27) in particular showed how men were included in the national movements and ideology due to their "male" body, which was conceived as a blending of physical appearance and inner virtue: "during the French Revolution, as part of its selfrepresentation, the structure of the male body itself became a symbol of a healthy nation and society". Other historians have also underlined the numerous representations of the "nation" with male roles such as the heroic soldier who is ready to defend his fatherland or the importance of the "cult of great men" such as "explorers, pioneers, warriors, statesmen, writers, and scientists" (Horne 2004: 28-29).

Many of these early scholars sought to demonstrate the extreme proximity between, on the one hand, the nation and nationalism and, on the other, men and masculinity (Waetjen 2001). Nagel, in particular, underlined how most of the institutions that are linked to the nation have been led and dominated by men and how the "culture of nationalism" commonly centres around typical masculine themes like honour, bravery and duty (Nagel 1998: 251). Enloe (1989: 44) also acknowledged the very masculinist focus of the nationalist movements' views and concerns, notoriously noting that "nationalism typically has sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope". In parallel, women are pictured for their motherly qualities or as symbols of tradition and history (Mosse 1996). They are attributed supporting roles, constructed on masculine representations (Nagel 1998). Most of these early scholars postulated a strong, mutually-reinforcing relationship between masculinity and nationalism. On the one hand, the dominant men and masculinist images in the nationalist

movements and institutions provide a view of the nation based on specific, gendered conceptions. On the other hand, this gendered image of the “nation” contributes towards supporting and sustaining masculine power (Waetjen 2001).

In reaction to this postulated strong, mutually-supportive relationship between men’s interests, masculinity and national projects and processes, several authors have called for a more thorough, differentiated study of the field (Waetjen 2001, Bracewell 2000). They have also criticised an approach that has commonly considered the categories of men and masculinities as fixed, homogeneous and bounded (Bracewell 2000). These novel perspectives formed part of a new general evolution of the study of men and masculinities that underlined “the multiplicity of masculinities, relations among masculinities, the importance of collectivity, social learning of and about masculinities and femininities, complexities and indeed contradictions, and change” (Hearn and Blagojevic 2013: 3). In the particular field of study of nation and nationalism, Waetjen (2001), for example, highlights the fragmentation of the category of men in South Africa along lines such as class, age or racialised hierarchies, while also demonstrating the presence of several competing masculine representations within the narratives of the nation. This categorical and representative heterogeneity can largely impact on the outcomes of nationalist projects but also the experiences and processes of identification among women (Waetjen 2001). Although not always referring to this explicitly, these scholars have started to push towards a more intersectional perspective on the relationship between men, masculinity and nationalism by integrating multidimensional categories of belonging that more fully capture the experiences of individuals.

Although the studies in the field of men and masculinities expanded and started offering far more nuanced and detailed analyses in the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, many of them often adopted a national or local research framework (Hearn and Blagojevic 2013). Several scholars have thus called for the expansion of the field of research across borders in order to be able to conceptualise processes such as the construction of the categories of men and women or gendered practices that permeate transnational spaces (see for example Hearn 2015, Fouron and Glick Schiller 2001, Hearn and Blagojevic 2013, Dominguez Andersen and Wendt 2015). This transnational turn can be conceptualised as a further axis of analysis in an intersectional perspective (Hearn 2011). In particular, it makes it possible to perceive the construction and development of gendered practices and subjectivities at the intersection of the local, national, transnational, global and sometimes international levels. Blagojevic (2015), for example, takes

the case of the Balkans in order to demonstrate how, in the neo-liberal era, traditional masculine constructions must compete against the recent transnational entrepreneurial masculinities.

To date, there remains an apparent dearth of scholarship on the interrelationship between, on the one hand, the “nation”, national projects and processes and, on the other, masculinities. In particular, despite this new strand of transnational studies, very few theorists have paid attention to the precise relationship between masculinities and nationalism from a transnational perspective (Dominguez Andersen and Wendt 2015). The existing scholarship points to numerous ways in which the “nation” and masculinities are interrelated and also pleads for further theorisation in order to develop a clearer understanding of these processes (Dominguez Andersen and Wendt 2015). At the same time, an important part of the literature in this domain still continues to follow a deep-rooted approach that focuses on the roles of the “elites” in the construction of national masculinities (Dominguez Andersen and Wendt 2015).

The third article included in this study draws on these different concerns by avoiding a strict top-down approach, as it considers how former activists recreate and negotiate post-mobilisation symbolic status in their narratives. Furthermore, it considers gender categories as multiple as well as changeable, especially when following a transnational perspective. The article scrutinises the different forms of masculinity created in the narratives of the “liberation of Kosovo” and pays particular attention to the mobilisation and negotiation of the discourses linking nation and masculinity at the local, national, transnational and international levels.

In the following section, I will scrutinise how the themes of national belonging and memories among Albanian-speaking people in the former Yugoslavia and Switzerland have been treated.

3.3 Albanian nationhood and ethnicity after the “liberation”

In recent years, several scholars have scrutinised the construction of Albanianess in both Switzerland and the former Yugoslavia. This section will explore this scholarship with a particular focus on the main themes and research approaches that emerge from this literature in relationship to this PhD thesis. The objective of this section is twofold. First, as this PhD research largely relies on the scholarship on Albanian nationhood and ethnicity, it is important to review the literature published in this domain. This will contribute towards situating my own work within the broader academic scholarship of the field, and also provide a more detailed background of some of the issues addressed than was possible in the articles themselves. Second, this brief review will also identify some of the gaps in the literature, particularly regarding a more transnational perspective, that my thesis partly proposes to address.

While studies on “Albanian” ethnicity and nationhood have been written in both Switzerland and Kosovo, the specific scholarship that links Albanian nationhood with narratives of the past appears to be mainly centred on the population living in Kosovo. For example, several scholars have addressed the emergence of different personal and public narratives of Albanianess among the Albanian-speaking population in the post-war period in Kosovo (see for example Di Lellio and Schwandner-Sievers 2006a, Di Lellio and Salihu 2014). They have asked: What does it mean to be “Albanian” (i.e. Albanianess) or “Kosovo Albanian” in the post-war period? How has the turmoil of the 1990s in the Albanian-speaking regions of the former Yugoslavia influenced the conception of Albanianess? In Kosovo, some of them have also scrutinised the intersection between the two constructions of Albanianess and gender (see for example Krasniqi 2007, Luci and Krasniqi 2006, Stephens 2014). Much less has been written about the development of national or ethnic narratives of the past and the forms of belonging among the Albanian-speaking population living abroad, and especially in Switzerland, although some scholars have analysed the forms of ethnic or national identification there (see for example Duemmler, Dahinden, and Moret 2010, Dahinden 2005, Haxhijaj 2015).

3.3.1 Albanianess and memories in post-war Kosovo

What is the role of narratives of the past in the construction of Albanian nationhood and ethnicity? In the post-war years, numerous scholars have explored this question in Kosovo. They have, in particular, depicted the emergence and sometimes rivalry between different discourses of Albanianess, themselves based on memories of the recent past. I will succinctly

review here the main literature existing on the topic.

While Albanian nationhood has long been built on figures of the past, particularly Skanderbeg (Nixon 2010), contemporary heroes and stories have been added during the post-“liberation” years. New narratives of Albanianness emerged following the state repression, resistance and conflict of the 1980s and 1990s. Some images appear to have imposed themselves at the expenses of others. Several authors have attempted to explore the creation and course of these different narratives (see for example Di Lellio and Schwandner-Sievers 2006a, Di Lellio and Salihu 2014, Ingimundarson 2007).

At the end of the war, one main narrative of suffering, despair, humiliation and victimisation was dominant within the Albanian-speaking population in Kosovo (Zdravkovic-Zonta 2009, Di Lellio and Salihu 2014). The Albanians depicted themselves as “good” and “victims” while the Serbs were portrayed as “bad” and “perpetrators” (Di Lellio and Salihu 2014: 121). This discourse was not only constructed on the experienced oppression and violence of the Milosevic years and the conflict (Di Lellio and Salihu 2014), but also linked to a dominant collective narrative, present in people’s memory and writings, that depicts the Albanian nation as the target of Serbian extermination since Kosovo came under Serbian rule in 1912 (Di Lellio and Salihu 2014, Zdravkovic-Zonta 2009). Furthermore, this perspective conceives Serbia as Kosovo’s coloniser and occupier, following the official version of history presented in the Albanian history books (Zdravkovic-Zonta 2009). Thus, the narratives of tyranny and persecution by the Serbs were constructed at the intersection between the lived experiences of persecution and discrimination, shared memories of an “unjust” past as well as the official Albanian (state) history of the centuries-long oppressed “Albanian nation” (Zdravkovic-Zonta 2009). After the conflict ended, this narrative of victimisation, however, became less prominent as the heroic story of the “liberation of Kosovo” propagated by the KLA heirs started to impose itself in the public discourses (Di Lellio and Salihu 2014). These stories of fear and suffering, however, continued to be shared and propagated in the private sphere (Di Lellio and Salihu 2014).

According to the scholarship on memory and Albanianness, the post-war period essentially saw the confrontation between two main public narratives of Albanianness that were promoted and conveyed by the two most prominent political forces (Ingimundarson 2007, Krasniqi 2007). On the one hand, the KLA’s heirs propagated the heroic narrative of “Kosovo liberation” by the

KLA. On the other hand, the LDK members and followers promoted the narrative of peaceful resistance based on the figure of its, President Ibrahim Rugova. This confrontation resulted from a split within the Albanian-speaking resistance movement in the 1990s between those pleading for a more active, violent resistance against Serbia and those defending Ibrahim Rugova's nonviolent orientation (Ingimundarson 2007). As the conflict ended, these two forces competed for power in Kosovo. The traditional elite that had ruled Kosovo during most of the 1990s and been socialised in the socialist Yugoslavia became challenged by the political newcomers stemming from the KLA ranks who often originated from the countryside and prided themselves on their history of opposition to socialist Yugoslavia (Ströhle 2013).⁶ The defence and promotion of the two different narratives became part of a power struggle between the new and old Kosovan "elites" (Ströhle 2013, Krasniqi 2009). In particular, the new political forces attempted to downgrade their opponents by developing a heroic narrative based on sacrifice on behalf of the nation and armed struggle (Ströhle 2013). This narrative was used to impose a new "social hierarchy" that praised those who participated in the armed resistance and stigmatised the rest (Ströhle 2013: 250).

Memory specialists in Kosovo have pointed to the emergence of the heroic narrative of the "liberation" as the main public interpretation of the recent past and the most widely spread representation of Albanianess in post-war Kosovo (Di Lellio and Schwandner-Sievers 2006a, Schwandner-Sievers 2010b). In the particular post-war context, the heroic narrative largely spoke to the people as it played a specific "psychosocial function": it proposed to replace the rather dishonourable feelings of despair and victimisation with the more esteemed image of victory and pride (Di Lellio and Schwandner-Sievers 2006a, Schwandner-Sievers 2010b: 98). The narrative underlines the central role played by the KLA in the liberation of Kosovo and praises "superior values" such as military resistance, martyrdom and self-sacrifice for the "nation" (Ströhle 2010, Schwandner-Sievers and Ströhle 2012). Strongly associated with the grand narrative of the KLA's "liberating Kosovo", Adem Jashari's story of armed resistance and "sacrifice" (for further details on Adem Jashari, see chapter 2, section 1.2) was elevated to the "founding myth and master narrative of the new nation" through the prominence of this story in school textbooks, the yearly commemoration of Jashari's death during three days in

⁶ In neighbouring Macedonia, as in other post-socialist states, the reconfiguration of the relations between dominant and less dominant groups (mainly between Macedonians and Albanians) occurred following the collapse of the socialist system and the introduction of free market economy. In particular, individuals, mainly ethnic Macedonians, who were previously employed by the state lost all their privileges as their company was privatised. On the contrary, many Albanians took advantage of the new economic situation to open small businesses with the financial support of their relatives abroad and enjoy social upward mobility (Dimova 2010).

March and the transformation of this house into a place of pilgrimage (Schwandner-Sievers and Ströhle 2012: 505). Furthermore, not only rituals but also monuments dedicated to KLA soldiers spread throughout the country (Krasniqi 2013, Ingimundarson 2007).

In the post-war period, the LDK and its followers also attempted to defend their own version of the recent past, highlighting the legacies of Ibrahim Rugova and in particular the strategies of nonviolence and internationalisation of the Kosovo question (Ingimundarson 2007). The LDK also recast Ibrahim Rugova's image: from party leader he became the "national unifier" (Ingimundarson 2007: 101) and was praised by his supporters as the "father of the nation" (Ströhle 2013, Schwandner-Sievers 2010b: 108). As he died in 2006, his followers scored some points in the competition regarding the commemoration and memorialisation of the past as many Kosovo Albanians mourned him as the "father of the nation" (Schwandner-Sievers 2010b: 108). The LDK however did not openly confront the "post-war master narrative" (Di Lellio and Schwandner-Sievers 2006a) centred on Adem Jashari (Schwandner-Sievers 2010b); indeed, the party also endorsed the rhetoric commemorating the war but "contested the suggested boundaries of inclusion and exclusion" and attempted to integrate its own "heroes" and "martyrs" in the heroic narrative (Ströhle 2013: 99). In effect, for many years in post-war Kosovo, no structured or organised voices dared to criticise publicly the Jashari narrative although he was privately criticised for its traditionalist and patriarchal character (Di Lellio and Schwandner-Sievers 2006a, Schwandner-Sievers 2010b). As the heroic narrative of the armed resistance became dominant in Kosovo, many other figures of the 1990s were marginalised (Visoka 2016). In particular, those who managed and participated in the parallel state structures that operated throughout most of the 1990s, LDK supporters, women fighters and student protestors were excluded from the mainstream public memory (Strapacova 2016, Stephens 2014).

A few scholars have also demonstrated that both the post-war discourses conveyed by the KLA heirs and the LDK paid little attention to women while highlighting the role of powerful men and specific types of masculinity (Krasniqi 2009). As such, the post-war discourses in Kosovo confirm the well-established scholarship on gender and nationalism (Yuval-Davis 1993, 1997) as well as on gender and memory that commonly note the absence of "women" as well as the almost exclusive masculine focus of the representations of the past (Maleckova 2008, Paletschek and Schraut 2008). First, women figures and roles are almost excluded from the discourses, especially in the narratives about the struggle against the Milosevic regime as well

as in the nation-building process (Krasniqi 2009). Second, when women are depicted, they are represented as the “guardians of the private sphere” (Krasniqi 2009: 164) or as biological reproducers of the nation (Salvatici 2008). They are also associated with “tradition and continuity, perhaps even inertia” while, at the same time, men are made the representatives of “progress and political advancement” and are supposed to protect the women (Krasniqi 2009: 164). Finally, this masculinist perception of women’s roles also testifies to the specific historical context of the post-socialist states that saw the “retraditionalisation of gender norms” after the end of communism (Munn 2006, Gal and Kligman 2000, Asztalos and Gradska 2018: 11).

Furthermore, the public discourses and political references about the recent mobilisation in Kosovo often offer a dual vision of masculinity: “heroic masculinity” and “peace-loving masculinity” (Krasniqi 2009: 164). The first version underlines the role of KLA fighters as “national savours” (Krasniqi 2009: 163). This model constructs a “brave heroic male” (Krasniqi 2009: 163) that relies on traditional masculine qualities and values that praise armed struggle and self-sacrifice (Ströhle 2010, Schwandner-Sievers and Ströhle 2012). Adem Jashari, as the revered figure of the heroic narrative, represents for many urban Kosovan women the archetypal patriarch who shows absolute domination over his family, including power over life and death, following the Albanian tradition (Di Lellio and Schwandner-Sievers 2006a, Schwandner-Sievers and Ströhle 2012). The “peace-loving masculinity” is usually represented by Ibrahim Rugova. He symbolises “a type of forward-looking civic nationalism premised on the Western construct of the nation-state.” (Krasniqi 2009: 161). Compared to the “heroic masculinity” embodied by the “freedom fighter”, Ibrahim Rugova appears to be a more “effeminate” leader who cannot capitalise on the armed struggle (Krasniqi 2007). He is portrayed as the patriarchal head of the family whose female members are conceived as the biological, social and cultural reproducers of the nation (Krasniqi 2009).

Moreover, in Kosovo, masculinities have not only been articulated in the oppositional relations between the “peace-loving” and the “heroic” forms but also in relationship to the International Community’s policies that depreciate the local masculinity and depict it as “irrational” in contrast with the “rational” Western masculinity that is set as the model to attain (Krasniqi 2009: 162). These opposite the gender constructions that emerged as part of a broader discourse emanating from the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) that portrayed the society in Kosovo as “sick” and endeavoured to change people’s subjectivities by “civilising” them and

encouraging them to embrace “a Western-style model of political behaviour and rationality” (Krasniqi 2009: 162). This opposition has led to alternative discourses that seek to reinvigorate the image of the “Kosovan male” (Krasniqi 2009: 162). For example, during the 2004 political campaign, the Democratic Party of Kosovo appealed to “dignity”, partly relating to KLA combatants who were struggling to gain status in post-war Kosovo and were seen as “emasculated” because the “International Community” had disarmed the KLA instead of entrusting it with the protection of the country (Krasniqi 2009: 163). These constructions of masculinity were, however, not oriented against the images provided by international actors but, rather, as a merger between what can be considered the western, more traditional forms of masculinity (Krasniqi 2009: 163).

Finally, scholars have also demonstrated how recent stories of war suffering, civilian killings and other testimonies of non-fighters have started to resurface (Di Lellio and Salihu 2014). These stories, often critical of the KLA narrative of heroic resistance, have begun to emerge as several KLA leaders started facing criminal charges within international and Kosovan courts and were accused of corruption (Di Lellio and Salihu 2014). These circumstances helped to undermine the KLA’s discourses and make more space for the victims’ stories (Di Lellio and Salihu 2014). In particular, civil-society groups have launched several initiatives to give voice to the victims and also to ordinary citizens. These endeavours explicitly sought to prevent any further political and collective manipulation of memories.

This study explores how the research participants link these different discourses of Albanianess, conveyed in Kosovo, with their personal life stories and other shared accounts of engagement. It explores how they resort to these discourses of the “nation” to construct their narrative of engagement within the specific context of the post-engagement years and in the transnational social fields. The objective is to analyse how they use these narratives to frame the “Albanian nation” and negotiate their own position within this specific time and space.

3.3.2 Nationhood and ethnicity among Albanian-speakers in Switzerland

What does it mean to be “Albanian” or “Kosovo Albanian” as both ethnicity and nationhood in Switzerland? Only a handful of researchers have attempted to study the self-understanding of Albanian-speakers in Switzerland. As ethnicity and nationhood are constituted by a dual process of self-identification and external categorisation (Jenkins 2008), it is not only important to analyse how Albanian-speakers identify themselves but also how others characterise them as

well as how they respond (or not) to this external categorisation.

A few scholars have described the evolution of ethnic and national consciousness and belonging among Albanian-speaking migrants in Switzerland (see for example von Aarburg and Gretler 2008, Dahinden 2013). According to these authors, during the first years of emigration to Switzerland, the Albanian-speaking migrants in Switzerland were recognised by the Swiss population as “Yugoslav” rather than “Albanian”, an unknown ethnic group (von Aarburg and Gretler 2008). Moreover, these Albanian-speaking migrants also identified themselves as “Yugoslavs” (von Aarburg and Gretler 2008) so, at the time, no pronounced form of national or ethnic belonging based on Albanianess emerged among the guest-workers (Dahinden 2010b). Moreover, the *gastarbeiter* only envisioned their life in their homeland where they hoped for a better financial and social situation. Indeed, migration created the double advantage of improving not only their living conditions and those of their families at home but also of enhancing their social status there (Le Normand 2016). More specifically, they saw their access to Western consumer goods as a tool for achieving prestige in their home society (Le Normand 2016). Together with other elements, such as education and material conditions, contact with the Western world constitutes one element testifying to their high degree of “modernity” and “culture” that would help them to integrate within a higher position in the home society (Le Normand 2016, de Rapper 2002).

These authors identified the beginning of the 1990s, as Yugoslavia started to disintegrate along an ethnic logic, as the period in which the Swiss media and population began to differentiate the “Yugoslav” population in the country according to more exclusive categories of belonging, based on ethnicity (von Aarburg and Gretler 2008). Concurrently, the increasingly bleak situation of the Albanian-speakers in Yugoslavia amid growing nationalism in the country contributed towards strengthening the national consciousness, and solidarity as well as nationalism among the Albanian-speaking migrants in Switzerland (Dahinden 2010b). In practice, the Albanian-speaking population in Switzerland started to mobilise on behalf of their homeland via engaging in numerous transnational activities and initiatives (Dahinden 2013). During those years too, Albanian-speaking migrants in Switzerland strongly counted on each other for support and constituted a kind of sealed community at a local level (Dahinden 2010a).

From the beginning of the 1990s onwards, the “Albanians”, or the “Albanians of Kosovo” as they are commonly referred to, started suffering from a negative image in Switzerland and more

generally in Europe (Fibbi and Truong 2015, Schwandner-Sievers 2008). As the number of Albanian-speaking immigrants increased throughout the 1990s due to the violence and widespread discrimination in Yugoslavia, they were confronted, as a group, with a damaging reputation as abusers of the welfare system, criminals and machos (Fibbi and Truong 2015, Burri Sharani et al. 2010, Haxhijaj 2015). Women have also been the targets of stereotyping, such as being portrayed as “defenceless victims” who lack independence in a patriarchal family (Duemmler, Dahinden, and Moret 2010, Burri Sharani et al. 2010: 39). As a result of this stigmatisation, they have encountered discrimination at school, in accessing employment and housing as well as in political campaigns and have suffered due to social exclusion (Fibbi, Kaya, and Piguet 2003, Burri Sharani et al. 2010, Haxhijaj 2015, Iseni 2013, Duemmler, Dahinden, and Moret 2010).

Several authors have focused on the boundary work responses given by Albanian-speaking individuals to these negative stereotypes not only in Switzerland but in other European countries also. One frequent strategy for Albanian-speaking migrants has been to adopt a more acceptable ethnic identity (Blumi 2003, Schwandner-Sievers 2008). Often, some have attempted to hide their origins and pretend to be Italian in their countries of settlement (Blumi 2003, Karrer 2002, Schwandner-Sievers 2008). Another strategy has been to avoid and deny the importance of ethnic identification while highlighting other forms of belonging (Vathi 2010, Karrer 2002). Another possibility encountered is to reverse the moral hierarchy by claiming one’s own alleged values as superior to those of mainstream society (Duemmler, Dahinden, and Moret 2010). Thus, many respond to the negative clichés by insisting on “Albanian values” and are proud to be different (Haxhijaj 2015). Finally, in practice, the strengthening of social links with other Albanian-speaking migrants within a type of closed community might also be understood as a response to discrimination and marginalisation (Dahinden 2010a).

Several authors have insisted on the situational and variable nature of Albanian ethnic and national identification. Dahinden (2008), in particular, scrutinised the changing ethnic boundaries among Albanian-speaking migrants according to different migration phases. She showed how, during the flight in wartime, the category of “Albanian” translated into an all-encompassing solidarity that was based on the lowest dominator of being categorised as “Albanian”. At the time, the line of division that mattered was between the “Albanians” and the “Serbs”. After settling in Switzerland, however, new boundaries appeared. While, from the outside, the “Albanians” appeared isolated from the rest of society, they were fractured from

within. Thus, in practice, this ethnic homogeneity did not translate into concrete solidarity and relationships as other categories, such as residence permit types, and gender or rural versus urban origins, imposed themselves over the ethnic divide but within the ethnic group (Dahinden 2008). This example demonstrates how context-sensitive ethnicity is in practice.

Similarly, Iseni (2013) shows how, during the 1980s and 1990s, the Albanian-speaking population in Switzerland was mainly oriented towards the “homeland” as a consequence of the political turmoil there. This observation parallels Dahinden’s description of the strong ethnic homogeneity of the Albanian-speakers in Switzerland (2008) which she partly attributes to the forced emigration of the “Albanians” as they were persecuted for their “Albanianness”. They thus took advantage of their sojourn in Switzerland to be “more Albanian” (Dahinden 2008: 62). After the conflict ended, the Albanian-speaking population in Switzerland reoriented their attention towards their place of living, which resulted in increasing naturalisation, property purchase and commitment to children’s education there (Iseni 2013). This reorientation involved a renegotiation of their place within society in both their country of origin and in Switzerland. As they renounced their plans to return, many migrants developed nostalgia for their country of origin but also disappointment because of the lack of perspectives there and uneasy relationships partly because of wealth differences (Iseni 2013). As the years passed, boundaries between those who remained and those who left the country have thus been erected (Iseni 2013).

Furthermore, scholars have also started to distinguish between the first generation and those born in Switzerland in terms of self-identification. Some broad differences can be mentioned, although the “first generation” is relatively heterogeneous. In particular, first generation individuals are still far more committed to their country of origin than their children and often share more traditional values, rely more heavily on Albanian ethnic networks and live with an idealised picture of the homeland (Haxhijaj 2015). At the same time, many of the first generation migrants appear to be more attached to tradition than their co-nationals in the homeland (Haxhijaj 2015). Over the years, these migrants tend to remain focused on the same customary values and ways of living within a closed group of other individuals with the same origins without adapting to societal changes (Haxhijaj 2015).

The generation born in the 1980s and 1990s appears to embrace a different situation compared to that of their parents who emigrated to Switzerland as adults. On the one hand, many feel

detached from their parents' country of origin and values. They often distinguish between "them", "the Albanians" in Kosovo, and "us", the "British", the "Swiss Kosovar" or other denominations (Haxhijaj 2015, Iseni 2013, Paca 2015). Furthermore, the uneasiness in the relationships created by wealth differences also contributes towards distancing them even more from their parent's homeland (Paca 2015, Iseni 2013). On the other hand, they often do not feel completely accepted in Switzerland where negative clichés and discrimination against the "Albanians of Kosovo" are still commonplace (Haxhijaj 2015, Iseni 2013, Duemmler, Dahinden, and Moret 2010, Zschirnt and Fibbi 2019). While some find it difficult to find their place in a situation of double rejection, others have negotiated a "third" form of identification that allows them to navigate between different contexts, normative codes and values, choosing, for example, to identify themselves as "Swiss-Kosovar" (Haxhijaj 2015). This observation fits closely with Paca's comment about self-identification among Albanian-speaking migrants in the UK, underlying that "diasporic identity is multidirectional, context bound and that homeland discourses as well as host society discourses are involved" (Paca 2015: 233). Indeed, she remarks that the people ultimately do not attempt to align themselves with a particular homeland or British discourse of Albanianess but rather to pursue a positive self-interpretation in each possible context (Paca 2015: 213, 232).

Finally, several authors have also studied how the migrants have been perceived in their societies of origin. Tensions between migrants and Kosovo inhabitants seem to have arisen as early as the *gastarbeiter* times (Le Normand 2016). For example, during those years, deprecating terms were already used to qualify migrant workers, who were perceived "as greedy and overambitious" (Le Normand 2016: 46). More recent examples demonstrate similar processes of negative categorisations. Pichler (2009: 227), for example, explains how the local Albanian-speaking inhabitants of Macedonia tend to perceive migrants as lacking "culture" and morally inferior. In Kosovo, migrants, especially those from German-speaking countries, have been qualified as "shaci", a term used in a derogatory manner that literally means "treasure" but also "sweetheart" (Paca 2015, Ferizaj 2018). While the migrants are recognised for their money, they are also treated as inferior because of their alleged bad taste (Paca 2015, Ferizaj 2018). According to the journalist, Ferizaj (2018), the adoption of this term among the urban elite represents a way of enhancing their own status by belittling Albanian-speaking migrants who are considered "others" and marginalised in Western Europe. However, while this urban elite sees itself as European and more advanced than the migrants, they are still generally considered in Western Europe as the less advanced "other", at the periphery: "First and

foremost, the *shaci* image is an uncriticised import of the ‘European’ other by the European ‘other’ itself” (Ferizaj 2018).

Why do the migrants suffer from demeaning stereotypes and a lower symbolic status in their homeland? One explanation could be that they constitute a threat to those who have not moved abroad: with their wealth, they challenge the local hierarchies and power balance (Le Normand 2016, Brettell 2003, Pichler 2009). When they display their financial means, cars, expensive weddings and western style houses to prove their “modernity and progress”, they disturb the established symbolic and social orders (Pichler 2009: 133, Leutloff-Grandits 2017). Subjecting migrants to demeaning terms and excluding behaviour might thus constitute a way not only to fight against potential competitors but also to enhance one’s own status on “moral” and “cultural” grounds to compensate for a lower, embarrassing economic situation (Le Normand 2016, Brettell 2003, Pichler 2009).

This thesis builds on this existing literature, particularly by paying attention to the specific context of the stigmatising discourses conveyed about the “Albanians” in Switzerland and also in their homeland. It considers these discourses as one element, among several others, that influences how the former activists compose their narratives of past engagement in order to craft a particular symbolic position in the present. Furthermore, as this literature provides a historical account of the development of national belonging and consciousness among Albanian-speaking migrants in Switzerland, it also supports my reflection on the changing discursive constructions of the “Albanian nation”. Finally, while the scholarship on ethnic and national belonging among Albanian-speaking migrants in Switzerland has underlined the internal-external dialectic of identification, the variability and situatedness of such phenomena as well as the responses made to stigmatisation, no researcher has previously studied the role of the past narratives of engagement in these processes. This thesis will thus provide an original contribution by scrutinising the role of memories in the construction of nationhood among Albanian-speaking migrants in Switzerland.

3.4 Research questions

Relying on the epistemological and theoretical considerations presented above, the study aims to scrutinise how former Albanian-speaking activists in Switzerland narrate their national belonging. In particular, it asks: how do they construct their belonging to the “Albanian nation” in the memories of homeland engagement?

Following this overall goal, each article attempts to answer a specific research question:

- 1- How do former activists make sense of the rising feeling of national belonging experienced during the demonstrations of the 1980s?
- 2- How do former activists still living in Switzerland respond to oblivion from the “Albanian nation” and the perceived inferior symbolic position in Kosovo?
- 3- How do former activists articulate national membership in gendered terms?

4 Methodology

This PhD thesis started with a historical approach, with the goal of investigating how former activists on behalf of the Albanian cause in Switzerland made sense of their engagement during the 1980s and 1990s. In order to understand their mobilisation and their rationale for it, I planned to follow a double methodological strategy. First, I wished to adopt a conventional historical method by assembling all of the possible written documents related to their engagement, then comparing and evaluating them and finally attempting to reconstruct the past activism. I thus started collecting evidence from different sources, particularly the Albanian-speaking newspapers and material produced by different Albanian-speaking organisations during the 1980s and 1990s in Switzerland. For this purpose, I visited official archive repositories like the Swiss National Archives as well as different libraries that had collected newspapers and brochures produced by Albanian-speaking people in Switzerland. As a second step, I started contacting former activists in both Switzerland and Kosovo in order to collect their personal archives or those of their organisations. As the events were still relatively recent, I also wished to interview the main protagonists of the mobilization: the activists themselves. I saw two main advantages to this: their testimony could replace the partial lack of archives and they were able to provide me with far more detailed accounts. Moreover, it did not make sense to contact these individuals only to collect their archives without listening to the stories they adamantly wished to tell me. As already mentioned in the introduction, my encounters with the former activists compelled me gradually to reconsider the topic of my research. I decided to abandon my goal of reconstructing the past subjectivities in order to consider the current sense-making about the past engagement. This led me progressively also to re-examine the ways in which I was collecting and analysing my data as well as writing my thesis.

While I refocused my attention on post-war interpretations of the struggle of the 1980s and 1990s, I still benefited from a detailed background knowledge of the activities that were actually carried out during the 1980s and 1990s, thanks to many hours spent reading the archives of the different movements and organisations. This knowledge proved helpful in at least two ways. First, it helped me to develop a clearer understanding of the post-war narratives of engagement that are still often related to particular factual or organisational details of the past engagement. Second, my in-depth knowledge of past activities proved very useful in allowing me to compare the activities carried out during the 1980s and 1990s with their interpretations many years later. For example, narratives of the engagement of the clandestine organisations of the 1980 often minimise the role of the Marxist-Leninist ideology while newspapers produced by the

organisations of the time were strongly infused with Marxist-Leninist arguments and vocabulary. This comparison might lead to several reflections on the reasons for such differences that relate, for example, to the past and present relationships within the transnational Albanian-speaking population and the mainstream anti-communist opinion in Switzerland as well as to historical developments since the end of the cold war.

In this chapter, I will describe and discuss the main methodological choices adopted in order to collect and analyse the narratives of the transnational engagement produced by former activists as part of this study. I will particularly focus on the use of oral history methods. This chapter will also serve to provide detailed information on the research participants.

4.1 Particularities of oral history: epistemological and methodological reflections

This PhD work explores former Albanian-speaking activists' memories of their engagement on behalf of Kosovo in Switzerland. It seeks to understand how they make sense of their past engagement and scrutinises particularly how they narrate their ethnic and national belonging with a specific interest on their transnational positioning. This research follows a social constructivist framework, an approach that analyses subjective meanings as historically and socially negotiated: they are the result of interactions with social actors in particular historical and sociocultural circumstances that include "shared understandings, practices, language, and so forth" (Schwandt 2007b: 197, Creswell 2013). The research thus aims to get as close as possible to the participants' views (Creswell 2013). Methodologically, I decided to rely mainly on oral history in order to understand the participants' constructions of the past. Oral history is one among many possible methods for studying memories. In this section, I will outline the main benefits of this methodological choice as well as some of the methodological and theoretical developments in the area of oral history. I will also examine in more detail some of the core aspects of oral history, particularly its subjective, narrative and inter-subjective character. Finally, I will describe some of the connections between the fields of memory studies and oral history.

In its early years, oral history was mainly used as a historical method for collecting evidences about the past following a positivist approach (Grele 2006, Bischooping and Gazso 2016, Bornat 2013). Over the years, however, oral history has evolved to become a gateway to an individual's subjectivity, within a more interpretative view (Grele 2006). Thus, individuals started to be interviewed not just for evidence about the past but also for their views of themselves as actors

who construct their own stories and interpretations of the past (Grele 2006). Alessandro Portelli, in particular, inspired many generations of oral historians by bringing to the fore the meaning-making role of oral history (Bischoping and Gazso 2016). He famously declared (Portelli 1991: 52):

But what is really important is that memory is not a passive depository of facts, but an active process of creation of meanings. Thus, the specific utility of oral sources for the historian lies, not so much in their ability to preserve the past, as in the very changes wrought by memory. These changes reveal the narrators' effort to make sense of the past and to give a form to their lives, and set the interview and the narrative in their historical context.

Since Portelli's ground-breaking considerations, oral historians have started considering interviews as a chance to observe how the construction of the past regularly changes in evolving contexts (Bischoping and Gazso 2016). Several paths have been followed: underlying the multiple constructions of the past made by a single subject, exploring the oppositions and tensions among several narratives of the same past experiences, and scrutinising the relationships between official/public memories and personal ones (Bischoping and Gazso 2016).

Alessandro Portelli, his colleague Luisa Passerini and other pioneers of an oral history that distances itself from positivism also greatly contributed to the field by bringing to the fore two interwoven aspects: the narrative and the intersubjective nature of oral history interviews (Grele 2006). Even by the end of the 1970's, Portelli (1991: 48) noted: "Oral sources are narrative sources. Therefore, the analysis of oral history materials must avail itself of some of the general categories developed by narrative theory in literature and folklore". Since then, numerous oral historians have taken into consideration the narrative components of the interviews collected in their research. They have in particular adapted their interview practice, giving more room to the interviewees, in order to encourage them to construct their responses in terms of their narratives, which was not the case in the early years of oral history, when oral historians favoured the use of questionnaires that elicited short, factual answers (Abrams 2016).

As narrative research has expanded significantly across the academic fields and different forms of inquiry have developed, from biographical studies (Rosenthal 2007, Schütze 1983, Bornat

2008) to archival works (Felming, Riegle, and Fryer 2007), no agreement has been found with regard to what composes narratives and how to approach them (Abrams 2016, Chase 2003). There is however a common understanding that narrators tell stories in order to make sense of experiences by constructing meaning (Chase 2003). Thus, narratives not only interpret but also construct experiences; they not only represent happenings but also constitute them (Somers 1994). Furthermore, narratives not only contribute towards making sense of experiences, but they are also sources of action for individuals. Margaret Somers (1994: 614) famously explained:

Their research [scholarship in narrative studies] is showing us that stories guide action; that people construct identities (however multiple and changing) by locating themselves or being located within a repertoire of emplotted stories; that "experience" is constituted through narratives; that people make sense of what has happened and is happening to them by attempting to assemble or in some way to integrate these happenings within one or more narratives; and that people are guided to act in certain ways, and not others, on the basis of the projections, expectations, and memories derived from a multiplicity but ultimately limited repertoire of available social, public, and cultural narratives.

Oral history interviews are thus composed: narrators choose, for example, between different "genres" and "modes" of narratives in order to tell their stories (Abrams 2016, Portelli 1991, Chamberlain 2006). The narrators commonly include reported speech and anecdotes in their stories (Abrams 2016), and might also decide to portray themselves as victim or hero in a tragedy or epic form of a story (Abrams 2016). Narrators also need to situate their narrative, or part of it, at the level of the home, town, national or international (and obviously also transnational) perspective, which results in stories that focus on the individual's life, the experiences of the "community" or the official and political spheres (Portelli 1991). These decisions in terms of genre and mode of telling reveal the meanings attributed by the narrators to their stories (Abrams 2016).

The emphasis on the narrative component of the interviews within Portelli's generation has also been accompanied by a focus on the intersubjective nature of oral history that rests on two components (Summerfield 1998, Grele 2006). On the one hand, as already mentioned, narrators integrate their personal recollection of events with multiple discourses and narrative genres that are available in their social environment. On the other hand, the interview is recognised as

“dialogic” (Grele 2006: 68), as it consists of a conversation between an interviewee and a researcher or even a broader public that might read the narrator’s testimony (Abrams 2016, Sarkar 2012). Portelli (1991: 56) further explains the role of the oral historian: “the historian remains important at least as a partner in dialogue, often as a “stage director” of the interview, or as an “organizer” of the testimony. Instead of discovering sources, oral historians partly create them”.

Reflecting on the relationship between the narrator and the researcher also leads to the questioning of the researcher’s self-reflexivity and power differences (Sarkar 2012). In particular, categorical differences such as status, class, gender and ethnicity are considered relevant in the relationship between the researcher and the interviewee (Bornat 2013). The seeming asymmetrical relationship of power however needs to be relativised, as this relationship often appears to be “complex and shifting” (Armitage and Gluck 2002: 79), as interviewees exercise their agency in numerous ways by, for example, focusing on certain aspects while hiding others (Sarkar 2012, Portelli 1991, Bornat 2013). Another way of viewing interviewees’ agency is to consider the notion of “composure” (Dawson 1994). It is generally admitted that narrators compose interviews by selecting from among various possible stories that often agree with the wider cultural context and that might also please the audience (Summerfield 2004, Abrams 2016). Thus, narrators can choose between “a range of possible identities, some of which will be dominant or hegemonic, ideal or desirable, others will be alternative or subversive” (Abrams 2016: 67).

Furthermore, while memory study scholars and oral historians traditionally pursued different perspectives and interests in the study of narratives of the past, their approaches have recently started to concur. For a long time, oral historians conventionally focused on personal or small group memories. They thus traditionally favoured an approach that centres on individual agency while also highlighting the importance of human relationships in the practice of remembering via the interview (Hamilton and Shopes 2008). By contrast, memory study scholars have, instead, focused on collective forms of remembering, involving for example the study of meta-narratives of the “nation”, large-scale rituals and monuments (Bornat 2013), neither have they tended to focus on how individuals create meaning about the past in acts of remembrance, which is one of oral historians’ main preoccupations (Hamilton and Shopes 2008). Rather, they concentrate on how a “collective memory”, often understood as “*one* generally shared

memory”, is produced, conveyed, mediated and accepted within a broader public (Strath 2008: 628, Hamilton and Shopes 2008).

There has emerged, however, a relatively recent trend in the field of oral history to consider personal memories in relationship with other types of shared remembering: “researchers are now able to say that an oral history source based on memory offers up insights into the interplay between the self and society, between past and present and between individual experience and the generalised account” (Abrams 2016: 81). Thus, the interplay between individual and social forms of remembering as well as between private and public forms now lies at the heart of a great number of oral history projects (Abrams 2016). Debates however continue about the real influence of public and shared memories on individual remembering, on the role of interviewees’ agency and on the importance of lived experiences within the field of oral history (Abrams 2016, Bornat 2013, Hamilton and Shopes 2008).

The research approaches followed by oral historians appear to fit well with the social constructive epistemology adopted in this study. Indeed, oral historians explore how individuals make sense of the past, but do not only concentrate on personal stories. They also broaden their analysis by scrutinising the influence of the shared forms of understanding and remembering available in the particular historical and social contexts of the research subjects, including for example the official, family and community memories or particular narrative genres and modes. Furthermore, oral historians also understand the process of meaning-making of the past produced in the interview as a result of the immediate interaction with the researcher and the imagined public or readers/listeners.

In this work, I follow the practices of oral historians and memory study specialists by understanding “memory and “narratives” as double-faceted. “Memory” is not only constituted by the passive act of remembering past experiences but also as the active, intersubjective process of making meaning in a particular historical and social context (Portelli 1991). Similarly, the concept of “narrative” also encompasses two main aspects. On the one hand, a narrative is “an ordered account created out of disordered material or experience” (Abrams 2016: 106). It can be conceived as a story with several units, a beginning and an end (Kohler Riessman 2008). At the same time, a narrative is an account that people create in a particular setting to make sense of experience, and construct and communicate meaning according to their social and historical environment (Chase 2003). Furthermore, I not only concentrate on

personal memories or narratives but also pay attention to the public narratives that are conveyed in the interviews. These are discourses about the past that are constructed and communicated in the public spheres, in contrast to other forms that remain in the private domain, although the boundary between public and private is not always clear-cut. These discourses are often spread via the media, such as the TV, internet, books and newspapers, in commemorations, celebrations or informal discussions.

4.2 Methods: a study mainly based on oral history interviews

Oral history interviews with Albanian-speaking former activists represent the main method used to collect the narratives regarding the mobilisation for this study. In this section, I will specify the different steps and decisions taken in the process of organising and conducting these interviews. I will also provide some details about the research participants. Finally, I will concisely outline the other methods used to complement the oral history interviews: limited participant observation, the collection of documents and online searches.

4.2.1 Interviewing former activists: an iterative process

Interviewee selection: theoretical and snowball sampling

When I started planning the interviews, my goal was to meet the former leaders and active participants of the mobilisation in Switzerland in order to develop a highly heterogeneous sample, particularly in terms of the past and present activists' orientation, their origins in the homeland as well as socioeconomic and educational background. I followed a theoretical sampling strategy which helped me to adapt the characteristics of the people whom I wished to interview during the course of the project according to the emergence of particular topics and explanations (Bernard 2006). While, at the very beginning of the study, I planned to concentrate on individuals who were active in the 1990s, I quickly realised that I also needed to incorporate those who were engaged in the 1980s. Indeed, for a large proportion of those who were active on behalf of Kosovo in Switzerland, the real mobilisation started at the end of the 1970s and especially in 1981, as the first demonstration of a long series took place in Bern. Although most of the former individuals I met continued to be active on behalf of their homeland and of the "Albanians" in Switzerland after the end of the conflict, they often perceive the post-war years as a different period of activism. Kosovo had been "liberated" so many of them then reoriented their attention towards their situation in Switzerland. For this reason, I decided to concentrate my research on Albanian-speaking individuals who were active in Switzerland in the 1980s and 1990s.

Another question that emerged relatively quickly was the possibility of including transnational activists who lived outside Switzerland, especially in Germany. After some reflection, I decided not to expand the sample outside Switzerland. One of the reasons for this was that the interviewees whom I met frequently appeared to follow a "Swiss" logic of belonging, based on the national, cantonal and communal levels. According to the interviews, during the early

1980s, the activists were extremely mobile across Europe and their activities and meetings were not necessarily delimited by national borders. However, as the organisations developed during the 1980s and later during the 1990s, they were modelled on the three-level structure of the political organisation in Switzerland: the federal, cantonal and communal levels. As a result, the interviewees usually introduced themselves as the president, secretary or member of a particular national, cantonal or communal committee or assembly. Furthermore, several interviewees also distanced themselves from activists living in other countries, although they had regular meetings with them. A common explanation was, for example, that the greatest burden of the mobilisation had been carried out by “Albanians” in Switzerland while those living in Germany were older and less active, with few financial means to support the struggle.

Following these initial choices, I started contacting “Albanian activists from the former Yugoslavia who had been active on behalf of their homeland in Switzerland”. I pursued several routes in order to contact these individuals, regularly reflected on their background and adapted the sample. I established a first list of activists whom I wished to contact based on the advice of Albanian-speaking acquaintances, the names of leaders that I saw in the archives, academic publications and journalists’ articles about the “Kosovo crisis” as well as the names of post-war leading figures of the Albanian-speaking population in Switzerland who often appeared in the media. The first interviewees whom I contacted in this way showed a great interest in my study and were happy to share their memories during an interview. They also introduced me to other former activists and invited me to various meetings, conferences and parties where I met other activists. I thus followed a snowballing method, as is often the case in oral history (Leavy 2011). In this way, I was able to contact an important number of former activists with different geographical origins in the former Yugoslavia, who reported different political orientations and paths as activists. The sample included mainly people who had settled in Switzerland, and also integrated seven people who lived in Kosovo and Macedonia. This classification should not be strictly understood, as several interviewees appeared to share their life between Switzerland and Kosovo.

Following this first round of interviews, I reflected on the sample and decided to refine it in order to include people who were less well represented. In particular, I attempted to include more female activists, individuals who had not occupied leading roles in the past and the present as well as activists who had belonged to smaller and less politically-oriented organisations. To achieve this goal, I asked the gatekeepers and earlier interviewees to help me to diversify my

sample. I also contacted new individuals who had links with the Albanian-speaking population in Switzerland, such as my PhD supervisor, my neighbour from Kosovo and Albanian-speaking scholars in Switzerland. These endeavours contributed towards increasing the heterogeneity of the sample.

Despite these efforts, the sample still relies mainly on men who occupied primary roles in the largest, most powerful organisations in the 1980s and 1990s and who remained very active in Switzerland and sometimes in Kosovo at the time of the interviews. Later, I realised that one of the reasons for my difficulty in recruiting less prominent individuals was the terminology I had used throughout the fieldwork to recruit my interviewees. Women in particular, but sometimes also individuals who engaged in activities that were not considered as purely “political” (for example, people engaged in cultural or humanitarian organisations) often did not recognise themselves as “activists” and so refrained from participating. In fact, the sample only includes five women.

Another problem was linked to the snowball method used: the interviewees often tended to indicate only the leaders of their own party. They sometimes also put me in contact with them, without asking my opinion. In other cases, I was directly contacted by some of the leading figures of the past and present Albanian-speaking scene in Switzerland who had heard of my research project and wished to communicate their own version of the past. This over-emphasis on the past and present male leaders in the sample also corresponds to the dominance of certain interpretations of the past over other, less prominent ones among the interviewees. The composition of the sample probably reflects the power relationships among the former activists in Switzerland and possibly even within the Albanian-speaking population in Switzerland as a whole.

The interviewees: who are they?

Interviews were conducted with 50 participants. Furthermore, I also contacted one more former activist who, after speaking to me on the phone, decided to email me his views on the past rather than participating in a face to face interview. Regarding the composition of the final sample, although it may have been helpful to provide a table containing the participants’ main characteristics, such as their place of origin and establishment, age, the date when they first arrived in Switzerland and their political affiliation, I decided to avoid presenting such precise details, since the majority of the interviewees are well-known among the Albanian-speaking

population in Switzerland and even beyond and so might be easily identified by their place of origin and age, for example.

Furthermore, the strict classification of the interviewees according to categories such as their nationality, origin and party/organisation membership was also avoided, since this would, in many cases, have been completely artificial, failing to respect the real situation of these activists or benefit the analysis in any way. For example, I met a man who held both a Kosovan and a Swiss passport, who considered himself as both an “Albanian from Macedonia” and Swiss. His relatives still lived in Macedonia, where he grew up, but he now lives with his wife and children in Geneva. Regarding party/organisation belonging, almost all of the interviewees joined more than one party or organisation during the 1980s and 1990s, although they sometimes hid their past political affiliations or preferred to emphasise one party over another. They sometimes belonged concurrently to different parties or organisations. Moreover, several interviewees felt very close to one or two particular organisations without have ever officially belonged to them. Given this blurred situation, I refrained from including a table that classified the interviewees according to these artificial categories. I will nevertheless provide some indications about the participants.

Although the research participants left Yugoslavia during the first three phases of migration (see chapter 2, section 2), most of them emigrated during the 1980s and 1990s. Among those who emigrated to Switzerland before 1981, I interviewed three men with a middle to high education level. Two of these had already been active within underground organisations in Yugoslavia. While one of these men left Yugoslavia on economic grounds, another had fled the country where he felt threatened and the third had a university education, had performed a skilled job in Switzerland and only became politically active during the 1980s and especially the 1990s.

All of the other research participants who emigrated to Switzerland before the 1980s had a low level of education and were *gastarbeiter*. These men became fully active on behalf of their homeland during the 1980s, when several political activists settled in Switzerland. A frequent explanation for this was that, as they came in contact with the “refugees” who were already active in Yugoslavia, they saw a chance “finally” to engage on behalf of their people and homeland. These men held different positions within the active movements in Switzerland. Most of them understood themselves as helpers regarding practical and field activities. They

tended to feel proud that they participated in demonstrations and were often responsible for the security of these events, but rarely participated in the decisions and discussions held at the top of the organisation. Only “intellectuals”, i.e. those with a higher education, were responsible for the high-level activities, which mainly appeared as an obvious and acceptable choice to these men. One of these early *gastarbeiter*, however, managed to reach a leadership position within one of the most important organisations of the 1980s. During the interview, this man echoed the common classification that opposed “workers” against “intellectuals”, although he did not include himself in the “worker” category.

Many of the interviewees had fled Yugoslavia in the 1980s following their participation in demonstrations and/or clandestine nationalist organisations. They usually feared arrest or execution by the Yugoslav security services, and tended to be young university students, although some had already completed their studies and acquired some work experience. They were sometimes accompanied by their wives, who were often also active on behalf of the national cause. Almost all of them had participated in underground groups in Yugoslavia and, in Switzerland, they tended to continue their activism and develop their organisation, within which they might assume high level functions. Many of them had already been jailed in Yugoslavia due to participating in unauthorised organisations. They were highly motivated, with a good network of activists in various European countries. Frequently, this network consisted of individuals whom they had met in Yugoslav prisons. These young men usually perceived themselves as “intellectuals”. While most of these “refugees” who fled their country in the 1980s remain politically active to date, some of them reduced their engagement during the 1990s.

A few of the interviewees also emigrated to Switzerland in the 1980s for economic reasons. While some of these “workers” would participate in demonstrations on behalf of Kosovo during the 1980s, they usually became fully active at the end of the 1980s, when the opportunities for engagement increased in Switzerland and Kosovo. These men had sympathy with many different organisations in the cultural, humanitarian, sport and political fields, but mainly joined the well-known, easy to reach organisations, like the LDK.

Numerous interviewees also left the country after Kosovo lost its autonomy at the end of the 1980s. The research participants who emigrated after the end of the 1980s reflect very different situations. First, several activists did not belong to any political or nationalist organisation but

supported or participated in the 1988-90 unrest and so ran the risk of being arrested. Second, some of the leading members of the different types of organisations, such as human rights groups and the LDK, feared being jailed or killed by the security services. Militants of underground groups, essentially the LPK, also continued to flee Yugoslavia. In Switzerland, several of these young men from the LPK ranks decided to pursue their education, despite the great difficulties (language, financial situation, diploma recognition). During the interviews, some of them referred to French intellectuals such as Camus or Bourdieu to clarify their points. One man even specified in the interview that, during his first years in Switzerland, he had two goals of equal importance: to contribute to the national struggle and to obtain a university education.

A few of these activists of the 1990s returned to live in Kosovo at the end of the conflict. In particular, several LPK members moved back to Kosovo or Albania during and after the war, although they often left their wife and children in Switzerland. Since then, many of them have occupied very high positions within Kosovo's government, administration and parliament. Many of these early activists have also spent the last few years living between Switzerland and Kosovo, and some have never resettled in Kosovo, as they feel well-rooted in Switzerland and do not see a future for themselves or their families in Kosovo.

Third, I also interviewed individuals who had lost their jobs because of discriminatory policies and were no longer able to make a living in Yugoslavia. Finally, I also met the children and wives who decided to join their fathers or husbands in Switzerland following the degradation of the economic and human rights situation. During the 1990s, all of these individuals were extremely active. Most of them were engaged with political but also cultural and humanitarian associations, and devoted their free time to meetings, demonstrations, publications writing and distribution, collecting donations, etc.

Some of the interviewees played very important roles over the years in a great many types of organisation, as they possessed highly valued skills and resources such as a good command of (Swiss) German and French, a computer (especially at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s), a good understanding of the practical aspects of the life in Switzerland (opening a bank account or a post office box) and technical knowledge related to the graphic and publishing fields. As of these interviewees supported and had contact with activists from all sides, displaying an impressive knowledge and judgement of the years of engagement.

The research participants originated mainly from Kosovo but also from Macedonia and Serbia proper. At the time of the interviews, most of them were still residing in Switzerland, although they all regularly returned to Kosovo where most of their relatives still live. In Switzerland, they occupied a great number of jobs, from social assistant and translator to taxi driver and bricklayer. Almost all of them are also still active on the transnational Albanian-speaking scene: they hold political positions in Swiss or Kosovar bodies, remain active within the same political, cultural or humanitarian groups, are engaged in integration and representative institutions in Switzerland and several are writers and journalists for the transnational Albanian-speaking world. Moreover, a great number of the former activists now participate in memory enterprises, as the organisers, participants and authors of commemorations, books about past leaders and organisations or comments left on the Internet.

Conducting the interviews

As oral history interviews constitute the most widely-used method for collecting data for this PhD research, my approach to the interviews was thus mainly guided by the practice of interviewing within the field of oral history. Following the widely-accepted instructions on oral history practice (Yow 2015), I began by acquainting myself with the mobilisation in Switzerland and the interviewees before starting the interviews. This included in particular searching for information about the respondents' past and present positions via the Internet, newspapers and academic books on the history of Kosovo. I considered this preparation as a way to facilitate my understanding of the situation, the participants and their experiences. It also helped me prepare an interview guide composed of a loose list of topics that I sensed were important (Yow 2015). The interview guide evolved over time. On the one hand, I adapted it from one interview to the other by integrating emerging issues and adapting it to the specific research participant. On the other hand, as I became more experienced in conducting the interviews, I developed less structured and precise guides.

To make the interviewees feel comfortable, I let them choose the place and time of the interview. Numerous interviews were carried out at the participants' homes, some at their workplace and a few in cafés. Frequently, I was then invited to dine with the interviewee and his or her family. The length of the interview proper varied between 20 minutes (the interviewee left for another meeting) and two and half hours. As my command of Albanian is insufficient to conduct a proper conversation, most of the interviews were conducted in French and German, with some hints of Swiss German dialects. On a few occasions, the interviewees asked their

children to be present in order to translate or assist in case of language problems. In only one case, a translator who was not a family member of acquaintance was present. This interview took place in Prishtina with a man who had only spent a very few years in Switzerland and whose German was rather weak. In this case, the translation was done in English.

Seven interviews took place in Kosovo, in the city centre and suburbs of Prishtina. The interview experience in Kosovo differed from that in Switzerland in two main aspects. First, although I had contacted the interviewees and obtained their agreement to participate a days prior to my trip, I encountered difficulties related to meeting several former activists in Kosovo. Some of my contacts cancelled our appointment at the last minute, another stopped responding to my calls and text messages, another decided to email me his answers instead of contacting me and one participant left the interview after twenty minutes, claiming an urgent appointment. I did not face such problems in Switzerland, where almost all of the former activists whom I contacted (except women) were very keen to participate and highly reliable. Second, the former activists established in Kosovo and Macedonia appeared to live within a climate of distrust. Almost all of the seven interviewees whom I managed to meet demonstrated a high degree of suspicion, providing short stories about their engagement that lacked detail. In response to my questions, I sometimes received answers such as: “I can’t speak about this”, “I don’t know how the information will be used and I don’t want to take any risks” and “in 50 years, we’ll be able to give more details”. In one case, the interview was arranged in a small, completely isolated restaurant, outside the city of Prishtina, which gave me the impression that my interviewee wished to hide. In Switzerland, although the interviewees also sometimes repressed parts of their engagement, they demonstrated far wider and more flexible boundaries.

In most cases, the encounter and subsequent interview with the research participants followed a similar pattern. We usually started the interview with a preliminary phase, during which I introduced myself. I broadly explained that I live in Bern with my young child and husband and originate from the French-speaking part of Switzerland. I then specified the objective of my research project, clarifying my interest in the mobilisation on behalf of Kosovo. I also usually mentioned that little research has been conducted to date about their engagement and more generally about Albanian-speaking migrants in Switzerland. I then told them that I was trying to meet former activists who participated in different organisations and explained how I had heard about them. During this initial phase, the participants often expressed great interest in my project, recognising the importance of such work. They sometimes also hinted at their current

position regarding their past engagement, expressing for example pride and honour but also often disappointment. On some occasions, they asked me questions regarding my working hypotheses and the orientation of my work, which felt as if they were testing me. Sometimes, the participants also told me about their current life interests; for example, explaining to me about their passion for jogging, painting or the theatre.

Then, the more formal part of the interview started. I always began by stressing that I was interested in the interviewees' own views of the mobilisation. In order to interfere as little as possible in their construction of meaning, I decided to opt for a mainly unstructured form of interview. I followed a framework similar to that which Alexander von Plato (2000) suggested. I first asked the participants to tell me the story of their engagement, which in most cases triggered a long, detailed narrative. In the second phase, I requested clarification about particular terms or explanations that I did not understand. In the third phase, I asked more specific questions that I had regarding their narrative that had not been addressed so far, often stemming from my own interest and curiosity provoked by the interviews. These were also topics I had prepared before the interview, and based on information I had collected or heard about the interviewee or topics discussed in previous interviews. These questions sometimes also triggered long narratives. Finally, I sometimes reached the recommended fourth phase, during which I confronted the interviewee with alternative explanations and arguments heard from other interviews or read in publications and on the Internet (von Plato 2000). In such a situation, the interviewees tended to respond with further arguments to support and strengthen their own position. They also often reacted by demonstrating a perfect awareness of other people's opinions, which signified to me that this topic was widely-known and debated among memory entrepreneurs. The interviews were recorded and followed some basic rules, such as starting with an open-ended question, not interrupting the narrator and attempting to lead an almost natural conversation that was not based on a question-answer type style (Anderson and Jack 1991). This meant, in particular, that I did not strictly follow the questions prepared for each interview but rather considered these as topics to cover during the interview (Yow 2015).

As I asked the participant to tell me the story of their engagement according to their own perspective, many of the participants appeared to have a fairly good idea of the story they wished to tell. It seemed that they had already prepared their narrative in advance or had already related it elsewhere. A few of the interviewees, however, mentioned that they had never told their story to anyone before and found it very difficult to compose a story with which they

seemed satisfied. Sometimes, they even asked me to provide them with precise questions because they felt unable to tell a story. Although I did not ask the participants to tell me their life story, they usually started the interview by describing their childhood or events that happened before they were born, then composing a narrative that ended with the present time. They, however, chose specific elements of their life that were usually linked to their engagement. During the interviews, the participants often showed me monographs about the history of Kosovo and diverse objects related to the mobilisation, such as pictures, flyers and the organisations' regulations and books printed during the 1980s and 1990s. They usually used these objects to prove a point in their argument or illustrate their story. These objects then sometimes became the topic of a long discourse, as they elicited memories of particular events, decisions and discussions. At the end of this more formal part, I would thank the participants and ask if they wished to discuss other topics or develop specific themes.

Although, when I started interviewing former activists, I thought that I was fully complying with the elementary guidelines provided by the oral history manuals, I soon realised that conducting satisfactory oral history interviews that provide insights into individuals' meaning-making processes required some practice and adaptation. During the first interviews, we spent a long time discussing facts and particular events that were largely irrelevant to uncovering the interviewees' subjectivities. They lacked values, feelings and interpretations. This relative failure was due to two main reasons. First, many of my early interviewees were activists in the 1980s, who were very keen to recall the details about their organisation's constitution. This usually included painting an exhaustive picture of all of the organisations that were active at the time, including their official names, challenging acronyms and changing leaders as well as the many splits and reformations that occurred, together with precise arguments, debates and dates related to these. Faced with this abundance of new, detailed information, my first reaction was to ask very factual questions in order to understand the stories I was recording and, in particular, identify the different actors, organisations and arguments of that time. Second, even with participants who constructed relatively simple narratives, most of my questions failed to elicit discussions that revealed the interviewees' perspective. In fact, I was so ready to compare the interviewees' answers with what I had learnt from my own academic reading prior to the interviews that I was unable to distance myself from my theoretical hypotheses and background information, and so unable of listening to my interviewees fully.

I had to “learn to listen in a new way” and, in particular, to engage with the interviewee by trying to understand their stories from their viewpoint rather than that of the background scholarship (Anderson and Jack 1991: 18). I thus had to review my interview technique completely:

Realizing the possibilities of the oral history interview demands a shift in methodology from information gathering, where the focus is on the right questions, to interaction, where the focus is on the process, on the dynamic unfolding of the subject’s viewpoint. (Anderson and Jack 1991: 23)

Accordingly, my goal became to allow the narrators to orientate the interviews based on their own decisions rather than my reading and theoretical concerns (Anderson and Jack 1991). I started trying to set aside my preoccupations stemming from the academic literature, and focused instead on eliciting moral values, judgements and comments. Another strategy was to concentrate on the “logic of the narrative”, by attempting to follow the logic of the story, the links between different and recurring themes as well as any internal contradictions (Anderson and Jack 1991: 139). I also learnt to concentrate on the narrator’s viewpoints and help them to focus on their perspective by employing techniques such as follow-up and probing questions on topics that I sensed to be important to them or that needed further explanation (Yow 2015). Another useful tool was to request clarification or interpretation regarding the specific meanings of words, expressions, reported experiences and objects (Yow 2015).

Thanks to this new approach, the interviews provided more space for the narrators to develop their own stories and viewpoints. Furthermore, as the project progressed, I became more aware of the types of issues that generally seemed to matter to the participants. I was thus able constantly to adapt the content of the interview topics and relate the collection of the interviews with the start of the analysis (Bernard and Ryan 2010).

After the recorded part of the interviews that took place in the participants’ homes, there was often an opportunity to discuss some of the objects present in the room. Pictures of Ibrahim Rugova, sometimes with the interviewee present, were often hung on the wall. Some former activists also displayed photos of “heroes” who had been killed during the 1980s such as Kadri Zeka and the brother Gërvalla who were considered as national “martyrs”. Numerous participants also possessed sculptures and statues of Skanderbeg as well as the black and red

Albanian flag. The interviewees told me what these figures meant to them, often seeing them as role models for their own lives or as national heroes. They also commented on the “imposition” of the new Kosovo flag by the International Community and related numerous personal memories about the “true” red and black Albanian flag. So, fieldwork did not only mean interviewing the former activists but also observing from the inside their homes and family relationships.

During this stage, the participants often also made interesting comments about the interviews. Some told me that they had suppressed some issues that they did not wish to reveal because they were too sensitive. Often, they also distanced themselves from the past engagement that they had just narrated and started judging it. For example, several participants recognised that they had made mistakes and should have pursued other types of activities and relationships. They especially deplored the divisions among the Albanian-speaking activists in Switzerland. Moreover, during this phase, the interviewees frequently became melancholic or critical. Often, they compared their impressive past engagement with their current situation and expressed disappointment at having never been thanked or recognised for their past acts. They also consistently criticised the current Kosovo rulers and the general political situation in their homeland. Many of the participants also mentioned the non-achievement of their dream to return to live in Kosovo and the difficulties they still encountered as “Kosovo Albanians” in Switzerland. In some cases, however, some of the interviewees also told me about their future political or economic projects in both Kosovo and Switzerland. Often, too, they proudly told me about their children’s achievements: several were university or *gymnasium* students, and some were relatively successful actors or musicians.

After that, following the interviews conducted in the participants’ homes, I often shared a meal with the interviewees and their family members. Often, these lunches or dinners were uncomfortable for me, and a division usually grew between the interviewee, their family and myself. Everyone would suddenly fall silent at the table. Furthermore, they often offered me wine but did not drink alcohol themselves, so that I felt strongly othered. Before leaving, I was usually offered some food to take for my husband and child.

In order to achieve a more profound understanding of the ways in which the interviewees made sense of their past engagement, I also met ten participants more than once. This allowed me to go beyond the factual information and detailed names, too often mentioned during the first

interviews, and discuss particular issues that remained neglected, unclear or contradictory. Clearly, meeting the participant for a second or third time helped to increase the trust between us, and these subsequent interviews tended to feel more relaxed. During these conversations, the participants often reflected on the first interview by reconsidering some of their former positions or adding new aspects to them. They also often told me anecdotes or examples in order to help me to understand particular norms and traditions they thought that an outsider should know about in order to understand their “culture”. Some of them became “key informants”, who helped me to understand some of the themes that remained obscure to me and so refine my ongoing interpretations (Bernard and Ryan 2010).

In order to offer a taste of the interviewees’ experiences and engage more deeply with the narratives told, it would be useful to reproduce some of the interview transcripts in this PhD thesis. However, due to confidentiality issues, I have decided to renounce to such an endeavour. Instead, I will provide three constructed stories, inspired by the interviews. These stories are similar to some form of “ethnofiction” as they combine elements of ethnographic research and fiction (Augé 2011).

For the great part, these stories consist of various discourses, facts, ideas, narrative patterns and details that were developed in different interviews and that I have slightly adapted. The objective is to provide a more detailed image of the types of narratives collected. I have chosen to provide not one but three short narratives in order to offer differentiated images of the interviewees’ narratives. Clearly, I recorded a far great diversity of interpretations and stories of the past than can be conveyed by the three stories presented here.

Story 1

In the first example, I attempt to replicate, in a condensed manner, a story that was told numerous times by former members of the LPK (or the “Lëvizja”). Almost all of the former LPK activists who were active until the end of the war produced a very similar narrative that transmits heroic values and similar story patterns. In particular, they always recall the same key dates and events regarding the creation and development of the LPK throughout the 1980s and 1990s, thereby conveying a fixed and formal memory of the LPK engagement.

Interviewer: Could you please tell me the story of your homeland engagement?

Interviewee: I think that my engagement originates from my family. My grandfather always told me about the massacres of the Serbs in Kosovo, when I was a child. My father wrote books that weren't allowed to be published, and he always spoke freely, even during the worst times of repression. Then, at school too, we learnt about the history of Serbia, how the Serbs were a blessed people, but nothing about the Albanians. The Serbs, they were directors and they all had great jobs. The Albanians, they took the lowest jobs, those that the Serbs didn't want to do. We were treated as second class citizens, but I wanted to live with dignity. So, my engagement has its roots in the accounts of the massacres and experiences of inequality that were building up over the years.

In 1977, I enrolled in a fine arts course in Prishtina. I started coming into contact with university students who were active. In 1978, we celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Prizren League. We were very proud to be Albanian. At the university, with other students and professors, we were forging our national consciousness. We participated in concerts and attended plays in Albanian. We sang revolutionary and patriotic texts. That was really something!

During the commemoration of the Prizren League, I joined an organisation and took an oath. I joined a clandestine organisation, the OMLK. The organisation was orientated towards Albania, our motherland. We listened to Albanian radio and watched films about the Second World War in Albania. These were examples that inspired us in our own struggle. We also exchanged illegal literature from Albania. We wanted Kosovo to join Albania. Later, we changed course and asked for Kosovo to become a republic within Yugoslavia.

In 1981, I joined the demonstrations, although they were not organised by the OMLK. We thought it was too early but then we took part in the demonstrations, we organised the people, we provided slogans to be shouted, like "Kosovo Republic". Many of my friends were arrested during the months of the demonstrations. I managed to avoid arrest. However, in 1982, I was living with X.B., who was an illegal immigrant in Kosovo. He was living underground, waiting to leave Kosovo, because the police were looking for him. His name was given by an activist from Gjilan. I was arrested with him. I first went to jail in Prishtina, where I was harshly treated, then I went to the prison in Pozarevac, in Serbia. They tried everything to make me talk: physical torture and psychological pressure. I was tortured by the Serb and Albanian police, but I didn't give any name and I resisted. I was condemned to three years. We organised the resistance in prison. Ninety percent of the prisoners were Albanian. I met activists from every

town, which helped us to unify the movement with people from different regions and organisations. The other prisoners became like brothers to me.

In 1985, I was released. A day after my release, the secret police came to question me at home. They threatened me with further jail sentences, and also asked me to spy for them. After that, I feared that they would also follow me and try to find out more about my friends. I thought that my friends were in danger because of me, so I decided to leave the country as soon as possible. After spending some days underground, I arrived in Switzerland. I had a relative who was working in Risch, in the canton of Zug. From there, I tried to get in touch with E.K., X.E. and others. I knew their names and I knew that they were active in Switzerland. I then moved to Biel, which was the centre of the movement at the time. I received asylum there after two years. I always worked, all kinds of job. With my money, I helped my friends. I also spent it on organising demonstrations or other activities.

In Switzerland, I was a member of the redaction of the journal *Zëri i Kosovës*. I also participated in and organised demonstrations in Bern, Zurich and Geneva. The movement was united until 1986. It then split into two branches: one “with the address” and the “other without address”. I belonged to the one “without address”. We wanted more changes, more work with the broader Albanian population, a modern organisation not only based on family links. After the split, we started to reorganise the branch “without address”. We then held a series of important meetings. On 8 November 1986, in Zurich, we had a consultative meeting and I was chosen, with E.K. and X.T., to draft a new organisational model. We then organised the first grand assembly in July 1987. It lasted three days and took place in three different cities in Switzerland for security reasons. In 1989, a meeting took place in Kosovo. In 1991, we also had a consultative meeting in Kosovo and, in 1993, an assembly in Macedonia. In 1993, we decided to open the “homeland calling” founded to organise the war. You can find the history of the movement and these dates on the Internet.

Throughout the years, I was always a member of the LPK’s leading committee. I was mainly based in Switzerland, but I also sometimes worked underground in Kosovo. Sometimes, I was just a leader for the diaspora and sometimes I was a leader for the entire LPK, also in Kosovo. The organisation worked this way: the leaders were in Kosovo and, when it was impossible to conduct the work there, then the competences were transferred to the leaders in Europe.

Actually, most of the work was done in Switzerland because the Kosovo members were arrested all the time.

After 1993, we considered that we were at war, although we openly declared our engagement in the armed struggle on 28 November 1997. After 1993, we prepared the armed struggle: we informed the members, started to sensitise the public to our cause, recruited new members, collected donations and participated in other activities related to the struggle. We started with small units in Kosovo that grew bigger over time. We never thought that the peaceful resistance organised by Ibrahim Rugova and the LDK would lead to liberation. Actually, for us, this was not a pacific resistance but rather a movement that sought to pacify the Albanians, to have a docile people. Our idea was to start with small attacks and no frontal confrontation and then to hope for help. We were unsure whether we would attract international support or not but, as we were conducting a just struggle, then we received that help.

During the war, all LPK members were active on behalf of the UCK. I was mainly responsible for the funds and also participated in other activities in Switzerland. I wrote articles in the *Zëri i Kosovës* as well as communiqués. It was hard not to be in Kosovo at the time. I was unable to fight with my comrades in arms in the field. It would have been far easier for me to be in Kosovo than in Switzerland. I was prepared for the armed struggle and was ready to give my life for our freedom but someone had to stay in Switzerland, to collect donations and inform the world about the situation in Kosovo.

The liberation of our country and people is a story that started long ago. For us, it is clear that Kosovo and also the territories in Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro are part of Albania. We have never accepted that the territories were divided in 1912. We have always felt occupied in Yugoslavia. It was always clear for us that we are a nation. With the liberation of Kosovo, we succeeded in achieving what other generations before us had striven to achieve.

Today, the Albanians in Kosovo do not speak about the engagement of the diaspora. They have abandoned those who struggled on behalf of Kosovo. The people are different there; they only think about their own interests.

Story 2

In the second example, I sought to reproduce an interview conducted with an individual who emphasised his membership of the LDK as well as the role of the LDK in the homeland engagement from Switzerland. I did not hear one typical life trajectory among the LDK supporters, but rather a small number of shared personal stories. While some of the LDK members in Switzerland regarding the beginning of their activism as their participation in underground organisations in the 1980s, many others relate this to the coming to power of Milosevic and the loss of autonomy. Numerous LDK supporters in Switzerland tend to share specific values that they attribute to the LDK as well as reference to Ibrahim Rugova. I tried to retrieve here one of these characteristic narratives that I heard.

Interviewer: Could you please tell me the story of your homeland engagement?

Interviewee: I come from the countryside, close to Istog. My parents were farmers, I also worked a lot on the farm, but I received a proper education to become a teacher. I went to boarding school as a teenager, so I became a teacher. I taught English in a high school. I had to follow a strict programme. American literature was almost unavailable. I also tried to teach freedom to my pupils; this was not part of the course. I wanted them to be critical, to think for themselves, and not think as the regime wanted them to think. I was free in my mind.

I had a big family. My salary, together with the farming work, were insufficient to live a normal life, so I decided to go abroad to work. I left Kosovo for Switzerland in 1987. I just wanted to spend one or two years in Switzerland. I did all kinds of jobs, especially on constructions sites. I lived very modestly in Switzerland. I sent the money to my family at home. They were able to buy a tractor and build a new house.

The situation in Kosovo became difficult at the end of the 1980s. Everything was difficult under the Serb dictatorship: clothes, food, medical assistance...Milosevic had closed the schools. All of the Albanians in Switzerland, those who were fleeing the repression in Kosovo and the workers, decided to become organised on behalf of the homelands so, on 29 April 1990, together with some colleagues, we took the initiative to found the LDK in Switzerland, at a meeting in Olten. S.H. was elected president of the LDK Switzerland. He had been the director of an important state company in Kosovo. He was a very literate person. Then, thanks to the help of many activists, we founded sections across the whole country. Every canton had sections

and under-sections. Throughout Switzerland, there were 55 sections and more than 1,000 active members.

Our main goal for the LDK Switzerland was to support our people in Kosovo. The people in Kosovo lived under extreme forms of repression. They had no rights. Everything was closed: the newspapers, the schools... We wanted our people to live a normal life, like other people, with the help of democratic methods. We had had very bad experiences with the socialist regime and wanted to give everyone a chance to express themselves, as in Switzerland. We thought about collecting money to support the schools and the teachers in Kosovo. We opened an account and collected the so-called 3%. Everyone paid it freely, without pressure. We also supported the health services in Kosovo with this money. For us, it was important to conduct our activities legally. We never did anything illegal. We placed ourselves under the government in exile that exercised financial control. Everything was clean, contrary to what happens today in Kosovo or in other organisations of that time that were illegal. We wanted everything to be legal. We were very active. Another method was to organise demonstrations in the countries where Albanians lived, mainly in Switzerland and Germany. We also published newspapers and information booklets for the public and the Swiss authorities. We also had direct contact with Swiss institutions; for example in the federal commission for foreigners.

The LDK Switzerland was very close to the LDK Kosovo and the historical president, Ibrahim Rugova. The LDK leaders in Kosovo were all well-known scholars. The people trusted them and the LDK became a very strong movement. President Rugova informed all of the diplomats and all of the states about the situation in Kosovo. Our goal was to achieve independence but without war. Rugova demanded that we solve the Kosovo problem without violence. He knew Albanian history very well. We lost many wars but, even if we sometimes won them, we then lost at the negotiation table. Thanks to the LDK and President Rugova, we changed this approach. He always called for a protectorate or for NATO support and, in the end, this is what we achieved. Fortunately, we had the support of Europe and the USA; otherwise, it would have been very difficult.

In 1990, I founded the local section of the LDK in the town of L, so I became president of the section and, after that, I was re-elected every two or three years. And I am still president of the section. I was also the president of the canton for ten years. Then, I joined the national presidency of the LDK Switzerland four years ago. I decided to join the LDK movement to do

something for my people. I'm happy that I can do something for other people. I also participated in the creation of a cultural association in my region. We invite here theatre groups, singers and authors.

During the war, I didn't hear from my mother for five weeks. I first heard that she'd been killed and then I finally saw her on CNN. It was a very painful time. It was very difficult to be away from my family. It was also difficult to live here during all those years, because everyone was expecting our financial support in Kosovo and not everyone was able to provide such support. Moreover, we had normal jobs during the day and then were spending our evenings and weekends on activities on behalf of Kosovo. We weren't paid for that. We had no time for family or friends. We just gave everything for Kosovo. These were very exhausting years.

Our goal was for Kosovo to achieve independence. This is our success. We didn't mobilise for our self-interest, but rather for Kosovo. Now, our interest is to be integrated here in Switzerland, to work here for ourselves and our families, not for Kosovo. I've founded a small company here, I take care of financial transactions for Albanian people in Switzerland and I give them financial advice. The people in Kosovo shouldn't ask anything of us anymore. They should achieve what they want themselves and be responsible for their own lives.

Story 3

In the third example, I sought to include the narrative of a person who focused on her support for the overall Kosovo cause, but not for one unique or dominant organisation. Moreover, I tried to adapt the narrative content to cover some of the typical topics that featured in the women's interviews, such as their families and their relationships with their husbands.

Interviewer: Could you please tell me the story of your homeland engagement?

Interviewee:

I was born in a small village close to Lipjan. My father was a craftsman. He repaired horse equipment. He worked for a Serb man, a respectable man. I was one of eight brothers and sisters and, except for the youngest one, we all went to university. It was very important for my father that his children studied, because he did not have the chance to study himself. I studied Albanology at the University of Prishtina.

One of my brothers spent five years in prison, in the 1980s. He then fled the country; he lives in Switzerland. He was active in the Lëvizja. He knows a lot. You should talk to him. I have a sister who lives in France. She married a man from Kosovo there. The rest of the family lives in Kosovo. My parents are still alive but they have health problems. I visit them every year.

My husband was active on behalf of the Albanian people in Kosovo. He went to prison several times in the 1980s. In 1987, as the situation became risky again for him, we left Kosovo and came to Switzerland. Here, we first lived in very bad conditions and had no asylum decision from Bern. We were waiting a long time in an unsettled situation. Finally, we received the decision, as I was pregnant with my first child. I have three children.

My husband and brother were active in Switzerland. They didn't belong to the same organisation in Switzerland. They disagreed and often argued with each other. I was always a bit in-between. At the beginning, my husband, together with some colleagues, had the idea of starting to collect money in the diaspora. The government in exile did not exist at the time. As soon as the government was formed, the money was handed over to Bukoshi, in Germany so we then worked for the Fund. And I also helped him. I kept records of the donations. So many people participated and gave money. That was a lot of work. He also tried to publish a small newspaper for the Albanians in Switzerland. It was a different type of newspaper, with another orientation from the previous publications; not so left-oriented. He was also an LDK member for several years and constantly travelled across Switzerland and in Germany. He attended many assemblies. We also had many important people from Kosovo and leaders who lived in Germany and the USA who visited us. They came to our home and I cooked for them, at any time, even during the night. I knew all of the important people within the movement. I listened to their discussions. I also attended demonstrations in different cities in Switzerland. I've been everywhere. I remember the Place des Nations in Geneva well. During the demonstrations, we felt so emotional and were happy to show our solidarity with our brothers and sisters at home.

I also had my group of women. We collected money for Kosovo. We cooked for all of the parties and celebrations. We also took care of the children, teaching them, for example, poetry and organised plays. I also spent a lot of time at the Albanian association. We talked about the situation in Kosovo, organised cultural events and collected donations. Especially during the war, we spent a lot of time there, together with our country people.

At the beginning, we belonged to the LDK, but also had contact with people from the Lëvizja. We attended demonstrations that were organised by all of the different organisations. We did not care about the orientation; the most important thing was to gather many participants, to show our solidarity with the people at home. I supported Rugova until he went to visit Milosevic in Belgrade during the war. But then, this was too much, He shouldn't have returned to Kosovo after that. He should have quit politics. When Rugova started at the end of the 1980s, he was courageous and was the only intellectual who spoke up. In Kosovo, being president is a cursed position. Rugova started very well. He had the entire people behind him, but there are limits to how far the people are willing to submit without protest. I see the same phenomenon with Hashim Thaçi. He started well but, now, he really upsets me.

I also remember now, I participated in the demonstrations in 1981 in Kosovo, in my hometown and in Prishtina. I was a student at the university at the time. My brothers and university friends joined in the protests. The demonstrations were thrilling, very emotional. Our goal was for Kosovo to become a Republic. At the time, there were more Albanians in Yugoslavia than Montenegrins, but they had their republic. That was unfair. Once, immediately after a demonstration, I was brought to the police station for interrogation. They asked me if I had participated in the demonstration and if I knew anyone who had participated. I said I had nothing to do with the demonstrations; I had never demonstrated; I was just visiting a cousin in Prishtina. They asked again and again but I kept denying everything; then I was released. But after that, I was suspended from the job I had just started, as a teacher.

My husband was closely engaged on behalf of Kosovo but he didn't have time for the family during all those years and now he still spends a lot of his time in Kosovo. With some colleagues, they are building up a new movement or party because they disagree with the current political situation in Kosovo. He is very disappointed with the current political leaders, and with the international presence. I take care of the children here in Bern and I work for older people and clean houses. The children go to a *Gymnasium*. It is good, all what we did for Kosovo, and I'm very happy that Kosovo is free, but we could've had a different life in Switzerland. I have suffered a lot. I've never been happy with my children here because I thought about the children in Kosovo who had such a terrible life.

These three condensed stories report different topics that are very typical of the narratives of homeland engagement: particular values, judgments, relationships and activities. They also

partly reflect the structure of the narratives that were recorded. The narratives of the former LPK activists are especially noteworthy because most of them are very similar in terms of the structure and time perception expressed. This seems to demonstrate some form of agreement among former activists as well as the crystallisation of one specific narrative of the past. Another striking element is the distinction that is commonly drawn by the interviewees between different Albanian-speaking activists. Oppositions are created, for example, between the “workers” and the “intellectuals” or between the “Marxists” who operated “illegally” and the legal and democratic “LDK”. Some of these distinctions are discussed in the articles presented.

4.2.2 Other methods: participant observation and document collection

Apart from conducting oral history interviews, I also engaged in limited participant observation. As my research unfolded and I developed a network of contacts among the former Albanian-speaking activists, these individuals started inviting me to different events. I thus attended political party meetings, a book presentation, commemorative ceremonies and several parties celebrating Albanian national day as well as the anniversary of Kosovo’s independence. During these events, I habitually introduced myself as a PhD student interested in researching the homeland engagement among “Albanians” in Switzerland. I told the people whom I met that I was interested in hearing many different voices and views regarding the past mobilisation. In some cases, however, I did not have to introduce myself, as I was introduced by the organisers of the event to the rest of the audience. As the participants knew the reason for my presence, they were usually very welcoming towards me. In many cases, they did not seem surprised that a “non-Albanian” student wanted to learn more about their past engagement. Often, strangers approached me on those occasions, asking questions about my work and offering suggestions or advice on whom I might find it interesting to interview. After these events, I made notes, writing down the names of the people I had met, some of the conversation, comments on the general atmosphere and the people present as well as things that surprised me.

My participation at these various events assisted my collection and analysis of the oral history interviews (Bernard 2006). On the one hand, at these events, I met several participants whom I later interviewed. Furthermore, being part of these happenings made me more aware of the type of questions I might ask (Bernard 2006). On the other hand, several experiences and situations surprised me; for example, on two occasions, I was the only female present at the political meetings of one particular party, and I was also surprised to see political leaders, still holding office since the 1990s, congratulating each other for their important role in the past mobilisation

in front of a large, apparently highly supportive audience. My participation at these events helped me when analysing the interviews and increased my confidence regarding some of the arguments I was advancing. They also made me focus on several important topics, such as the role of gender, particularly masculinity.

I also collected various documents that have been published in the last years to commemorate and keep trace of the work of the various organisations and activists in Switzerland as well as different books and brochures about the history of Kosovo that were circulated at the events that I attended. These publications were often commissioned by the organisations themselves or written by Albanian-speaking journalists and historians who had been part of the mobilisation. Although these publications played a relatively marginal role in the research, they offered hints about the authors' self-portrayal and self-reflection, that could also be included in the interviews and analysis of the oral history interviews.

Finally, I visited several Internet pages written in Albanian by journalists and commentators that present arguments and narratives about the history of the engagement from Switzerland. I also found several articles indicating the critical relations and contentions between the political figures within the Albanian-speaking population in Switzerland. These contentious relations appeared often to be grounded in a long antagonism that started in the 1990s. Reading these Internet debates and critical articles helped me to understand the burden of the past in the current relations between several leading figures of the Albanian-speaking political world in Switzerland.

I thus used these other research methods as means that supported the preparation, conduct and interpretation of the oral history interviews. During the analysis phase in particular, they helped me orientate my investigations and confirm or refute some assumptions.

4.3 Ethics

In this section, I will discuss the most important ethical issues encountered during the course of this research. I understand ethics as “norms for conduct that distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour” (Resnik 2015). More specifically, ethical problems challenge the responsibilities, values and rights of the study participants in relationship to the achievement of particular goals (Ward 2011). I will also outline the issues of reflexivity and positionality.

4.3.1 Protecting the research participants

In social research and especially in oral history projects, considerable stress is placed on protecting the research participants (Thurgood 2003, Yow 2015). Ensuring the participants’ wellbeing and security is even more central in the case of studies that deal with sensitive subjects (Chamberlain and Hodgetts 2018). Ethical issues concern chiefly consent, anonymity, confidentiality and potential harm (Chamberlain and Hodgetts 2018). In this study, particular measures were adopted in order to ensure that the research participants understood in what type of research they were engaging, to preserve anonymity and confidentiality, and to avoid causing any harm to them as a result of their participation. I will describe the main measures adopted and issues encountered in the following paragraphs.

Before starting the interviews, I carefully explained to the participants the goals of the research and the possible ways in which their interviews would be used. I also provided them with a written document that described the objectives of the study and asked them to sign a consent form. The first objective of the consent form and the accompanying document was to ensure that the interviewees were informed about the research goals and main procedures and that they voluntarily decided to participate in the study (Flick 2014). Hence, apart from explaining the goals and scope of the study, I also described the conditions for the interviews: asking the participants for permission to record the interviews and informing them of their right to end the interview or not answer questions at any time. On this aspect, some participants informed me that they were unwilling to speak about some facets of their past engagement because they might still face legal consequences related to their actions.

Researchers have pointed to two main issues concerning participants’ informed and voluntary consent. On the one hand, it is often impossible to explain in detail the objective and content of the study to the participants (Yow 2015, Mason 2018). This was particularly difficult in the

case of this study, whose scope and research questions progressively evolved throughout the interview process. Another difficulty stemmed from the position of numerous interviewees who understood my work as a form of acknowledgment and celebration of their past engagement. I often had to confront such views and highlight the more academic objectives of my research.

On the other hand, researchers have often pointed to the participants' 'free choice' to take part in interviews (Yow 2015). Some individuals might, for example, not feel able to refuse a researcher, who may be seen as a scientific authority (Yow 2015). This situation was less problematic in this study, as the great majority of those contacted about an interview welcomed my interest in their past engagement and were happy to participate. Furthermore, some activists who had heard about my research also took the initiative in contacting me first. In some rare cases however, the interviewees were directly asked to participate by their friends or partners. In these circumstances, it was more difficult to judge whether they fully voluntarily participated or felt socially obliged to meet me. I noticed one particular case of a woman who appeared very uncomfortable throughout the interview. She had been recruited by her husband who had insisted that she participated, despite her lack of enthusiasm. In fact, her husband seemed to pride himself, as an open-minded, tolerant and modern man, on his wife participating in the interview.

Second, the consent form should also inform the participants about how their interview data will be protected (anonymisation, confidentiality) and stored, both during and after the research. I thus informed the participants that the study would guarantee their anonymity and confidentiality: their names and identity would not be revealed. Most of the participants, however, claimed that they firmly stood behind their statements and comments and that it was unnecessary to conceal their identity. In fact, many of them wanted their names to be cited. Furthermore, as I was conducting the interviews, I had not planned any future storage strategy for the data collected and the transcriptions after the research ended. At the time, data-sharing and data management plans were not given the same importance as they are today in Switzerland. Because of this lack of provisions, and given that these interviews include sensitive information, I decided that I would share the audio versions and transcripts only under very strict conditions. An essential condition would be that the research participants give their consent to this.

Another important topic was to consider the potential direct effect of the interviews on the respondents (Abrams 2016). When I started the interviews, I was not fully aware of the distress that these individuals had undergone. After meeting the first activists, I began to realise that the interviews were triggering painful memories, such as of imprisonment and torture, a perilous flight from Yugoslavia, murder, the disappearance of close family and friends and war experiences. I never directly asked the interviewees about such traumatic events, but many of them intentionally reported these to me. While I reacted initially to these with slight unease, I soon realised that these memories were often framed in a heroic rather than a traumatic light. They were the standard, celebrated components of the activists' biographies in certain nationalist groups. Beyond this performance of heroism and bravery, however, it is far more difficult to assess whether or not the interviews had a direct negative impact on the participants.

Finally, the writing phase of the research also raised various issues in terms of possible negative impacts on the participants. First, several of the narratives that were collected contained information that could potentially have caused harm, if published (Yow 2015). For example, numerous interviewees harshly criticised other former activists and organisations: they recalled past fights and alleged treachery, made slanderous comments against them and accused them of criminal acts. It would have been irresponsible of me to publish such remarks because, on the one hand, they often appear defamatory and, on the other, they would have contributed little to the research while worsening any existing antagonism and reputation. In other instances, the interviewees admitted having engaged in low-level illegal activities in Switzerland. Although such practices have mainly been reported in media articles and other specialised reports, I chose generally to conceal them, despite the anonymity and confidentiality of the research. In some borderline cases, however, it was difficult to decide whether evidence could be published or not. Several participants, for example, mentioned their plans and discussions about building up a Kosovo Albanian armed force from Switzerland but had never put them into practice.

Second, while the anonymity of the interviewees is easily secured, it is far more difficult to guarantee complete confidentiality. On the one hand, most of the interviewees are well-known within the Albanian-speaking population in Switzerland. Hence, they can be easily identified on the basis of simple information about their origin, party affiliation or role in the mobilisation. On the other hand, the articles published need to reveal such information in order to contextualise the interviewees' statements.

Further issues concerning the relationship between the participants and the researcher are touched upon below.

4.3.2 Researching a contentious topic: reflexivity and positionality

According to oral history theory, research based on interviews involves the encountering of many subjectivities (Abrams 2016). First, the oral history interview is a product of the interaction between an interviewer and a narrator, each of whom possesses his or her own perceptions, sense of self, embeddedness in the present and past cultural discourses as well as agenda (Abrams 2016, Maynes, Pierce, and Laslett 2008). Second, when interpreting and analysing the interview experience and the recorded narrative, the researcher is confronted with his or her own approach and perspective, that might differ from those of the interviewee concerned (Borland 1991, Maynes, Pierce, and Laslett 2008). Finally, the presentation of the narratives collected, usually in the form of publications, is compiled by authors with an audience in mind (Borland 1991), and will affect how readers understand such narratives and the participants' situation (Borland 1991). In order to understand these intersubjective encounters, it is important for researchers to reflect on their own position (Abrams 2016).

First, as an interviewer, I introduced myself as a PhD student who was interested in collecting the participants' stories about their past engagement. I also usually mentioned the fact that I have a small child and a husband. I introduced myself similarly when I was invited to ceremonies and celebrations, except that I mentioned my status as a "mother" and "married woman" only on appropriate occasions. Furthermore, as I conducted most of the fieldwork in German-speaking Switzerland, I also indicated that I came from the French-speaking part of the country, which was quite clear anyway, given my accent.

I was welcomed as a Swiss French-speaking female academic by a population mainly constituted of men who were older than I. In fact, except in Kosovo, where I sensed a great degree of suspicion, I was usually warmly welcomed by the interviewees and meeting participants. In many instances, I felt that the fact that I was a *female* researcher did not matter to these mainly male interviewees and discussion partners. Indeed, it felt as if I had managed to become "like a man" or to have reached a specific status as an "honorary man" (McAllister 2013, Schwandner-Sievers 2009), which allowed me to enjoy the same opportunities and be considered like a man. On several occasions, I had the feeling that I had definitely crossed the gender boundary. This happened clearly once, for example, when I was invited to the annual

national day-long meeting of a particular party. In the morning, the numerous party members and political or scholarly guests gathered to discuss political questions and especially celebrate the past engagement. In the afternoon, a more festive programme was planned, with music and food. I happened to be the only woman present at the morning programme, while women and children joined us in the afternoon. Furthermore, while the men welcomed me into their specific sphere, such as during this party event, I often also felt excluded from the women's world by the women themselves. This happened particularly when I was conducting interviews with the male participants in their homes. Their wives were also often present in the house during the interviews, and sometimes brought us drinks and snacks like cake, but extremely rarely sat with us. Often, too, they cooked a meal that we shared after the interview. During and after the interviews, it seemed that several of the wives appeared unfriendly and severe towards their husband, while almost ignoring me, which felt quite perplexing. As a woman and particularly as a recent mother, I felt close to these women, a sentiment that however did not seem to be mutual.

How did I manage to become an "honorary man"? In fact, I did not intentionally seek this position when I started conducting the interviews and attending meetings. This status was probably imposed on me due to my status as a "scholar" and probably also because of my "Swissness". On the one hand, I soon noticed that I was interviewing and spending time with people who regarded higher education as a key value in determining a person's symbolic position (see also: Thiessen 2007, de Rapper 2008). On the other hand, it seemed that my "Swissness" also helped me to attain a higher position. In a way, I was able to exploit my status as a "honoured foreign guest" in my own country (Schwandner-Sievers 2009: 190). In fact, being a "foreigner" visiting the world of the Albanian-speaking migrants in Switzerland, I was treated like a guest. Hence, the research participants suppressed my female status by enhancing my position as an "academic" and a "Swiss guest" (Schwandner-Sievers 2009). Moreover, some of the former activists were also so keen for their mobilisation to be recognised that they would have probably welcomed any researcher.

Not all of the former activists I met, however, displayed the same attitude towards me. In some cases, I rather felt as a "naïve, non-threatening wom[a]n" (McAllister 2013: 168). This happened mainly in two situations. On the one hand, the interviewees sometimes chose to present very simple, well-known facts and arguments without making the effort to dig into more subjective memories and interpretations. Neither did they affirm any debateable or

controversial ideas, which made their narrative insipid and bland. On the other hand, other interviewees delivered versions of the past that lacked any form of credibility and that, for example, concealed well-known facts that were not in their favour. They would have surely told a different story to another researcher, especially one with a more insider position. I sensed that these were the types of narrative provided to someone considered to present a great knowledge gap and a poor sense of discernment.

Furthermore, the participants were fully aware of the negative image of the “Albanians” in Switzerland. Often, after the formal recorded part of the interview, they complained about the negative stereotypes they face. At the same time, all of them reported past and present contact with Swiss individuals who were working for humanitarian and human rights organisations and churches, as well as migration and development experts or researchers. They often acknowledged the respectful behaviour of these people and possibly associated me with this category of considerate people.

Moreover, various participants had a university education, although not all of them had completed their studies. Although most of the people whom I met did not enjoy a high socio-economic situation or a valued job in Switzerland, they were active in the transnational Albanian-speaking scene and enjoyed a higher status there. As my questions tended to focus not on their situation in Switzerland but rather on their transnational engagement, they could thus enjoy an authoritative status during the interview. Despite the fact that I took the initiative, as a *Swiss* PhD student, therefore, to organise the interviews and initially shape them with my description of the project and questions, the relationship that developed with the participants was not necessarily unequal in my favour. Indeed, I often had the feeling while I was conducting the formal part of the interview that my conversation partners were speaking as experts and teachers who had to explain the past engagement to an ignorant outsider; for example, many times, the participants re-oriented the conversation: “If you want to really understand what happened, you shouldn’t ask this, but rather ask why...” However, as soon as the interview was over and we changed topic, several participants appeared to lose confidence and the atmosphere sometimes even became awkward. It is as though they were brought back to a humble present after visiting a heroic, more valued life. Furthermore, although I had read the available academic literature, journalistic articles and archives on the subject before starting the interviews, I quickly realised that the narratives told were far more complex than I had envisaged. Thus, I probably also communicated my own confusion and puzzlement during the

interviews, which might have contributed to the teacher's attitude of some of the interviewees. In fact, during most of the interviews, I was the outsider and the participant was the insider.

Moreover, as the project progressed, I discovered a relatively strong antagonism between the proponents of two opposing strategies of engagement during the 1990s. On the one hand, numerous interviewees defended the peaceful strategy of resistance against Serbia. These were mainly members and sympathisers of one of the most important Kosovan parties, the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK). On the other hand, various former militants championed a more aggressive form of engagement against Serbia. These interviewees were the former members of an underground group called the Popular Movement of Kosovo (LPK) (for the further development of these organisations, see chapter 2 section 3). It was occasionally challenging for me to maintain a neutral position between the two main sides as the relations between them still seemed sometimes tense (see for example Rexhaj 2013). In particular, I sometimes found it difficult to maintain a trusting relationship with some (but not all) of the LDK leaders, as I had the feeling that they were trying to manipulate me in order to present a better image; for example, I was once invited to a national meeting where I was formally introduced to a large audience as a university professor who was conducting research on the LDK, which was untrue. On the same occasion, a photo was taken of all of the participants, including me, and then added to the party's website, although I had opposed the publication of the picture on the Internet. Following this experience, I became far more suspicious of the intentions of some of the LDK research participants. On the contrary, I was very surprised by the interviews conducted with the former LPK members who, it seemed to me, offered a more trustful relationship. Several of the interviewees, who had played important roles in relation to the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), informed me that they were unable to reveal all of the details they knew about the KLA. They asked me to understand that some topics could not be covered in the interview because of potential legal consequences. Although I was unable to discuss every possible topic, I found this position clearer and more manageable.

In fact, during most of the fieldwork, I strove to maintain as neutral a position as possible between the different personalities I met, plus their organisations and discourses. This problem is known in French as "encliquage": the risk of the researcher being assimilated into a "clique" (de Sardan 1995: 20). On the one hand, the researcher might be overly influenced by this "clique" and take up its ideas while, on the other, he or she might be denied access to other "cliques" (de Sardan 1995). As I wished to have a chance to hear a variety of voices, I could

not afford to show myself as taking part. Many of the interviewees endeavoured to prioritise their narrative of the past over other interpretations as the most appropriate and as the one to be remembered by the audience who would read the publications derived from my research. As I was concerned about my self-positioning between the two main discursive sides, the non-violent and the armed forms of resistance, I sometimes neglected to pay attention to other interpretations that tried to avoid this opposition.

Second, when interpreting and analysing the interview experience and the recorded narrative, the researcher is confronted with his or her own approach and perspective, that might differ from those of the interviewee (Borland 1991, Maynes, Pierce, and Laslett 2008). In a widely-shared article entitled “That’s not what I said”, Borland (1991) underlines the possible disagreements between the interviewee and the researcher’s interpretation of her memories. She describes the process of analysis and writing following the interview as the “construc[tion] of a second-level narrative based upon, but at the same time reshaping, the first”. She (Borland 1991: 63-64) explains:

Like the original narrator, we simultaneously look inward towards our own experience of the performance (our interpretive shaping of it as listeners) and outward to our audience (to whom we must display a degree of scholarly competence). Presumably, the patterns upon which we base our interpretations can be shown to inhere in the ‘original’ narrative, but our aims in pointing out certain features, or in making connections between the narrative and larger cultural formations, may at times differ from the original narrator’s intentions. This is where issues of our responsibility to our living sources become most acute.

The analysis of the interviews started immediately after speaking with the informants through memoing. I took notes on the conduct of the interview, possible topics to explore further, questions and anything that had occurred that appeared strange to me. I thus started to develop a more “fixed” interpretation of the narratives on paper. My immediate understanding and feelings regarding my recent encounter largely constituted my initial interpretation of the interview. It also partly relied on my limited theoretical background. In this initial phase, the atmosphere of the whole encounter and the different people who sometimes intervened often struck me. While sharing meals with my interviewees, I was also often puzzled by the social exchanges and eating customs that were very different from my own, although I did not consider

the research participants as very different from the people I met in my everyday life. These situations made me aware of how our perceptions of everyday interactions may differ.

The further analysis of the interviews revealed a misfit between the interviewees' agendas and my intentions (Maynes, Pierce, and Laslett 2008). Many of the interviewees regarded my research as an opportunity to have their engagement recognised and celebrated by a broader audience. They also hoped to see *their* version of history dominate. Clearly, I did not make any promises in this regard when I was conducting the interviews, but also did not give precise indication to the interviewees about how I would interpret their narratives and which topics were most important to me. In fact, I was still unclear about these issues. As I was developing the first analysis concepts and explanations, I started moving away from the interviewees' immediate words and diving into my own interpretations. This implied linking the data collected with different theories and concepts and situating them within a broader historical background as well as social and discursive environment. At the same time, I also, slowly but not intentionally, distanced myself from the participants.

In the next phases of the analysis, I also needed to confront my own curiosity about particular topics emanating from the interviews and my own personal interests related to the requirements of academic institutions and scholarly journals (Maynes, Pierce, and Laslett 2008). This meant finding a way to make my personal focus and interpretation fit the scholarly rules and literature. Finally, journals' rules and reviewers' comments also played a vital role in dictating how I orientated my articles and part of their content.

4.4 Analysing the data: inductive approaches

The analysis of the data chiefly started after most of the interviews had been transcribed, although the data collection and interpretation were an iterative process, conducted simultaneously (Leavy 2011). From the beginning, I felt that I needed to find a guiding thread throughout my work. While considering various leading scholarly concepts, I decided to focus on ethnicity and nationhood in relation to the other topics of gender, performance and “social identity”.

As a result of this initial phase of interpretation, at the end of the fieldwork, I had developed a relatively clear idea about the type of topics I wished to explore in my articles. I knew that demonstrations were an important topic because these were frequently mentioned during the interviews. Furthermore, the relationship between nationalism and performance was quite popular in the academic world and scholarly publications at the time. Throughout the research process, I sought ways to account for the diversity and richness of the narratives collected, despite the presence of some highly influential and antagonistic discourses. I also always felt the need to retell the stories I had heard and still felt attracted by the historians’ approach of constructing narratives of the past. At the same time, I was puzzled by the interviewees’ need for recognition and sought ways to address this issue. Finally, as already mentioned, it was also important for me to cover topics linked to questions of gender.

Although I had in mind specific topics that I wished to scrutinise when I started the analysis, I broadly followed an inductive approach, starting from the data and developing the themes, categories and explanations (Creswell 2013). I thus started the analysis of each of the three articles by immersing myself in the fully-transcribed interviews as well as my field and interview notes (Shopes 2002). The result of this thorough reading was a list of possible questions, repeated themes and explanations. It also helped me to narrow down the focus of the analysis; for example, it was during this phase of reading that I decided to scrutinise the construction of masculinities, given the highly limited presence of women in the narratives.

I analysed the data with a focus on two forms of inductive strategies. On the one hand, I wished to underline the main themes and categories emanating from the data. I thus opted for a strategy inspired by grounded theory that is commonly used by oral historians in the field of social sciences and rests on the transversal coding of the data, thus doing mainly thematic analysis (Leavy 2011). On the other hand, I was interested in preserving the entirety of the narratives in

order to see their logic and chose to draw on methodological insights from narrative research, thus conducting thematic narrative analysis (Riessman 2008). Given the great number of interviews collected, I decided to use software, HyperResearch, to code the data. This helped me to keep better track of the analysis process by developing more easily codes across the interviews, combining and reflecting on the coded segments and navigating between the different interviews more easily.

For the first and third articles, I adopted a similar strategy. On the one hand, I analysed the interviews following a transversal method inspired by grounded theory, as described above. On the other hand, I also considered each interview separately. First, I started coding the interviews and my notes following an “initial coding” strategy (Charmaz 2014). I carefully read the transcriptions and notes, sorting out the data with a very open mind and aiming not to exclude any future possible theoretical framework and explanation (Charmaz 2014). As the analysis advanced, the codes were regularly renamed and adapted, which implied a back and forth movement between the early analysed data and the newly-examined ones. In particular, I became more aware of the importance of “values coding”, applying codes to data “that reflect a participant’s values, attitudes, and beliefs, representing his or her perspectives or worldview” (Saldana 2009: 131). These codes are relevant for this research because they provide hints at the shared discourses available in the individual’s social environment (Saldana 2009). I kept notes of the process of developing and refining the codes in an “analytic memo” (Saldana 2009: 118). Writing these notes helped me to pause and reflect on the emerging categories and their interrelationships.

After completing the “initial coding” of all of the interview transcriptions and notes, I considered all of the codes that had emerged and started reorganising them. I grouped them thematically and reflected on the relationships between and within the categories. I also considered which categories were relevant to the particular article and which could be abandoned. As the main categories and themes emerged, I chose the main topic of the article and rearranged of all the categories around this central topic (Saldana 2009). These decisions were based on my personal interests and understanding that developed during the research process. They also rested on the theoretical and background literature on the topic.

Second, I also relied on narrative research to analyse the data. The interviews were crafted in the form of narratives: to make sense of their past engagement and communicate it to me, the

interviewees naturally told me many different types of stories, such as their life story, the “history of the Albanian people” and the story of how they first became involved in activism. Following narrative theory, I consider the narratives “to organize a sequence of events into a whole so that the significance of each event can be understood through its relation to that whole” (Elliott 2005: 3) Thus, I felt, from a very early stage, that I needed a way to analyse the interviews and the various narratives they contained in their entirety without breaking them down into units through a transversal analysis, as in grounded theory. There are many different narrative analysis approaches (Elliott 2005), however, so the challenge was to pick the most appropriate method(s) for the data available and the type of explanations I was seeking. This led me to explore many methods throughout the research. One of the main problems encountered was that narrative analysis is often applied to a small number of texts and consists of time-intensive close reading that pays attention to syntax and language features or to the structure of the narrative (Abrams 2016). Such methods were inappropriate for the number of interviews I wished to analyse. I developed different methods for analysing the data collected. Most of the strategies I used relied on “thematic analysis”, concentrating on the content of the text rather than on its structure or performative aspects (Kohler Riessman 2004: 706).

In the first and third articles, I read through the interview, identifying and noting down the narrator’s “basic storyline” composed of the elements of his or her narrative that appeared important to him or her (Maxwell and Miller 2010). In a second phase, I grouped the narratives according to their thematic similarities and differences. At the same time, I refined the transversal categories. Moving back and forth between the two methods helped me to identify the most important categories in my data as well as develop a core theme of enquiry. At this stage, I combined the two methods in order to provide a central focus to my article and start working on a first draft.

For the second article, I chiefly renounced any analysis across the interviews and decided to consider each interview as a whole. This article, however, developed after several rounds of transversal coding that I partly used for the other articles or abandoned before undertaking any further analytical step. I thus started the analysis with many categories, questions and possible explanations in my mind. Again, I turned to HyperResearch in order to analyse the interviews, given the great amount of data to process. As I progressed through the interviews, I developed a specific approach that combined different methods. For this reason, I moved many times between the various interviews.

Broadly, in the first phase of the analysis, I pursued three different strategies. First, I observed the structure of the interview by considering the sequencing of the narrative with a focus on “the broad storyline, including episodes and turning points in the plot” (Kohler Riessman 2008: 68). Second, I identified the main narratives and themes communicated within the interview and labelled them, such as “the Albanian people in History” or “the Albanians in Switzerland”. Third, as in grounded theory, I applied “initial coding” to the entire interview, with a particular focus on “value coding” (Saldana 2009). In a second phase, I considered the findings emanating from each of the three steps and grouped the main themes and narratives as well as the “values codes” within the same interview. I ended up with a small number of categories. In a third phase, I reflected on the relationships between the main themes, narratives and values as well as with the findings on the structure of the interview. Again, I grouped these results into a small number of relevant topics. At that stage, I started broadening the analysis by introducing theoretical concerns, thus shifting to a more deductive type of approach, and setting the interviews in their social and historical contexts. I then conducted the same three-step method for each interview. Finally, I organised the findings emanating from each interview in a table, which allowed me to compare them and finally draw a gradient typology (Kohler Riessman 2004). I then started writing the article on the basis of this typology.

5 Articles

5.1 Articles' backgrounds and contexts

The research scrutinises how former activists, who massively engaged on behalf of the national cause in the 1980s and 1990s, construct and communicate meanings about ethnic and national belonging in the narratives of their mobilisation. Via the stories of their past engagement, they shape their particular ways of belonging to the “nation” without ever defining these directly (Cavarero 2000). The articles presented in this PhD focus particularly on three specific forms. They scrutinise how feelings of attachment to the “nation” emerge during demonstrations, how different discourses of national belonging arise as a response to exclusion and a lack of recognition, and how gender categories participate in shaping the national constructions. Here, I will briefly review how I operationalised in each article the scholarship presented earlier. The three articles reproduced in this thesis relate the story of the former Albanian-speaking activists in Switzerland, from the celebrated years of engagement to the search for a new status.

5.1.1 Demonstrating for Kosovo: relating the glorious times

The first article scrutinises how the research participants related their belonging to the “Albanian nation” via their participation in demonstrations. As I was conducting the fieldwork, many of the former militants were actively celebrating the first demonstration on behalf of the national cause abroad that was organised on 11 April 1981 in Bern. The memory entrepreneurs celebrated the demonstrations as glorious events in which activists joined in the streets of diverse cities and united around the idea and feeling of Albanianess. They mainly organised commemorative events as well as publications that recalled the engagement of several activists. As many interviewees passionately spoke about the demonstration of April 1981 and the further protests that took place across Europe, I decided to examine this topic in more detail.

Recently, numerous scholars of nation and nationalism have claimed that nationhood and ethnicity cannot be studied solely as discursive categories of practice to classify people or look at the world, but their capacity to generate collective phenomena should also be explored, such as a shared consciousness, solidarity and the feeling of belonging to a unique group called a “nation” (Calhoun 1997, 2007, Brubaker and Cooper 2000). Experts of performance and ritual have in particular attempted to demonstrate “how national sentiment is experienced” (Taylor Woods and Tsang 2014: 2).

In line with the recent literature, the first article focuses on the marchers' points of view in the nationalist demonstrations organised on behalf of "Kosovo" in the 1980s and seeks to understand the successful "collective effervescence" developed in these performances. It analyses the narratives of former leaders, organisers, helpers as well as marchers who did not play an important role in the preparation and conduct of the demonstrations. As such, the research pursues a comprehensive approach that does not artificially separate the perspective of the "organising elite" from that of the "banal demonstrators", as usually presented in the literature. It thus makes it possible to perceive and understand the emotional heights created in these performances through different perspectives and offer a more complete analysis. At the same time, it makes it possible to glimpse the distinctions constructed by the interviewees themselves between different categories of activists.

Furthermore, I also paid particular attention to the methodological challenge of studying affect in relationship with national identification. Via an oral history approach that emphasises the importance of narratives of the self, I attempted to reconcile the conventional opposition between, on the one hand, discourse and the mind and, on the other, emotion and the body (Barbalet 2001, Wetherell 2012, Athanasiou, Hantzaroula, and Yannakopoulos 2009, Koivunen 2010). Hence, I focused on the links between the emotions and the narratives.

5.1.2 Shifting the boundaries of belonging: fighting non-recognition in Kosovo

The second article scrutinises how the former activists respond to their lack of recognition and lower status in Kosovo in their narratives of homeland engagement. The inspiration for this article was the regular remarks made by the research participants, especially before and after the recorded parts of the interview. Many expressed great disillusion regarding Kosovo. They spoke of their sometimes-problematic relationships with their acquaintances in Kosovo. Almost all of them harshly criticised the new political forces in the country. They mentioned feeling abandoned by the new state and also complained of the lack of acknowledgement for their enormous engagement. In fact, they felt symbolically degraded after the end of the mobilisation and were trying to find solutions in order to recover. I thus sought to explore their different strategies to response to this negative transnational position in their memories.

The literature developed in the last few years regarding the responses to stigmatisation and discrimination on the basis of ethnic or national criteria has frequently resorted to boundary work theory (Wimmer 2008a, Lamont and Mizrahi 2012, Witte 2017). Scholars have sought

to explain how external boundaries affect individuals and groups' identification and, in turn, how these stigmatised individuals or groups pursue different strategies to change undesirable boundaries or modify their position in relation to them (Wimmer 2008a). In the field of migration studies, several researchers have chiefly attempted to explain migrants' responses to stigmatisation in their country of settlement (see for example Duemmler, Dahinden, and Moret 2010, Morosanu 2012, Dahinden and Zittoun 2013). Scholars have only rarely appraised the responses given to transnational forms of stigmatisation.

Contrary to the majority of the recent literature on the responses to stigmatisation, this article concentrates on stigmatisation in the country of origin, rather than the country of settlement. This specific focus stems from the transnational perspective adopted in this study that makes it possible to distinguish new phenomena that could not otherwise be perceived. This approach also makes it possible to take into account all of the possible discourses of national membership that are present across diverse social fields, from local to the transnational spaces (Dahinden, Duemmler, and Moret 2014).

Furthermore, by applying a boundary-work perspective, the article seeks to analyse both facets of the stigmatisation and exclusion processes. On the one hand, it shows how the research participants perceive the erection of boundaries in Kosovo that exclude or belittle them. On the other hand, it also analyses their boundary-making strategies to improve their negative position.

Finally, in this article, the boundaries between the groups are marked on the basis of the "narratives of liberation of Kosovo". Scholars of nation and nationalism have long analysed the role of memories as the "cultural stuff" that can be used to draw boundaries and create distinct national groups (Armstrong 1982, Barth 1969, Smith 1999a). In the particular case of memories crafted by migrants, the narratives of the past also testify to their self-representations and situations in transnational spaces (Lacroix and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2013).

5.1.3 Crafting the new "Albanian man" in Switzerland: fighting for a more favourable image

The third article examines how former activists seek to construct a more positive image of the "Albanians" in Switzerland while integrating gender categories. This article stems in large part from my observations of the gender relations exhibited during the fieldwork. On the one hand, I noticed that some (but not all) of the political organisations of Albanian-speakers in

Switzerland are overwhelmingly composed of men. For their part, women often participate in parties, cultural representations or humanitarian work. On the other hand, I was struck by the difficulty of finding women who were willing to be interviewed. I thus decided to explore questions of masculinity into more detail.

Since the 1980s, scholars have endeavoured to demonstrate that men and women are differently incorporated in national projects (Nagel 1998, Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989). While feminist researchers initially concentrated on highlighting the different roles played by women in national projects, they then started exploring the links between nationalism and masculinity. In recent years, scholars have, in particular, demonstrated the multiplicity of masculine constructions and their differentiated relations with national ideas. They have also called for greater consideration of the emergence and transmission of gender constructions in transnational spaces.

The article mainly relies on the two last strands of scholarship in analysing the construction of national masculinities within the memories of homeland engagement. It attempts to convey the multiplicity of masculine constructions and their interdependency. It also observes the interrelated influence of the different sources of interpretation produced and conveyed within the national, international and transnational levels in the construction of the “Kosovo Albanian man”. The article not only demonstrates how Albianness is partly constructed in gendered terms, but also shows how the former activists endeavour to create new identity models in order to enhance their status in Switzerland post-independence.

5.2 Demonstrating for a Kosovo Republic in Switzerland: emotions, national identity and performance

Farquet, R. (2014), 'Demonstrating for a Kosovo Republic in Switzerland: emotions, national identity and performance', *Nations and Nationalism* 20, 2: 277-296

ABSTRACT. National ceremonies are often designated as a means of crafting or strengthening the 'national identity' of the participants, thanks to their potentially emotional effects. This article seeks to examine in greater detail the relationship between emotions, 'national identity' and performance. First, it presents evidence from the literature to demonstrate the crucial role played by emotions in the process of national identification, then highlights the conditions responsible for generating these. Second, it explores these issues by adopting an oral history approach in relation to the demonstrations organised by Albanian-speaking migrants from Yugoslavia in Switzerland in the 1980s. This approach makes it possible to explore issues from the participants' own perspective. The marchers' narratives not only provide a taste of the demonstrations' excitement but also provide clues about the conditions that lead to the emotions they experienced. They are particularly insistent about locating the demonstrations within a much broader life picture.

KEYWORDS: Albanian nationalism, emotions, identity, Kosovo, performance, Switzerland

For decades, scholars have explored the power of performances, such as national day celebrations, parades and commemorations, to shape or strengthen the national identity of the participants. By 1912, Emile Durkheim had already recognised the sensual and emotional effect of rituals by speaking of 'collective effervescence' (Durkheim 1995/1912: 218). In recent years, various scholars have begun to scrutinise the real influence of such performances. Noting that not every ceremony successfully leads to such a state of exaltation, they have questioned their impact on the audience (Elgenius 2011b, Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008, Mookherjee 2011, Uzelac 2010), as well as on the organisers themselves (Verkaaik 2010), and have also sought to find ways to appraise success and failure, often agreeing that a performance can be judged to be successful or efficient if it achieves emotional outcomes (Alexander 2006, Fisher-Lichte 2005, Uzelac 2010). Scholars have also sought to determine the criteria that explain success or failure (Alexander 2006, Collins 2004, Uzelac 2010), highlighting, for example, the national historical circumstances and narratives offered (Elgenius 2011a) or the perceived authenticity of the performance from the audience's perspective (Alexander 2006, Uzelac 2010).

Although scholars have recently started to question the impact of performances of a national character and have highlighted the importance of emotions in this domain, much research still needs to be carried out in order better to understand the relationship between emotions, national identity and performance. In this article, I seek to explore the conditions leading to a successful performance, a designation that can be broadly applied, according to the literature (see Alexander 2006, Mookherjee 2011: S5, Uzelac 2010), to those performances that manage to create an ‘affective experience’ (see Alexander 2006, Mookherjee 2011: S5, Uzelac 2010). I scrutinise this issue by adopting an oral history approach and with the help of a particular case, that of demonstrations organised by Albanian-speaking migrants from Yugoslavia in Switzerland in the 1980s. I thus spoke with former nationalist militants who described to me their time as demonstrators in Berne, Geneva and Zurich, as well as in other European cities about thirty years after the marches. These protests sought to call attention to the political and human rights situation in Kosovo as well as to the fate of ‘the Albanian people’ in Yugoslavia. This approach allows me to apprehend the participants’ own experience of how it felt to be a demonstrator and also explore their personal understanding on how performances manage to produce emotions.

This article will start with some methodological notes and then examine the theoretical considerations related to two main areas: the links between emotions, national identity and performance, and the potential conditions responsible for generating emotions during performances. As a second step, I will concentrate on the case of the nationalist demonstrations organised by Albanian-speaking migrants from Yugoslavia in Switzerland in the 1980s. I will first present a brief overview of Albanian nationalist activism in Switzerland in the 1980s, then the core of the article will highlight the relative importance of the demonstrations for the interviewees, the stories recalled about the demonstrations and the life trajectories of the marchers. I will conclude with some observations on the utility of the oral history approach, highlighting the relevance of apprehending individuals’ own subjectivity.

Methodology

In contrast to other scholarship on emotions, identity and performance, which often relies on present-time ethnographic case studies (see for example Juris 2008, Verkaaik 2010), or on documentary research (Ismer 2011) and literature review (Uzelac 2010), this article is mainly

based on oral history interviews. These interviews form part of a larger project on the homeland politics among Albanian-speaking migrants from Yugoslavia in Switzerland between 1981 and 1999. Thus, the interviewees spoke about the demonstrations as part of a broader account in order to describe their activities as nationalist militants and enable me to understand the reasons for their engagement. Fifty people were interviewed for this research between 2008 and 2011. Of these, 36 had emigrated to Switzerland before 1990. Although their reasons for emigrating are not always clear-cut, it can be said that, of the 36 participants, 20 had left Yugoslavia on security grounds, and 16 for economic, professional or family reasons. Moreover, 32 of the interviewees had attended at least one demonstration during the 1980s. The sample includes some organisation leaders as well as more banal protesters who did not formally belong to any organisation. Of the 32 individuals who had participated in demonstrations, eight were interviewed more than once. Each interview lasted up to two and a half hours. I started the interview by collecting the participant's life story and then continued with more precise questions, for example, on the demonstrations' course and the participants' perceptions and feelings about it. Moreover, some interviewees provided me with valuable photos of the demonstrations that prompted further questions and helped me to visualise the marches.

Although I was not particularly interested in emotions at the start of the project, they quickly became central to my research as the interviews often became emotional in tone and content. Indeed, I witnessed more than once respondents crying or shouting while recalling intense moments in their lives, such as the death or imprisonment of their relatives or the declaration of the independence of Kosovo.

Of course, the stories I gleaned during the interviews and the emotions transmitted thereupon did not convey the interviewees' lives as experienced, but related rather to a construction of the past, moulded according to the present-day circumstances through a collaborative process with the interviewer (Eastmond 2007, Portelli 2006). The present viewpoint determines what is being remembered, how topical and temporal relationships of memories are linked, and what types of representation of memories are recollected (Rosenthal 2007). Moreover, the narratives offered were jointly created between myself and the respondents, in particular settings, such as the interviewees' home, offices and restaurants. Among other things, my position as a female researcher with a non-Albanian or Yugoslav background and my feedback influenced the content and form of the stories (Cortazzi 2001). Being a total outsider had varying effects on my respondents. Some of them felt grateful for, and honoured by my interest in their lives. They

also sensed that my position as an outsider and a researcher guaranteed some degree of neutrality, that encouraged them dig back into their memories in a trusting relationship. Others warned me that many facts were still not public, so due to possible legal consequences, they preferred to avoid tackling certain topics. Such respondents thus maintained a very cautious, rigid stance throughout our discussion.

While the interviews do not give me direct access to the actual demonstrations, I can glean important information about the present-day understandings and interpretations of the participants as well as the role they believe the marches have played in their lives. Indeed, these interviews offer me precious insights into militants' subjectivity; as stated by Alessandro Portelli (1991: 50), '[o]ral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did.' Moreover, as these stories not only concentrate on particular demonstrations but on a longer period, usually a life course, they can be inserted into a much more complete picture. Indeed, in order to make sense of their engagement, the interviewees told me very similar stories in which demonstrations and emotions played an important role.

While such an approach provides a richer understanding of the demonstrators' identification processes, it can certainly not be considered an exhaustive or absolute one as subjective evidence is necessarily uncertain and difficult to interpret (Maynes, Pierce, and Laslett 2008). Thus, based on this small number of interviews, this article does not aim to provide fixed recipes for a successful performance nor to make generalisations about the links between performance, emotions and national identity but rather to explore the possible contributions of oral history towards answering questions related to this domain of research.

Linking emotions, national identity and performance

In recent years, emotions have often been identified as an important ingredient for a successful performance that seeks to produce national identification. I propose here to clarify the interplay between these notions by specifying the links between emotions and national identity and highlighting the possible means of bringing about emotions in performances.

Generally, when scholars use the term national identity in relation to performances, they tend to refer to what Brubaker and Cooper (2000) characterise as 'strong conceptions' of collective

identity that entail a sense of both deep homogeneity and sameness among the group members and intense difference vis-à-vis outsiders. More specifically, qualifying the particular phenomena found in the field of nationalism, Brubaker and Cooper (2000: 19) introduce the term ‘groupness’ which they define as: ‘the emotionally laden sense of belonging to a distinctive, bounded group, involving both a felt solidarity or oneness with fellow group members and a felt difference from or even antipathy to specified outsiders.’

Like Brubaker and Cooper, many scholars recognise emotions as an essential component of national identity and nationalism. For example, Guibernau (2007: 11) defines national identity as: ‘a collective sentiment based upon the belief of belonging to the same nation and of sharing most attributes that make it distinct from other nations.’ Malesevic (2011: 282) asks: ‘how is it possible to make a person feel so attached to an abstract entity [the nation] that he or she allegedly expresses willingness to treat and cherish this entity in the same way one cherishes his or her close family?’ Thus, national identity relates not only to cognitive processes of ‘identification’ and ‘self-understanding’ (Brubaker and Cooper 2000) also to feelings and passions (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, Hearn 2006).

Moreover, emotions are not only constitutive elements of national identity, but also a means that contributes towards strengthening these cognitive processes. Two main phenomena take place. First, emotional circumstances contribute towards easing the interiorisation of symbols and knowledge. Indeed, when emotions occur, especially strong ones, they are often experienced as out-of-the-everyday routine. This extraordinary occurrence might signify to people that they are undergoing something important, and that they should pay attention (Stryker 2004). Moreover, acute emotional experiences also facilitate people’s familiarisation with symbols and the acquisition of knowledge by making these more intimate and salient (Ismer 2011, Kertzer 1989). In addition, when inscribed in one’s memory in particularly strong emotional circumstances, symbols and cognitive messages might also become more enduring because they leave a firmer imprint. Second, emotions can contribute towards forming people’s self-understanding and highlighting the salience of a particular self (Stryker 2004). This is especially the case as deep emotions are often perceived as immediate and out of control. Because of such spontaneity and genuineness, people confer a special meaning on the event and draw assumptions about who and what they are (Stryker 2004).

In order to create such emotional circumstances, and especially to develop feelings of ‘groupness’, states and other nationalist actors across the world are frequently signalled as resorting to national ceremonies (Elgenius 2011a). Through the use of various theatrical-like components, they usually play the emotional card and attempt to turn the notion of ‘citizenship as category’ into a ‘citizen as felt identity’ (Berezin 2001: 86).

The different actors who organise such performances dispose of numerous means to emotionalise these ceremonies. It is, for example, common for nationalist leaders to deliver speeches that integrate selective memories and devise historical narratives that seek to generate emotions and influence people’s self-perception (Duijzings 2000, Svasek 2006). Symbols represent another potent means that is capable of generating affect. As they stand for something other than themselves, they have the power to evoke particular impressions, attitudes and happenings (Edelman 1985). Finally, performances can evoke emotions through different sensory tools, involving stylised marching and dancing, sound and visual devices, singing and rhythmic chanting (Bell 2009, Kertzer 1989). Rather than being recounted or shown something, one is led to experience it (Bell 2009). This last element relates to the frequently sought experiential facet of ritual-like national ceremonies that seek to instil a sense of cohesion among the citizens.

However, as I mentioned earlier, various scholars have noted in recent years that not every performance successfully leads to such states of exaltation or the production of national identity. For example, Verkaaik (2010: 69) explains how naturalisation ceremonies in the Netherlands that were conceived as ‘a kind of disciplinary initiation ritual’ for new citizens of foreign origin did not seem to affect their targets, but rather the civil servants who performed them. How, then, can a performance be so successful that it manages to establish emotional circumstances that help to internalise symbols, values and cognitive messages and produce such emotions as closeness, and the feeling of belonging to a ‘bounded group’ (Brubaker and Cooper 2000: 19)

The success of performances

As many scholars have recently pointed out, in order to understand why some performances with a national(ist) character successfully achieve emotional outcomes, it is important to scrutinise not only the show offered by the organisers and main actors, but also its reception by

the participants and audience (Mookherjee 2011, Uzelac 2010). More specifically, there have been two main types of explanation of the success or failure of particular performances.

First, the performance itself and, more precisely, its different components have most frequently been employed to explain its success or failure (Alexander 2006, Elgenius 2011a, Schieffelin 1985). Elgenius (2011a), for example, notices the importance of a 'suitable narrative' and a 'unifying myth' in order to engender a successful national day. For Schieffelin (1985, 1998: 198), whether or not the performance can 'bring it off' depends on the interaction between the various participants in the particular situation. In the same vein, Alexander (2006) notices that a performance is determined by each of its components existing together – *background symbols and foreground scripts, actors, observers/audience, means of symbolic production, mise-en-scène and social power*. For example, in a demonstration, the participants are drawn into the performance on the streets by the marching in close ranks, chanting of slogans, and displaying of symbols. Solidarity, commitment and identification with a cause arise from this encounter in a particular setting with the help of various dramaturgical devices. The rather elusive notion of authenticity seems to be the criterion that determines whether or not a performance can bring about 'emotional connection of audience with actor and text' (Alexander 2006: 55, Uzelac 2010). Indeed, the performance has to be convincing and felt as 'true' (Alexander 2006) by both the participants and observers.

Second, success and failure have also been explained in terms of various elements that play a part outside the performance itself. For many scholars, the initial emotional state felt by the participants when they attend performances plays an important role. Indeed, the performance manages to generate strength when it builds on initial fears, uncertainties, inner struggles and expectations and converts them into a sense of solidarity and participation via dramaturgical means (Kertzer 1989, Schieffelin 1985). A precondition for the often-sought 'collective effervescence' (Durkheim 1995/1912: 218) thus seems to derive from the initial emotional state of the participants. When there is no sense of common initial affect or tension, shared emotion cannot be generated (Collins 2004). In addition, scholarship has also demonstrated that a society's self-perception might affect the emotional response of its members. For instance, Ismer (2011) has shown, through a sporting example, how the evolution of the 'German national self-image' (2011) between the Football World Cup in 1974 and 2006 respectively impacted on the atmosphere among the German football-following public. While, in 1974, the climate could have been described as 'reserved', by 2006, it had attained 'collective effervescence'

following various campaigns that managed to make national identity more prominent within German society (Ismer 2011: 554).

To recapitulate, according to the literature, various elements can explain the chances of a performance proving successful in producing emotional outcomes and hence ‘groupness’ (Brubaker and Cooper 2000: 19). On the one hand, the burden of success lies on its various components and interactions, from the actors to material symbols, and their encounter. On the other hand, success is also dependent on features found outside the performance, such as the emotional state of the participants before joining the crowd or the national self-image of the society to which they belong.

With these theoretical considerations in mind, it is now possible to examine the case of the demonstrations organised by Albanian-speaking activists from Yugoslavia in Switzerland in the 1980s and to scrutinise the emotions and identification processes that took place there.

Albanian nationalist activism in Switzerland in the 1980s

At the end of the 1970s, a couple of Albanian activists from Yugoslavia, who had only just arrived in Switzerland, started to mobilise an Albanian-speaking population that had been hitherto almost completely unfamiliar with political questions. At that time, nearly all Albanian-speaking migrants from Yugoslavia were guest workers who were in Switzerland to make a precious living for their families back home. They usually had minimum schooling, came from the countryside, and were disengaged from politics. Besides, while they were identified within the larger Swiss population as Yugoslavs, many did not object to this designation, although their Albanian or more local origins also mattered to them.

When the first figures of the Albanian nationalist movement found refuge in Switzerland, they realised that, in order to pursue their struggle, they first needed to sensitize their ‘co-nationals’. This meant making them understand the ‘situation of the Albanians’ in Yugoslavia, convincing them of the injustices committed against them, and showing them the solution. With this aim in view, they organised demonstrations as well as informational and cultural meetings, disseminated literature on the ‘Albanian nation and history’, and printed newspapers and various propaganda material. Demonstrations were the most visible, lively aspect of the mobilisation. The first took place in Berne on 11 April 1981, exactly a month after the start of

nationalist unrest in Kosovo that was violently crushed.¹ Before the end of May, other protests had been organised in Zurich, Stuttgart, Dusseldorf, Munich and Geneva. Dozens of marches followed across Europe during the next few years. While only a small crowd of protesters gathered during the first marches², several thousand participants had joined the marches by the end of the decade. The demonstrations were mainly held to draw public attention to the situation of the ‘Albanian people’ in Yugoslavia. This was especially difficult in the 1980s, a time when Yugoslavia, as a communist State, enjoyed a privileged position in the West thanks to its neutral position during the Cold War and its more liberal regime.

One main movement was responsible for mobilising Albanian-speaking migrants from Yugoslavia abroad and organising demonstrations throughout the 1980s: the Popular Movement for the Republic of Kosovo.³ While the movement counted members throughout Europe, the bulk of its activists and its most influential leaders resided in Germany and Switzerland. It sought the creation of a Republic of Kosovo that would assemble all of the territories inhabited by Albanian-speakers in Yugoslavia. At the time, Kosovo was a Province within the Federal Republic of Serbia. Requesting the status of a Republic meant becoming equal to other Republics, such as those of Serbia and Croatia. The organisation renounced the old dream of unification with Albania, the ‘mother country’, as this now appeared unrealistic. Although the movement’s main ideology was nationalism, it was also strongly influenced by a strict Marxist-Leninism, as defended by the Albanian Head of State Enver Hoxha, who vehemently criticised Yugoslavia’s revisionism.

Recalling the demonstrations thirty years later

As many scholars have recently advised, in order to understand the impact of a national performance, it is crucial to scrutinise the participants’ response to it. I thus spoke with former marchers about thirty years after the demonstrations. At the time when my interviews were held, between 2008 and 2011, many of the early activists were engaged in commemorating the foundation of the nationalist movement abroad, its first demonstrations, as well as the assassination of its first leaders, all events that happened in 1981 and 1982. Thus, they organised ceremonies, conferences, parties and the publication of books. These anniversaries became opportunities for the former activists to recall their past engagement. In this reflection, the demonstrations occupied a prominent position. Similarly, during my interviews, the majority of those who had been active during the 1980s dwelt on the demonstrations in detail. They

explained to me the course of the marches and told me about the particularly strong feelings they had experienced while marching on the streets. Some of the interviewees, however, remained silent about or only briefly mentioned their participation in the demonstrations, even though they had been activists. Faced with these differences, I decided to first scrutinise the weight that the former demonstrators attributed to the marches in their lives.

Why, then, did some of the interviewed participants barely mention the marches of the 1980s or even ignore them, while most highlighted them as an important part of their engagement and of their life in general? This silence may be due to various reasons. First of all, two interviewees explained to me that they had not been regular demonstrators. They criticised the marches' Marxist-Leninist orientation and poor organisation. For them, it did not make sense to march in the streets of Western Europe while using a tainted vocabulary and ideology. Moreover, a few of the respondents felt reluctant to speak about demonstrations that they considered uninteresting, and sometimes showed a rather disdainful stance towards emotions, regarding them as opposed to reason and seriousness. It seems that, for them, the presence of emotions would have reduced the seriousness and integrity of their struggle. Finally, many of those who disregarded the demonstrations were respondents who preferred to highlight their role in the struggle for independence that took place in the 1990s, and tended to see that as more important than the marches of the 1980s. Indeed, these interviewees were often prominent leaders in the 1990s, while rather modest militants during the 1980s. Moreover, these individuals usually subsequently started to back a more violent solution to the Kosovo crisis by helping to set up the Kosovo Liberation Army. At the time of the interviews, they often still supported this solution as the only successful one, as opposed to the 'peaceful' solution, that was partially exemplified by the demonstrations.

Conversely, many of those respondents who chose to foreground the demonstrations of the 1980s during the interviews had been important leaders at that time but had later partly given up their political role. As this period represented the peak of their lives as an activist with its fantastic camaraderie, extreme engagement and powerful positions, it is unsurprising that it occupied a prominent position during the interviews. The demonstrations also featured prominently in the accounts of banal marchers who, for the first time, found the occasion to engage to a larger extent for their homeland, so that, today, this still represented a benchmark in their lives. Finally, the marches seem to have been such an emotional event that they left an indelible imprint on their memory. One man, for instance, told me that the very first

demonstration was ‘magnificent’ and that he would never forget it. Moreover, with the various commemorations that took place between 2011 and 2012, the marches were probably reinforced very strongly in many former marchers’ self-definition. They were able not only to remember the great times of adventure, solidarity and national pride that united them during their time as militants but also partially to relive them.

The interviewees thus expressed diverse perceptions when recalling the demonstrations dozens of years later, reminding us that the impact of a performance is not only felt distinctively by different participants at the time but also that it is considered diversely according to the context within and point of time at which it is remembered.

Talking about the demonstrations

I then resolved to scrutinise in greater detail the stories told by those who mentioned that the demonstrations had been an important experience in their lives. I sought to concentrate on the links between emotions, identity and performance. As emotions are often designated in the literature as the crux of a successful performance, I decided to highlight the expression of emotions as well as the respondents’ personal explanations of them.

When tackling the topic of demonstrations, most of the interviewees told me approximately the same story, informing me about the organisation and course of the demonstrations, so I was first able to learn about the factual side of the demonstrations. The very first march was organised by a loose group of activists whose main goal was to protest against the violent reaction of the Yugoslav security forces following the demonstrations in Kosovo. They sought to show solidarity ‘with their brothers and sisters’ in Yugoslavia, and also wanted ‘the world to know what was happening in Kosovo.’ Thus, the main slogans heard were either directly copied from those chanted in Kosovo at the time or new ones employed to demonstrate solidarity with the protesters at home: ‘Kosovo Republic! Freedom for Kosovo! We are with the students!’

As the nationalist effort became structured in one main movement and later with various organisations after 1982, the latter took over the setting up of the demonstrations and soon a typical pattern emerged. Most of the demonstrations unfolded in the same way. The marches started in the centre of the city and then moved to the Yugoslav representation in Zurich and Berne or to the United Nations Headquarters in Geneva. Demonstrators often marched in

disciplined ranks of two or three, with their fists raised. This was a communist symbol but also a sign of the unity of the Albanian people, and was directly inspired by the demonstrations in Kosovo. On the way, they shouted several slogans in both Albanian and the local language and distributed leaflets to passers-by. They also held banners, usually proclaiming the message, 'Kosovo Republic'. As the crowd reached the embassy, a speech was delivered in Albanian and sometimes also in the local language, and a petition was presented to the Yugoslav representation or, in Geneva, to the United Nations.

This first layer of discourse, shared by most of the interviewees, very much centred on the organisational and strategic level and remained highly descriptive in nature. In this layer of discourse, the interviewees repeated the rather official position of the organisers regarding the goals and course of the demonstrations: sensitising the general public about the Albanian cause by taking open action. This was the desired type of performance among the organisers at that time. Indeed, as many former leaders informed me, the marches were not envisioned as triggering emotions and unity within the group of demonstrators, but rather designed to target the public.

Apart from this very concordant and almost official discourse on the demonstrations, I also discovered a much more emotional layer as various former activists chose to foreground their feelings during and about the demonstrations. Generally, many marchers remember vividly and with great joy their first demonstration, especially those who took part in the very first march organised by the movement abroad. One man, for example, told me that he had never been so happy in his life. Furthermore, as many demonstrators keenly enjoyed the emotional high produced by the marches, they tried to participate in them frequently in order to reproduce the same intense feeling.

Beyond this general level of happiness, more particular emotions were frequently expressed: sensual feelings, connectedness and unity, pride, fear, anger, sadness and relief. For example, one of my interviewees, when asked how he felt during the marches, replied:

Yes... [laughing] like at a Techno-Party! Well, emotional! After every demonstration, one was even closer to one's fellow countrymen. Because, yes, emotions were high there. And one becomes aware, because so many people were still not very well informed about what was going on. If one is not directly affected,

one is...not really affected. But there, one really received information about what was going on there. We received a lot of documentation, with good material, facts and we became always more sensitised and we participated always more actively.

Like this man, many people recognised deep sensual emotions, the sort that is very difficult to describe, and thus compared them to the feelings aroused during concerts. These seem to be the typical emotions created by the experiential effect of the demonstrations and other rituals described above. People felt the effect of being in a crowd, of chanting slogans, of raising their fist and marching together. The effect of marching seems to have been particularly powerful. Indeed, one respondent recalled a demonstration that did not manage to take off: it took place in a square in Geneva without any marching. According to him, the protesters felt ‘frustrated, as something was missing.’

Many of the interviewees also remember how the demonstrations contributed towards developing their sense of connectedness and unity with other demonstrators, even strangers or people whom they barely knew before. One woman, for example, told me: ‘We did the demonstrations all together: men, women and children.’ Another man said: ‘We were all together: workers and intellectuals.’ Thus, the demonstrations seemed able to break down the barriers between people who otherwise would not have necessarily been united or even met.

Some of the participants also recall experiencing a strong sense of pride at being Albanian while protesting on the streets of Switzerland. They were proud to march under the Albanian flag that was forbidden in Kosovo. They were also acutely aware of the sometimes-critical eyes of the passers-by, which often contributed towards enhancing this pride but also their devotion to the cause and the group. At the same time, it encouraged them to behave ‘well’ on the march, which was usually understood as being disciplined, i.e., marching in orderly ranks, without causing any material damage or leaving rubbish on the streets, and displaying responsiveness and a voice. Furthermore, gradually, and in a spontaneous manner, many demonstrators started to wear traditional dress. Some women also wore red and black, the Albanian colours. Thus, the feelings created by this extraordinary situation of public exposure helped the participants develop common ‘Albanian’ attributes, such as moral values like discipline, and symbols like the traditional clothing.

Another feeling that was frequently mentioned during the interviews was fear. As the Yugoslav agents watched the behaviour of their compatriots in Switzerland closely, those who returned

home could risk, upon their return, losing their passport, which would prohibit them from working abroad again and providing subsistence for their family. For this reason, many marchers tried to conceal their identity with hats and sunglasses.

While trying to explain why the demonstrations were so emotional, many former activists told me about their acute emotional state even before they started marching. They often brought with them intense feelings of sadness or anger with regard to their own situation as well as that of their close relatives, friends and generally the Albanian-speaking inhabitants of Yugoslavia. This sometimes induced tears, but also great gravity and seriousness. For example, one man explained:

I knew why I was demonstrating. I knew someone had been arrested. I knew someone had been killed. And at the time I was very serious. For me, it was no... The feelings were... My feelings were that I am happy, I can do something. I had only these feelings, nothing else. And I was happy that I could do something.

For many, demonstrating represented a kind of relief or a way to ease their slightly guilty conscience. In fact, marching was a kind of therapy for migrants, who used the occasion to free themselves from the anger, resentment and sadness linked not only to the context of their co-nationals at home, but also to their own difficult situation in Switzerland. For example, one man observed: ‘All the people who came to the demonstrations came for that, to spit out what they always had in their heart. They could not show this in another place. It was for that.’

Finally, the participants’ awareness of and sensitisation to the situation of Albanians in Yugoslavia were raised. People recall receiving information from the speeches but also documentation that made them more knowledgeable about and conscious of the situation of Albanians. This was especially important, as the press was not free in Yugoslavia and people without any family members or acquaintances involved in the nationalist movement did not necessarily perceive the situation of oppression. Moreover, it was far easier for the demonstrators to familiarise themselves with the Albanian national question in such a lively atmosphere than through, for example, reading a book, especially as many of the marchers were barely literate.

To summarise, two main layers of discourse about the demonstrations emerged during the interviews. First, most of the respondents spoke on a very descriptive and strategic level about the marches. Second, many of them also tried to convey the emotions that they had experienced during the demonstrations, including a much sought-after feeling of unity with and closeness to the other protesters. Furthermore, they depicted the marches as an outlet for their anger and sadness.

The demonstrators' trajectories

Most of the interviewees clearly made a point of locating the demonstrations, just like all of the other actions in which they engaged, in the broader story of their lives. Only by understanding their previous experiences were they able to make sense of their participation in the marches in the 1980s. While every life story related to me obviously varied, I nevertheless found many similarities between them. Indeed, many of the respondents cited similar influential experiences and trajectories. Two main types of account, although bearing some common themes, can be recognised: those of the 'refugees' and those of the 'workers'. While this distinction stems from many of the migrants themselves, it is also often used in the literature (see Dahinden 2008, von Aarburg 2002). Although the boundary distinguishing them is not always clear, some elements can be advanced. When speaking about workers, this usually means those who had left Yugoslavia to find employment, but not security, abroad. Moreover, workers were also supposedly poorly educated while refugees were felt to be the 'intellectuals' of the movement. While most refugees depict a very similar trajectory, the workers stories are far more varied.

The refugees

Most of the refugees describe a very similar path, punctuated by some typical experiences: sensitisation as a child and teenager to the national question, the start of activism at school or university, participation in demonstrations, imprisonment, hiding, flight to Switzerland and activism from abroad.

Most of these young men and women mentioned their childhood as an important time, during which they had started to acknowledge and feel the 'injustice' of the situation affecting 'the Albanians'. Very early on, they heard family stories of past persecutions involving Serbian forces or individuals. One man, for example, began his interview with the following story:

Look, the Serbs, when they arrived in Kosovo, they did a lot of massacres. I heard my grandfather when I was very small. He told me: ‘These Serbs you see there, they killed my father and three other brothers. Four brothers, they killed.’ And he said, ‘This Serb you see there. He is wearing my father’s jacket. When they killed him, they took all his clothes.’ And always we...because at the time there was no...because 90% of the people were illiterate and they used, we say *Oda*⁴, to talk, discuss and always we heard about these massacres committed by the Serbs.

Young people were also taught the history of the ‘Albanian people’ and its division into different states through illegal radio stations and books from Tirana. The Albanian sources of information also caused the Albanian-speakers in Yugoslavia dream of their ‘motherland’ and adore its ruler, Enver Hoxha.

Moreover, the interviewees often recalled how they personally experienced emotion-provoking, even traumatic situations of violence and perceived injustice that contributed towards their rising anger, frustration and hatred against the regime. For instance, some children and teenagers witnessed or experienced at close hand arrest or the killing of family members and close friends. One former activist explained:

My whole family was politically engaged. My uncle was in prison almost his entire life. Actually, rather his entire youth because he was assassinated. He was 33. And I was confronted with this reality since my early childhood. Since I was small. The police came x times to our house to carry out searches, to look for my uncle, etc. This is where my rebellion against the system, the regime and all that started.

The next stage mentioned after childhood was that of youth, during which most of these young men and women joined illegal political organisations while at college or university. There, they found fertile ground for strengthening their opinions, becoming active and building strong relationships. Because these groups were forbidden, activists reported that they were put under constant pressure by the Yugoslav secret services, thus limiting their actions mainly to propaganda work and various organisational tasks. They often lived in a conspiratorial environment of fear.

After becoming more active, or participating in demonstrations, some of these activists started to have problems with the security forces. Militants were often punished for engaging in relatively modest activities, such as the distribution or reading of illegal literature. Some were also jailed for carving, painting or spraying graffiti in various locations with catchwords like the famous 'Kosova Republic' or 'Enver Hoxha'. Others were punished for belonging to an illegal organisation. Some activists were merely questioned and then released, while others had to serve sentences of varying lengths, from a few months to fifteen years for the leaders. Prison was often experienced at a very early age, as some convicts were not even 18 years old. Besides, many people were sentenced more than once, so their lives became a succession of periods of liberty deprivation and threatened freedom. Prison stays and the accompanying torture they reported usually did not deter them from fighting for the cause. On the contrary, it often strengthened their hatred for the regime and will to fight it. At the same time, prison became a school of life, an act of pride, almost a prerequisite in the life of a respected activist.

When released from prison, the militants usually either reintegrated with the movement or fled the country. Frequently, they decided to leave Yugoslavia when they perceived signs of imminent arrest. This often meant first spending some weeks underground in Yugoslavia until they found a way to reach Switzerland, Germany or another European destination.

Finally, shortly after reaching Switzerland, the militants contacted their fellow activists whom they had known in Yugoslavia or acquaintances who helped them organise the movement abroad. There, they could once again engage with the national cause, but this time in a state that offered far greater freedom for their activities. They tried to use the new context of freedom to pursue Kosovo's cause. In Switzerland, however, some political exiles recalled the difficulty of their lives. They not only had to recover from extreme situations associated with their torture, fear and their escape, but also to face their feelings of guilt and uselessness at living abroad while many of their friends were still struggling at home.

The workers

The workers stories were more diverse than those of the refugees. Nevertheless, they all shared a fairly common start: all of these men first moved to Switzerland for economic reasons, usually in order to make money to help their families back home. They often first accepted jobs in Switzerland as seasonal workers, or were employed in the black economy. Some were also students who found short-time employment in Switzerland during their summer vacations.

Often, they resented Yugoslavia as a country that was unable to offer them a proper job, compelling them therefore to migrate.

At different times, these workers started to join the struggle for the Albanian national cause in Switzerland and to participate in demonstrations. However, there is no typical story. Some workers were already active before migrating to Switzerland. Indeed, among the most engaged, there were some men who already had some ties with active groups in Yugoslavia. There were also cases of men who already felt sympathy for the national cause in Yugoslavia, and had at last found the occasion to join the movement while abroad, while others were sensitised much later, often through forming relationships with activists.

The interviewees cite various grounds for joining the demonstrations and engaging with the national question. Like the political refugees, many of these men tended to foreground their childhood and youth in order to explain their engagement. Usually, they mentioned how they lived in an environment where the situation of ‘the Albanians’ in Yugoslavia was a concern. Sometimes, they had family members who were already engaged, and often heard family stories about past atrocities. One man, for example, explained:

My hatred for the Yugoslav regime dates back a long way. Already, during World War One, during the years 1912-1914, my great grandfather had been killed by the regime of the time, and this continued. The regime always kept an eye on my family. It was always against [my family]. During the Second World War, my father was killed, I was only three months old. So, I never saw him, and no one knows where his grave is. He was never found. [...] And I heard about him. I was three months old. I have felt the pain and sorrows of my father. [...] This topic was always present, and so I was impatiently waiting to be organised, to join a movement.

Moreover, many recall how their presence abroad, where they had access to nationalist books that were forbidden in Yugoslavia, where they attended cultural shows in clubs, and where they had the occasion to speak with activists, contributed towards strengthening or developing their national pride as well as their feelings of injustice and outrage.

Most workers who were involved in activities related to their homeland lived in difficult conditions in Switzerland. On the one hand, they often led a miserable existence as they usually performed low-skilled jobs mainly in the building, agriculture, health and gastronomy sectors. On the other hand, because of their participation in demonstrations and other political activities abroad, they exposed themselves to great risks, as they believed the Yugoslav secret services to be very active in Switzerland.

To recapitulate, the former activists, both refugees and workers, usually presented their life stories as grounds for their engagement and active participation in the demonstrations. They justified the success of the performances through these stories. They saw their past and present experiences as triggers for strong feelings of anger, outrage, sadness and guilt, that caused a moral obligation and motivation to participate with fervour. Thus, they conveyed all of these feelings and memories of the injustices and atrocities to the protests, where they were able and even encouraged to release them collectively.

Two interesting findings can be uncovered from this tendency for the interviewees to resort to, often similar, stories in order to explain their feelings and actions. First, this indicates that the respondents used narratives to make sense of themselves, their emotions and behaviours. Second, the resemblance of their life stories and themes also reveals how they are historically, but also socially, embedded. Indeed, how people perceived and described themselves not only depended on the situations they had experienced, but also on the typical life courses and topics they chose to underline within the influence of their milieu.

Conclusion

The present article sought to explore the links between emotions, national identity and performance, especially the conditions that contribute towards producing emotions in national(ist) performances through an oral history approach. To this end, I used the case of the demonstrations organised by the Albanian national movement in Switzerland in the 1980s. As often advised in the literature, I decided to scrutinise the participants' responses and thus spoke with former marchers. I now wish to advance some conclusions based on the initial theoretical considerations as well as on this particular case, and also to highlight the advantages and disadvantages of adopting an oral history approach.

First, this study agrees with the recent literature (Mookherjee 2011, Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008, Uzelac 2010, Elgenius 2011b) about the impossibility of assessing the impact of a performance solely by analysing the organisers' designs and intentions. Indeed, the demonstrations were principally planned as a public sensitisation campaign and yet produced a tremendous effect in terms of the connectedness among the participants, an achievement that was not originally sought by the organising elites.

Moreover, the interviews also reveal the diversity of the demonstrators' feelings. On the one hand, they indicate how, among a heterogeneous crowd, the demonstrations were experienced in different ways at the time of the marches. On the other hand, they also show how the activists' subsequent trajectories affected their view of the impact of the performance. The notion of success thus highly depends on the context and a timely point of view.

Second, following the manifold literature on performance and collective identity (Alexander 2006, Brubaker and Cooper 2000, Guibernau 2007, Uzelac 2010), this case exemplifies the crucial role of the emotions as a constituent and trigger of national identity. Although the interviews took place thirty years after the demonstrations, they opened a window onto what it felt like to be a demonstrator and provided a partial flavour of this 'collective effervescence' (Durkheim 1995/1912: 218) and feelings of belonging today. Moreover, my findings also show how the initial emotional state of the participants, as well as the particularly emotionally-laden atmosphere of the demonstrations, may explain the creation of bonds between the participants and their increasing awareness of the cause.

Third, most of the explanations advanced in this article in order to understand the success of the demonstrations focus less on the various components of the particular show offered, as often raised in the literature (see Alexander 2006, Elgenius 2011a), and more on the diverse elements that played a part outside the protests themselves. Indeed, from the interviewees' point of view, the explanation lies less in the show offered in terms of historical narratives (Elgenius 2011a), the actors' performance, the encounters with the various protests' components (Alexander 2006, Schieffelin 1985, Schieffelin 1998) or even authenticity (Uzelac 2010, Alexander 2006), and more on their self-perceptions and feelings constituted before the performance and understood in the form of a story. Mainly, most protesters threw themselves into the demonstrations and participated with great eagerness in order to fulfil their personal needs and sorrows deriving from their life stories. Of course, the stories provided today may differ

somewhat from what they would have been if gathered in the 1980s. Nevertheless, the interviewees still indicate how, in particular circumstances, they make sense of their surroundings and their role in it by establishing a story about themselves. These observations partly support the argument of Ismer (2011), who highlights the importance of the participants' self-perceptions as a reason behind a performance's success and also back those who point to the relevance of the initial emotional state of the participants when engaging in the performance (Kertzer 1989, Schieffelin 1985, Collins 2004).

Furthermore, when focusing on the demonstrations themselves, the former protesters rarely mentioned the planned components of the show, like the speeches, personalities and symbolic objects, except perhaps the flag, as a reason for their emotions. Rather, some of them chose to foreground the innovative role of the participants who, in the demonstrations, constituted common symbols of attachment, like traditional clothing, that were not promoted by the organisers. Moreover, many of the interviewees also often highlighted the very general conditions that were not typical of these nationalist demonstrations but could potentially be found at almost every performance, such as the effects of belonging to a crowd or being exposed to the public eye.

Thus, in contrast to the recent scholarship, which has sought to understand the success of performances by analysing the reception of the shows by the audience (Uzelac 2010, Alexander 2006, Mookherjee 2011), this paper partially reverses this perspective by demonstrating what the participating audience itself brought to the performance. Moreover, it makes it possible to give a direct voice to those who were primarily involved instead of observing it from the outside and trying to guess how they were affected. This article thus adds another point of view to a many-sided phenomenon, which can be especially important in this new wave of scholarship that seeks to form a better understanding of the role of the audience.

Finally, although the time interval between the demonstrations and the interviews contributed towards blurring and influencing the interviewees' memories, it may have also helped to reveal perceptions and emotions that may not necessarily have been acknowledged at the time. Indeed, the respondents not only told the surface story of how the demonstrations worked and what 'they believed they were doing at the time', but probably thanks to the time distance, also articulated 'what they now think they did' (Portelli 1991: 50). Moreover, oral history interviews help to scrutinise the influence of the performance over a longer term, not just while it is

occurring. Indeed, the demonstrations not only affected the participants while they were happening or in the short term by attracting a few activists to the movement but also in the much longer term. I was surprised to discover how important the marches of the 1980s remain in the self-definition of many former activists today, and how they seemed to search for opportunities to revive some of the emotions felt at the time.

Notes

1 The true number of casualties is unknown. While the Yugoslav press counted eleven fatalities, others mention as many as 1,000. According to Amnesty International, the real figure could be about 300 (Dérens 2006: 93).

2 The first demonstration in Berne attracted 400 protesters according to the organisers, and 150-200 according to the newspaper *Der Bund* (1981).

3 First named the Movement for the Albanian Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia (LRSSHJ), the movement became the Popular Movement for the Republic of Kosovo in 1985.

4 The 'Oda' is the traditional room for receiving guests in an Albanian house. According to Kostovicova (2005: 113), it also corresponds to 'a historic educational space for Albanians.'

5.3 Narrating the “liberation of Kosovo” in Switzerland: Transnational Strategies of Boundary Making

Abstract

Increasing attention has been paid recently to the responses made by migrants to stigmatisation and discrimination in their countries of settlement. By applying a transnational perspective, this study emphasises that migrants might also be othered and placed in an inferior position in their countries of origin. The article concentrates on the responses given by former Albanian-speaking activists living in Switzerland with regard to their oblivion and perceived low status in post-war Kosovo. Based on oral history interviews, it focuses on the memories of their engagement in Kosovo on behalf of the national cause in the 1980s and 1990s. The article analyses the boundary work strategies they pursue in order to improve their situation. It underlines the different discursive responses adopted: from the construction of a deterritorialised Kosovan state to the creation of a new, separate narrative for the “Albanians in Switzerland”.

Introduction

During the 1990s, Albanian-speaking migrants in Europe, especially in Switzerland and Germany, massively mobilised in order to advance the national cause in Kosovo and support the “Albanian” population in Yugoslavia (Hockenos 2003). They played a key role in their homeland politics, particularly in the events that led to the withdrawal of the Serbian forces from Kosovo at the conclusion of the 1998-1999 conflict (Kosłowski 2005). Most activists ended their engagement to “free Kosovo” after 1999. Despite their long-standing desire to return to their homeland, most of them however remained in Switzerland after the “liberation”.

Although the activists abroad massively mobilised on behalf of the national cause, their engagement has barely been acknowledged in post-war Kosovo. These men and women often resent their omission from the history of the “liberation” and complain of being excluded from the Kosovan state. Moreover, in Kosovo, the Albanian-speaking migrants living in Switzerland are often negatively associated with backwardness and understood as “cash cows” for their remittances (Paca 2015). In this article, I wish to scrutinise the former activists’ responses to

this lack of recognition and discontent⁷. I will address this question by adopting an original approach that scrutinises boundary making strategies in the construction of memories (Wimmer 2008a). More specifically, I will explore how the former activists attempt to change this status, felt as inferior, in the narratives of their past engagement on behalf of Kosovo, related as part of an oral history project. These narratives are central for the respondents who dedicated a very significant part of their life to the national cause.

I will start by presenting the main theoretical background of the article. Then, I will provide a methodological note on the research and some historical insights into the mobilisation on behalf of Kosovo in Switzerland. I will continue by exploring the Albanian-speaking former activists' perceptions of how they are categorised in Kosovo. I will also explore the strategies they adopt to respond to this situation in their memories of homeland mobilisation. In the conclusion, I will underline the very specific situation of the Albanian-speaking former activists in their homeland. I will particularly reflect on the integration of a boundary-work approach within the study of memories and also plead for the adoption of a transnational perspective for understanding migrants' identification processes.

Theoretical background: strategies of boundary work

In recent years, scholars have paid increasing attention to the responses made by migrants and people considered as belonging to ethnic or racial minorities to processes of symbolic and social categorisation that lead to different forms of stigmatisation and exclusion (see for example Morosanu and Fox 2013, Dahinden and Zittoun 2013, Lamont and Mizrachi 2012). Most of the scholarship has focused on the situation in the migrants' countries of settlement. This literature has, for example, highlighted how they embrace other forms of ethnic identification or disengage from any form of ethnic attachment (see e.g. Schwandner-Sievers 2008, Morosanu and Fox 2013). Others have demonstrated the adoption of transnational responses such as strengthening the migrants' links with their homeland and improving their position there (Portes 1999, Snel 2016). This literature has, however, often overlooked negative forms of categorisation in the migrants' homeland. In this article, I will address the relative paucity of scholarship in this field by adopting a transnational perspective. I will consider the strategies adopted by Albanian-speaking men and women in Switzerland to respond to their adverse

⁷ Albanian-speaking migrants also suffer from demeaning stereotypes in Switzerland, where "Kosovo Albanians" have been often portrayed as "criminals" and "abusers" of the welfare system since the 1990s (Burri Sharani et al. 2010). This article will, however, not explore this issue, some aspects of which have already been studied elsewhere (see e.g. Duemmler, Dahinden, and Moret 2010, Haxhijaj 2015, Karrer 2002).

symbolic categorisation in their homeland. Furthermore, I will also focus on narratives of the past as a resource used to respond to this perceived negative position.

To conduct this analysis, I will rely on a boundary-making approach that contends that social actors create *symbolic boundaries* in order to categorise people, objects and practices (Lamont and Molnar 2002). They create distinctions between people on the basis of “cultural stuff” (Barth 1969: 15), such as “language, ritual, kinship, lifestyle, religion or gender representations” (Dahinden and Zittoun 2013: 194). Scholars of nation and nationalism have often demonstrated how narratives of the past might constitute the “cultural stuff” mobilised to generate ethnic and national boundaries (see e.g. Kolsto 2005, Duijzings 2000, Schöpflin 2000). In this article, I will hence explore the narratives of the past mobilisation as related by former activists as a means of creating symbolic boundaries.

Identification is the result of a dual dynamic of internal definition and external categorisation (Jenkins 2008). On the one hand, individuals identify themselves as belonging to a collectivity and recognise each other as members of that group (Jenkins 2008). On the other hand, individuals are being categorised and defined by others as members of a collectivity (Jenkins 2008). Power relationships play an important role in these processes: people might, for example, be ascribed to undesirable categories which they do not identify with, while some self-identified groups might not be recognised as such by others. As a consequence, the following question arises: how do excluded, stigmatised or low status groups and individuals react and confront adverse categorisation? In this case, how do former Albanian-speaking activists confront their lack of recognition in Kosovo and inferior symbolic position there?

Wimmer (2008a) has highlighted five different possible boundary-making strategies, characterised as “different ways in which individual and collective actors can relate to an existing, established mode of classification and closure, and how they can attempt to enforce their vision of the legitimate divisions of society” (Wimmer 2013: 44). These are: 1- the *expansion* of the boundary to incorporate further members; 2- the *contraction* of the boundary to reduce membership; 3- the *transvaluation* that implies a normative change; 4- individual or collective *boundary crossing*; and 5- the *blurring* of the boundaries by emphasising other attributes of belonging (Wimmer 2013). Following this perspective, I propose to analyse the different strategies used by Albanian-speaking former activists when relating their narratives of their engagement to draw more inclusive boundaries for themselves.

Methodology

This article is mainly based on oral history interviews conducted with first generation Albanian-speaking activists from the former Yugoslavia who were active in Switzerland in the 1980s and 1990s. The analysis also draws on participant observation undertaken mainly at commemorations and party meetings, as well as on limited documentary research that helped me to interpret the interview data.

I interviewed 50 former activists between 2009 and 2012. Of these, ten were interviewed more than once. The interviews were chiefly conducted in German and French and took place at the respondent's home, office, or in a café. As most of the former activists still live on a regular or discontinued basis in Switzerland, all of the interviews took place in Switzerland, except for seven that were held in Kosovo.

The sample includes a highly heterogeneous population in terms of their migratory backgrounds and forms of homeland engagement. Some fled their country in order to avoid long jail sentences or fearing for their life. Many left Yugoslavia on economic grounds although political and security reasons also sometimes played a concurrent role. Finally, the wives and children of male political refugees and *gastarbeiter* who arrived in Switzerland via family union also featured among the activists of the 1980s and 1990s. The sample included participants with different political orientations and fields of engagement, such as parties, humanitarian associations, and cultural groups. It is composed of leaders as well as activists who were not formal members of any organisation.

After transcribing the interviews, I analysed them mainly using narrative thematic analysis (Riessman 2008: 2). In order to preserve the narrative aspects of the interviews, I decided to analyse each one as a whole (Riessman 2008). First, I distinguished the various sequences that constituted the personal narrative. This allowed me to discover the recurrent patterns of storytelling. Second, I also identified the main themes and stories that occurred throughout each interview. Most of the respondents, for example, developed stories about the “Albanian people in history”, “Kosovo”, the “Albanians in Switzerland”, and various political parties or “Albanian” figures. Third, I also noted particular values, beliefs and attitudes toward the “Kosovo Albanian nation”, in areas such as the memorialisation of the “liberation” in Kosovo and abroad, the relationship with the Albanian-speaking population in Kosovo, the former Yugoslavia, as well as the connections with the Kosovan state (Saldana 2009). I then reflected

on each of the three steps and categorised the main themes, narratives, and values within each interview. In a third phase, I reflected on the interactions between the main categories emanating from the three forms of coding and considered their common meanings. Finally, I compared the findings across the cases in order to understand the different strategies adopted to enhance the “social identity”.

Homeland engagement on behalf of Kosovo in Switzerland: a brief background

As this article focuses on the memories of the transnational mobilisation of Albanian-speaking migrants in Switzerland, I will highlight here the most significant events that help to contextualise and understand these narratives. Although the mobilisation has been rarely researched, numerous authors have underlined the extensive engagement provided by Albanian-speaking migrants in Switzerland during the 1980s and especially the 1990s (see e.g. Koslowski 2005, Dahinden and Moret 2008, Hockenos 2003).

During the 1980s, Albanian-speaking refugees from the former Yugoslavia, often with the support of some *gastarbeiter*, contributed towards establishing various Albanian clubs and associations across the country (Burri Sharani et al. 2010). They also founded several transnational organisations based on Albanian nationalist and Marxist-Leninist ideologies inspired by Enver Hoxha, the Albanian communist head of state (Burri Sharani et al. 2010). At the time, Albania represented the motherland for the Albanian-speaking activists from Yugoslavia (Kola 2003).

During the 1990s, the Albanian-speaking migrants with different backgrounds and political orientations mobilised massively for their homeland in the form of humanitarian and cultural projects, financial transfers, political lobbying, information campaigns and the planning of armed resistance in Kosovo (Dahinden 2010b, Moore 2010). This extensive mobilisation started after the province of Kosovo entered a period of grave crisis following the loss of autonomy within the Serbian Republic (Dahinden and Moret 2008). As Belgrade directly ruled Kosovo, the Albanian-speaking population saw its condition massively deteriorating because of the adoption of several discriminatory laws against the “Albanians” and increasing police repression (Vickers 1998).

Under these circumstances, numerous organisations but also political parties were formed across Switzerland, often connected to partner entities in Yugoslavia, Europe and also North America

(Burri Sharani et al. 2010). In particular, a branch of the Democratic League in Kosovo (in Albanian: Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës - LDK) in Switzerland was founded in 1990 (Latifi 2008). The LDK had emerged in Kosovo at the end of 1989 as the main organisation of resistance on the Albanian-speaking side (Clark 2000). The LDK, whose main objective was Kosovo's independence, opted for a non-violent form of resistance and the internationalisation of the Kosovo issue (Maliqi 2012). Under the leadership of Ibrahim Rugova, a university professor, the LDK benefited from the support of most of the Albanian-speaking population of Kosovo and abroad until approximately 1997-1998 (Kostovicova 2005, Maliqi 2012). Furthermore, one of the Marxist-Leninist organisations, the Popular Movement for Kosovo (in Albanian: Lëvizja Popullore e Kosovës - LPK), decided to pursue its efforts covertly and opted for a more violent solution in order to achieve independence (Kola 2003). The LPK in Switzerland and Germany is usually attributed a large role in the creation and political representation of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), a paramilitary organisation that led a guerrilla war against Yugoslav troops in 1998-1999 (Koinova 2010, Judah 2001).

After the conflict ended, the mass mobilisation on behalf of Kosovo greatly decreased. While, on the one hand, the number of migrants' organisations has diminished, on their other hand, their attention has largely shifted away from their homeland towards the "integration" of Albanian-speaking people in Switzerland (Dahinden and Moret 2008, Burri Sharani et al. 2010).

Albanian-speaking migrants in Switzerland: an adverse position in Kosovo

Although most former activists are still keenly engaged in different forms of transnational practices in the economic, political, cultural and social fields, they suffer from a perceived lack of recognition in Kosovo and a generally adverse symbolic position. Based on Levitt and Glick Schiller's differentiation between "ways of being" and "ways of belonging" (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2007: 189), they are very active in terms of "ways of being" within their transnational social fields. They regularly engage in transnational relationships and practices. However, they suffer from an unsatisfactory "way of belonging" (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2007: 189). While most of them still strongly identify with their family and acquaintances in the homeland, they often feel that they are not accepted as full members of the "Albanian nation" in Kosovo. I will review three main areas in which the research participants bemoaned their situation.

First, they complain that the memories of the “liberation struggle”, and more generally the narratives about the “nation” in Kosovo, predominantly silence the role of the Albanian-speaking population abroad. In post-war Kosovo, a meta-narrative that praises the armed resistance against Serbia led by the KLA has dominated the public’s remembering of the recent past (Ströhle 2013). This potent narrative focuses on the story of the “insurgent KLA leader Adem Jashari”, a farmer who died in his home along with his extended family while fighting the Serbian forces in 1998 (Di Lellio and Schwandner-Sievers 2006a: 513). This story captures the essence of Albanianess in the post-war period: martyrdom, sacrifice, solidarity, and militancy (Di Lellio and Schwandner-Sievers 2006b). As this narrative of the armed resistance succeeded in occupying the entire public space of remembrance, other figures of the 1990s, like LDK activists and female fighters, became marginalised (Visoka 2016). Similarly, the numerous men and women who operated mainly outside Yugoslavia were excluded from the recent national history of Kosovo. They thus felt symbolically excluded from the “Albanian nation”.

During my fieldwork in Switzerland, many former activists expressed their disappointment that the memories of the “liberation struggle” in Kosovo do not include their names or engagement. They also sometimes spoke about the resentment and sense of injustice because they have never been thanked for their huge sacrifices and engagement. Likewise, during or after the interviews, many of the respondents showed me different monographs and academic studies on the national struggle written by authors from Kosovo or Albania. These works usually outline the path to war and the evolution of the conflict or portray recent national heroes. However, as explained by several interviewees, these publications do not cover the roles of the organisations and individuals who were active in Switzerland. In such a situation, one interviewee, for example, concluded: “[They] forgot us, the diaspora”.

Second, most Albanian-speaking activists in Switzerland feel abandoned by the Kosovan state (Haxhikadrija 2009). In particular, migrants face various obstacles from the administration in Kosovo. For example, they often complain about the difficulties they encounter in obtaining legal documents and other rights reserved for Kosovan citizens. At the time of the interviews, they were unable to vote in the Kosovan elections from abroad. They also need to overcome important barriers when trying to invest in Kosovo, partly because of the lack of tax facilitation (Haxhikadrija 2009). These difficulties often make them feel excluded from the new state, a

situation that is particularly difficult to accept, as they feel that they sacrificed an important part of their life to the national cause.

Third, Albanian-speaking migrants sometimes experience tense relations with people living in Kosovo, where they also suffer from a poor image. One difficulty seems to stem from the economic relations linking the Albanian-speaking people living in Kosovo and in the “diaspora”. The economic dependency on the “diaspora” as well as the financial differences between those living in the country and in Switzerland are a source of tension. On the one hand, Albanian-speaking migrants might disagree with the ways in which the remittances are being spent; for example, on luxury products and leisure pursuits that they cannot afford themselves in Switzerland (Haxhikadrija 2009). On the other hand, during their vacations in their homeland, migrants often display their material wealth, which creates unease among the locals (Pichler 2009). This is especially the case with the organisation of prodigal weddings during the summer, at which migrants have a chance to prove their belonging to the local community, or when they build western style houses to demonstrate their “modernity and progress” (Pichler 2009: 133, Leutloff-Grandits 2017). For many migrants, investing in Kosovo and displaying their economic achievements might also constitute a response to their often inferior status in their country of settlement (Leutloff-Grandits and Pichler 2014).

In terms of image, the migrants from Switzerland are associated with their money, which however does not imply that they enjoy a positive status in Kosovo (Paca 2015): they are the “cash cows” who provide important financial help to their families in the homeland and also to the Kosovan economy (Paca 2015). As such, they are categorised as the “schatzis” (Paca 2015), a German term meaning “treasure”, in the sense of “darling” (Paca 2015). The term “schatzi” is not only used due to its financial connotation but also with a depreciating meaning for the Albanian-speaking migrants from the German-speaking countries (Paca 2015). A recent article published in the Kosovo media clearly criticised the use of this “humiliating” term (Ferizaj 2018). The author explains how the Albanian “urban elite” resorts to it in order to distinguish themselves, the “progressive” and European Albanians, from the allegedly more backward Albanians living in the “diaspora” (Ferizaj 2018). In fact, the “elite” recycles the demeaning stereotypes used in the countries of emigration in order to enhance their own status (Paca 2015, Ferizaj 2018). The “diaspora Albanians” are thus often portrayed as uneducated *gastarbeiter* who “behave[d] in an uncultured and primitive fashion”, share poor clothing style, a backward and rural mentality as well as marginality in their country of settlement (Paca 2015, Leutloff-

Grandits 2017: 136). However, given the key financial role of the emigrants in Kosovo, this reuse of degrading stereotypes by Kosovo's inhabitants might also constitute a reaction to or retribution for their lower economic situation and financial dependency on the migrants (Pichler 2009).

Several activists who were encountered in the context of this study appear to be conscious of the "schatzi" label and negative stereotypes associated with backwardness. For example, one woman related a brief encounter with a friend in Prishtina during her vacation:

You know, I've lived longer in Switzerland than in Kosovo. I arrived when I was 16. Now, I will be 37 in May. I go there once a year, for a holiday. I say, there're too many changes in the mentality, it's not...only when I see Prishtina. It's not Prishtina; it's nothing to do with Prishtina. I went to the dentist. I later met a friend at the Grand Hotel. I couldn't recognise the streets. I said [to her]: "But what did you do?" [She replied] "Nothing, it was always like that." I said "No, it wasn't like that. There used to be a lot of space, greenery. There, now there're only cars, broken streets, etc". [...] The houses were no higher than two floors. They all had a garden, it was magnificent, magnificent. When I saw this, you know, I wept. "Oh, you're too emotional, I can see that you're a...", because they call us "schatzi". I said "No, I'm not emotional, I'm not a schatzi, but still." What kills me is that they don't think about the children. They try to make their house bigger, their villa...to take more. [...] Even the simplest citizen is dishonest. Oh, I don't know, they're always waiting for others to do something for them. That's too bad. [They say], "Yes, we can't afford it, we can't...you come from Switzerland and give us the money".

The narrator is "othered" as a "schatzi". She is considered "too emotional" and backward-looking to be able to understand the developments occurring in present-day Kosovan society. Furthermore, as the last sentence of the quotation also reveals, the interviewee is aware of the strong image of migrants from Switzerland as a source of financial support. She complains about the tendency of Kosovan inhabitants to rely "effortlessly" on the money coming from the "diaspora". The excerpt also demonstrates the moral obligation imposed on the migrants by the non-migrants to remit in their homeland (Carling 2008, Lacroix 2018). So, while the non-migrants denounce the excessive consumption habits of the migrants, they nevertheless also often apply moral pressure on the migrants by requiring support (Pichler 2009, Lacroix 2018).

To summarise, despite their active involvement in transnational practices, the former activists often complain about occupying an inferior symbolic position in Kosovo. They bemoan being omitted from the national memory and neglected by the Kosovan state, despite their enormous “sacrifice” on behalf of the national cause. They also suffer from being allegedly considered for their money and are often categorised as backward-looking.

Transnational strategies to improve the activists’ position in Kosovo

How do former activists in Switzerland respond to their perceived lack of recognition and negative categorisation in Kosovo? I analyse their narratives of the past as a resource they use to redraw the boundaries in order to achieve a better symbolic position. The analysis is based on the different boundary-making strategies proposed by Wimmer (2008a). While this section proposes to focus on four strategies cited in that research, it does not intend to scrutinise the effects of these discourses. Moreover, I take advantage of the adoption of a transnational perspective that makes it possible to reveal the boundaries constructed and the resulting categories in their entire cross-border complexity (Dahinden 2017)

Expanding the “Albanian nation”: Transnationalising the mobilisation in Switzerland

The first strategy pursued by the former activists interviewed is to extend the boundaries of the “Albanian nation” in order to include its members living abroad. They expand the different shared narratives of the “liberation” related in Kosovo by revealing whole chapters of their homeland’s history that took place outside Yugoslavia. This strategy is not only present in the interviews but can also be observed in the promotion, both in Switzerland and Kosovo, of several publications about migrants’ organisations, parties and individuals who were active on behalf of the national cause in the 1980s and 1990s in Switzerland.

Former LPK militants who still reside in Switzerland, for example, strive to include their activism in Switzerland within the broader heroic narrative of the “liberation struggle” conveyed in Kosovo. These people face a double exclusion from the dominant narrative of the armed resistance. First, the mainstream memory conveyed in Kosovo ignores the role of the Albanian-speaking population established outside the former Yugoslavia. They are thus forgotten because they lived and still reside outside their homeland. Second, the post-war narrative of the liberation struggle developed among KLA followers in the post-conflict period created a new “social hierarchy” that celebrated those who participated in the war and

stigmatised the others (Ströhle 2013: 250). While the LPK members in Switzerland adopted supportive positions during the war, for example by collecting funds for the KLA or recruiting KLA fighters abroad, they were not KLA soldiers and thus deserve a lower status, according to the new hierarchy.

To combat this double burden and expand the boundaries of inclusion, LPK activists underline the preponderant role played by their own organisation as the unique founder of the KLA. They underline the presence of most of the KLA founders and early decision-makers in Switzerland. One former LPK activist, for example, explained the creation of the KLA as follows:

Yes, that...look, Madam, to be honest, everything was organised from here [Switzerland]. But, for propaganda reasons, we always had to say that the initiative came from Kosovo. Unfortunately, it wasn't like that. [...] The main leaders were here [Switzerland], where the directives were given. Only after the war did the people go public. Because it was dangerous to say, that, 'Yes, this's our Head'.

Former LPK activists thus seek to transnationalise the KLA in order to include its members and allies living outside the Balkans.

Furthermore, former LPK activists mainly craft their engagement during the war in Switzerland as a personal sacrifice, the importance of which is comparable or even superior to direct participation in the fight. For example, a former journalist of the LPK *Voice of Kosovo*, a newspaper published in Switzerland but distributed internationally, explained his non-return to Kosovo in 1997-1998 along with many members of the LPK as follows:

No, I didn't go back. I wanted to. For me, it'd have been much easier to be there than here [Switzerland], because I found it somehow very painful to stay here. I was ready for that [fighting in the war]. And, for me, it'd have been easier to go there instead of stay here and follow the news. But someone also had to be there [Switzerland]. Well, the newspaper at the time was a means of telling the truth.

The interviewee attempts to extend the category of the "liberation fighter" by including those who did not directly engage in combat but nevertheless allegedly sacrificed themselves for the nation. He seeks to prove his worth by aligning himself with one of the core values of the post-war Kosovo: sacrifice.

This example shows how former LPK activists fight against their perceived exclusion from the national memory in Kosovo as members of the “diaspora” but also as supporters of the armed resistance who did not have an opportunity to engage directly in the conflict. They seek to enhance their status in Kosovo by extending the national boundaries in the dominant heroic narrative of the armed resistance to incorporate the activists in Switzerland.

All of the former activists interviewed adopt similar strategies, with the main aim of creating a form of “deterritorialised nation-state” (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc 1994: 269). They have a strong interest in underlining the crucial importance of their mobilisation abroad on behalf of the homeland and being accepted as leading members of the “nation” living in another country.

Crossing the boundary: integrating oneself into the “Albanian nation” in Kosovo

Another strategy is to seek to cross the boundary that excludes the “Albanians in the diaspora” by including oneself directly in the “Albanian nation” in Kosovo. In this case, contrary to the previous strategy, there is no attempt to transnationalise the boundary of the “nation”. The interviewees adopt one main strategy in order to reintegrate the “Albanian nation” in their homeland: showing proximity in terms of earlier homeland engagement, past membership in the same organisation and close relationships with celebrated heroes in the homeland.

Several activists spread across the political spectrum have adopted this strategy. This is the case for many interviewees who were mainly engaged in Switzerland in the 1980s. They aim to integrate one particular period of the mainstream narrative conveyed in Kosovo: the pre-KLA years of the 1980s. The mainstream narrative of the heroic armed resistance in Kosovo precisely praises this period: it not only celebrates KLA soldiers but also honours the pre-war generations of freedom fighters of the 1980s and 1990s (Schwandner-Sievers 2013).

The interviewees who were active in the 1980s often consciously attempt to integrate the generation of the early “martyrs fallen for the nation” by demonstrating their proximity to these heroes, particularly as several of the interviewees who were active in the 1980s were intimate with these “martyrs” as friends, relatives, neighbours or fellow prison inmates. For example, one former activist who arrived in Switzerland in the mid-1980s explains:

And I'm still alive. Despite this determination, I'm still alive. But? Agim Bajrami, and many of the friends I knew, I worked with, they're no longer alive. They went to fight and fell there. Thank God, our president made a very important decision. Our President of Kosovo, Krasniqi, named as Kosovo heroes the brothers Gërvalla, Kadri Zeka, Rexhep Mala and Nuhi Berisha who were lost and forgotten. He honoured them, and it felt good. Because they were our teachers, our heroes, right?

The interviewee seeks to draw benefits from his relationship with these “heroes” of the 1980s. The official recognition of these martyrs also partly involves the official recognition of his own engagement, as he was a member of their group and so shared the same determination to sacrifice himself in the fight.

Several activists of the 1980s have recently been actively promoting the memories of the 1980s via public events and publications in Switzerland and sometimes in Kosovo. They seek to capitalise on this proximity in order to gain respectability and esteem. They have a unique opportunity to gain a more advantageous position, just like their comrades in arms in the 1980s have achieved a privileged status in Kosovo.

Another possibility is to demonstrate proximity with Adem Jashari. This is the option which LDK members often choose. In particular, they pride themselves on their movement having trained the first “Albanian men” to fight in Kosovo⁸. Accordingly, the LDK sent soldiers to Albania at the beginning of the 1990s to prepare them for a future fight, years before the KLA emerged. The LDK interviewees in Switzerland, despite their non-violent discourses, seek to associate themselves with these combative acts, although they played no direct role in this initiative. In particular, they attempt to portray Adem Jashari as one of their own, against the widespread image of Adem Jashari as a KLA leader. One LDK leader explains:

Jashari, the legendary commandant [unclear] he was sent to Albania by the LDK. These were 250 people. They are the first fighters who went to Kosovo with machine guns. They had nothing to do with this [the KLA].

⁸ A group of former Kosovo Albanian policemen and officers loyal to the LDK Prime Minister in exile Bujar Bukoshi was sent to train in Albania in 1991 and 1992 (Judah 2008).

By claiming that Adem Jashari, the new “Father of the nation” in Post-War Kosovo, is on the LDK side, they reposition their movement at the centre of the “Albanian nation”. Concurrently, as members of the LDK, they also elevate themselves in the national hierarchy.

These examples demonstrate how former activists attempt to show proximity to post-War Kosovo heroes in order to join a more favourable category. Contrary to the first strategy presented, these forms of responses do not attempt to extend transnationally the boundary of national inclusion. They do not genuinely call into question the boundary produced in Kosovo but, rather, seek to integrate themselves into the “national we” imagined in their homeland.

Inverting the hierarchical ordering: elevating the “diaspora Albanians”

The analysis also demonstrates the development of a strategy that particularly focuses on challenging the stereotypes of backwardness with counter arguments that demonstrate the lower standing of the “Albanians in the homeland” compared with those in Switzerland. The strategy of “normative inversion” (Wimmer 2008a: 1037) seeks to reverse the hierarchy of the two categories: the allegedly retrograde and traditional members of the “diaspora” are praised rather than the “modern Albanians” in the homeland. One female activist, for example, seeks to invert the hierarchy defined in Kosovo in her explanation of the evolution of the status of women in recent years in Kosovo:

So, it was only in Prishtina [where women enjoyed extended freedom]. Then, they started in Pejë, Gjakovë, there were fewer...But this, this whole women’s liberation, this has become in the last ten [years]... extreme. Because they lost all the virtues of...of how a woman has to be. It is not going clubbing [that makes you a woman]. Every stage has its...what I did at 18, I wouldn’t do it today at 37. And this’s worse, back home. They’re mixing up everything. Even a mother who’s 37, she wears the same clothes as her daughter who’s 15. You saw them yourself. [unclear] But, even here [a city in Switzerland], I go out in my tracksuit, I don’t care. But there, you need a blow-dry, make up and need to dress to go to...[...] So, I have the values acquired during my upbringing: honesty, love, woman, man of his word. When you say something, then you should keep your word.

The interviewee thus retains the dichotomy of backwardness and modernity that separates the “Albanians” residing in the homeland from those in Switzerland, as conveyed in Kosovo.

However, she also adds a new intersecting category of difference based on essentialised discourses of gender. In particular, she distinguishes between two forms of feminine behaviour. On the one hand, the Albanian-speaking women living in Kosovo have adopted, during the last few years, new types of behaviour that demonstrate superficiality and a lack of feminine morality. On the other hand, the interviewee, who comes from Kosovo but lives abroad, sticks to the traditional – although considered outmoded in Kosovo – values that she learnt as a child in the 1970s and 1980s. In particular, she emphasises the importance of the core Albanian national value of “besa”,⁹ that implies that one keeps one’s word. The interviewee is thus attempting to invert the hierarchy by condemning the lack of morality of the women in Kosovo and opposing it to the older Albanian traditions. By criticising the women in Kosovo, who depart from the traditional Albanian values, she thus strengthens her position as a true “Albanian”. Although such essentialising discourses of femininity were not widely heard in the interviews, similar arguments have been raised as a response to stigmatisation in other research conducted in Switzerland (Duemmler, Dahinden, and Moret 2010). This study demonstrates how young, second generation males from the former Yugoslavia appear to praise feminine behaviour that follows the more conventional roles, in an attempt to invert the hierarchical ordering that allocates a subordinate role to “Albanians” in Swiss society (Duemmler, Dahinden, and Moret 2010).

Other interviewees resort to this strategy to demonstrate the moral superiority of their group of activists in Switzerland over other categories in Kosovo, particularly the new elite and political leaders. The criteria for this differentiation are usually grounded on values and virtues attached to the past engagement, such as solidarity, sacrifice, honesty and hard work, that are compared to the alleged selfishness, corruption, venality and opportunism of the current Kosovan rulers. One long-time LDK leader, for example, explained how the Fund of the Kosovo Government worked during the 1990s:

The Government was constituted after 1991 and went into exile to Germany, Stuttgart. It controlled the Fund together with our compatriots in Switzerland, where the money had to go. With all the mechanisms that exist in a state today, there are

⁹ The concept of “besa” was a central component of the Kanun, the ancient Albanian customary law. It represented a form of social contract based on honour. In the 19th century, the Albanian national movement included “besa” as a key value and principle of the Albanian nation, again a form of the word for ‘honor’. In the following periods, the concept was then used and interpreted differently, according to the circumstances. Today, the concept of “besa” retains its connotation of national unity and ‘honor’, although it is especially alive in rural Kosovo (Schwandner-Sievers 2010a).

problems, corruption but, at the time, no one ever thought something bad could be done with the money. Every activist, every Albanian, tried to help and didn't do anything bad. It was like that, ten years ago.

In this quote, the interviewee produces a common hierarchy between the current, corrupt Kosovo leaders who mismanage the new state and the honest activists of the 1990s in Switzerland, who only thought about supporting the national cause.

By trying to improve their position by inverting the hierarchical ordering, former activists however acknowledge and even strengthen the boundaries between the “Albanians in Kosovo” and the “diaspora”. They are willing to accept the boundary that distinguishes the “Albanians in Kosovo” from those in Switzerland in order to improve their position.

Contracting the boundaries: Crafting the narratives of the “Albanians in Switzerland”

Finally, several interviewees appear to be developing a narrative of the mobilisation that constitutes the Albanian-speaking population in Switzerland as a group distinct from the “Albanians in Kosovo”. This narrative distinguishes itself from the constructions of the past conveyed in Kosovo. This distinction can, for example, be observed in the pronominal forms sometimes adopted by the interviewees who differentiate between “them” in Kosovo and “us” in Switzerland. For example, one former LDK president explains the post-war relationships between the “Albanians” in Switzerland and in the homeland:

Now, it isn't like it was before. Now, they don't need much from us anymore. Our goals are to meet, our culture, integration. Many associations and many sections also have sport clubs that organise many activities, like football or other sports.

This quote also shows how Albanian-speaking migrants in Switzerland have reoriented their engagement: their associations no longer invest in Kosovo but instead concentrate on arranging cultural and sport activities for the Albanian-speaking population in Switzerland. Furthermore, several former activists attempt to develop a very inclusive story of the mobilisation in Switzerland. Departing from the memory struggles that have been taking place in Kosovo between different narratives of the past, they prefer to focus on the variety of contributions that furthered the cause in Switzerland. One man, who has been active in several organisations since the end of the 1980s, summarised the mobilisation in Switzerland as follows:

Yes, as time went on, there were new political parties and splits, but they were all pulling in the same direction. Whether Democratic League [LDK] or the Movement [LPK], those who were until then illegal. So, the left and right, they all pulled in the same direction. [They all] said we want the independence of Kosovo. And we all agreed on this. There wasn't a single Albanian who said 'No, I don't want independence', or 'I want to live under Serbia'. There was no one. And there is still no one today. And that was really a stroke of luck, because we argued over how, but we never argued over the goal. The goal was undisputed among all Albanians. Not only those from Kosovo but also those from the entire former Yugoslavia. And, yes, every Albanian made a contribution, according to his own means and ways. I was among them.

These memory entrepreneurs opt to praise “the Albanians” in Switzerland for their initiative, proactivity and creativity (Farquet 2018). They prefer to celebrate the commonalities of the people and provide a story of the past that unifies rather than divides the “Albanians” in Switzerland.

There appears to be a need for an alternative narrative, different from those told in Kosovo, that better suits the post-independence situation of the “Albanians in Switzerland”. Now, it is unclear whether this need to establish a boundary between the “Albanians” in Switzerland and those in Kosovo is a reaction to their disappointment regarding their position in the homeland and/or rather a consequence of the ever-closer ties that they have developed with their places of residence in Switzerland. On the one hand, several interviewees explain their decreasing engagement and interest in their homeland as a consequence of their disillusionment with their relationship with Kosovo. As a result, they often prefer to concentrate their attention on their life in Switzerland. One former activist, for example, clearly links his retreat from Kosovan political life and his refocusing on his family in Switzerland as a consequence of his exclusion:

I don't see, with the new parties, so much democracy, so much analysis, as was the case earlier [in the LPK in the 1980s and 1990s]. [...] But with them [politicians] in Kosovo now? And we [Kosovo Albanians abroad] are no longer interesting to them. And I said, 'If we're no longer interesting and if we can't decide anything, then I won't be active. I'll see, I'll try to make my children know me better'. I was

always travelling. We've two sons. They're 17 and 19. M. was born after the war. I've spent longer with M. but not with my sons.

Many former activists recall how they neglected their family, job and education during the years of engagement, as the national cause came first. With their resentment about the current situation in Kosovo, they now often convey a desire to refocus their priorities and end or reduce their involvement in transnational politics.

On the other hand, many explain their re-orientation towards Switzerland as the result of their decision not to return to live in their homeland. In the post-war years, many Albanian-speakers in Switzerland realised that, contrary to their enduring hopes, they would not reconstruct their life in Kosovo after the "liberation" (Iseni 2013). As a consequence, several individuals and organisations have concentrated on improving their own and their family's lives in Switzerland. These endeavours might have resulted in the reframing of a new definition and image of the "Albanians in Switzerland" that was more attuned to their situation in Switzerland (Farquet 2018). This tendency to assemble the "Albanians" in Switzerland around a distinct narrative of the past appears to go hand in hand with the emergence of new "Albanian" associations and organisations that develop critical discourses towards both the home and settlement countries (Iseni 2013).

Conclusion

This article highlighted the sense of disappointment among Albanian-speaking former activists from Switzerland in post-war Kosovo regarding their symbolic categorisation there. It explored the strategies of the boundary work they pursued in order to improve their situation. In particular, it focused on how they craft their narratives of engagement on behalf of the national cause as boundary work strategies.

The importance of this study is threefold. First, the article depicts the situation of Albanian-speaking migrants who felt that they dedicated everything to their homeland but never received any personal recognition in return. While their role is ignored in the national history in Kosovo, they also suffer from state neglect and feel considered inferior because of their alleged lack of taste and culture. Several reasons can be advanced to explain the discourses of othering and consequent demeaning symbolic status felt by the former activists. Economic discrepancies between the Albanians from the "diaspora" and those living in Kosovo constitute one possible

motive. While the migrants feel like “cash cows”, the local Albanians resent the display of the migrants’ wealth and economic power in Kosovo. For the Kosovans who suffer from economic dependency, portraying the migrants in an unfavourable light might be a strategy for rebalancing the relationship. In particular, for the urban elite, it is a chance to raise their own position as modern and European.

Furthermore, in other similar contexts, scholars have demonstrated how the state authorities, for instance in Morocco and Algeria, have sometimes feared the emergence of political competitors from abroad and thus attempt to keep the migrants under surveillance and prevent them from organising politically (De Haas 2007, Collyer 2012, Lacroix 2016). With their apparent wealth and past mass mobilisation for the homeland, migrant political activists might also represent a danger to the Kosovan political leaders, which could explain their non-recognition and neglect. Such a postulate would, however, need further investigation.

Second, the article demonstrates how former activists use the narratives of the past to improve their symbolic position. Indeed, they use their memories of their considerable engagement and their past roles as national activists and leaders as a resource in their endeavour to recover some of their earlier prestige and to become themselves “elite”. The article adopts an original approach by depicting their strategies by integrating a boundary making approach in the construction of their memories. It shows in particular different ways in which the past (as perceived in the present) can be used to draw boundaries. In this article, I highlighted in particular: 1) transnationalising the “Albanian nation” imagined in Kosovo; 2) including oneself in the “Albanian nation” in Kosovo; 3) inverting the hierarchical ordering between the “Albanians” in Kosovo and Switzerland respectively; and 4) crafting the “Albanians in Switzerland” as a separate, unified group.

These narratives contribute towards developing two different types of migrants’ memories: the “exilic” and the “diasporic” (Lacroix and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2013). The former is understood as a shared representation that emphasises the forced emigration from the homeland (Lacroix and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2013). In contrast, the “diasporic memory” refers to a collective representation of the past that “is not structured by a narration of the point of origin per se but, rather, is the outcome of a collective migratory trajectory, with the diaspora’s sense of distinctiveness, and of forming a minority, having thus appeared throughout the course of their emigration” (Lacroix and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2013: 687). On the one hand, former activists who

refuse to admit their symbolic rejection from the “Albanian nation” in Kosovo oppose the boundary erected between the two groups and tell stories that follow the current memories conveyed in Kosovo. On the other hand, several activists recognise the boundary created between the two groups and prefer to construct a satisfactory history for the “Albanians in Switzerland” that deviates from the models shared in Kosovo.

Third, by adopting a transnational perspective to address othering discourses, the article shows that identification processes are not only linked to categorisations in the country of settlement but also to external categorisations in the homeland. Indeed, as the “Albanians” living in Switzerland resent their inferior position in post-War Kosovo, their responses become transnational. They adopt strategies that target their low status not only in their host but also in their home country. In the same vein, this article tends somewhat to challenge the scholarship on the “deterritorialised nation-state”, that posits that citizens who live abroad remain part of their home country (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc 1994). As this example shows, transnational belonging to the homeland might prove challenging despite the numerous practices and relationships that Albanian-speaking migrants cultivate between Kosovo and Switzerland.

5.4 Nation-building, masculinity and entrepreneurship: memories of the “liberation of Kosovo” in Switzerland

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Abstract

Since the end of the Kosovo War in 1999 and the “liberation” of the territory from Serbian forces, narratives about the “freedom struggle” have been crafted and defended both in Kosovo and abroad. The transmission of these memories forms part of a broader effort to create a “national” history of Kosovo and constitute an “Albanian imagined community”. This article scrutinises the memories of the “liberation” produced by Albanian-speaking migrants who were active on behalf of their homeland in Switzerland. It explores the construction of masculinities within narratives collected via oral history interviews. In line with the literature on “nation” and gender in Kosovo, this research acknowledges the presence of two main forms of masculinity: the “heroic fighter” and the “pacifist”. However, it also demonstrates the crystallisation of the “entrepreneur”, an alternative type who integrates the transnational “neoliberal” discourses and proposes a more positive image of “Albanian men” in Switzerland.

Keywords: nation-building, entrepreneurship, transnationalism, masculinity, Kosovo, Switzerland

The mobilisation of the Albanian-speaking population to evict the Serbian authorities from Kosovo in the 1990s has been widely recounted, celebrated and debated since the ending of the Kosovo War in 1999 and the subsequent retreat of the Yugoslav forces from the province. These endeavours have taken place not only within Albanian-speaking countries in the Balkans but also in Western Europe, where thousands of Albanian-speaking migrants from the former Yugoslavia have been settling since the 1960s (Dahinden 2010b). Switzerland and Germany in particular represented in the 1980s and 90s the countries of Europe with the largest and most politically active Albanian-speaking population (Hockenos 2003).

Recalling the “liberation struggle” not only amounts to an intellectual effort to document and

interpret the past but also to a “nation-building” endeavour in the newly-created state of Kosovo. Indeed, by providing elements such as roots, a historical course and common beliefs, the narratives about the past constitute aspects of the “cultural stuff” that distinguish different “national” groups (Barth 1969: 15). In this case, it contributes toward defining “*Albanian-ness*” (Luci and Krasniqi 2006: 170). These are the sources of self-definition, offering fundamental values to a people that can be embodied in the narrative’s main figures (Duijzings 2000). At the same time, these stories might also help to glue together the members of the “nation” by raising their awareness of their allegedly shared background and “common fate” (Armstrong 1982: 9).

In Kosovo, various scholars have started to explore post-war memories and in particular the gender dimensions of the public narratives of the “national liberation”. While acknowledging the central role played by men in these memories, they have also demonstrated the construction of two prominent and opposing forms of masculinity: the “freedom fighters” and the “peace-loving” activists (Krasniqi 2009: 162). By highlighting the existence of these opposing narratives, their research contributes to a scholarly stance that has criticised the assumption of straightforward and mutually supportive links between masculinity and the “nation” (Bracewell 2000, Waetjen 2001). Despite recent endeavours to analyse the connections in greater depth, there remains little understanding of the relationship between masculinity and nationalist phenomena (Dominguez Andersen and Wendt 2015). Moreover, outside Kosovo, few efforts have yet been made to scrutinise the memories of the “national liberation” with a gender focus.

In this article, I will attempt to fill these gaps by exploring narratives of the “liberation” produced by former Albanian-speaking migrants from Yugoslavia in Switzerland. In particular, I will seek to contribute to the literature by highlighting the role of multiple discourse references across borders. More specifically, I will analyse oral history interviews conducted with activists who operated in Switzerland between 1981 and 1999. These years correspond to the main period of transnational mobilisation for Kosovo. Today, most of these activists are central actors in various migrants’ associations and projects both in Switzerland and transnationally. Some of them also occupy important positions within the Kosovan state institutions. They make interesting interviewees not only because of their involvement in the mobilisation but also because of their current dominant positions that enable them to circulate and impose their version of history.

First, I will demonstrate that the discourses of the “liberation” of the 1980s and 90s in Switzerland not only include images of the “heroic” and “peace-loving” masculinities but also a “neoliberal” narrative that portrays the activists, and to a certain extent the Albanian-speaking migrants at large, as “entrepreneurs”.¹ This re-reading of the past is being composed at the intersection between the discourses of the “nation”, masculinity and migration produced in the Kosovan, Swiss, transnational and international contexts. Second, I will demonstrate that the “entrepreneur” as the new role model is a masculine construction. The “entrepreneurial” norms only apply to male activists while women remain in hidden or peripheral roles. Third, I will show how this interpretation of the past contributes toward creating a consensual image of the transnational “Kosovo Albanian nation” that might offer a common self-understanding to the Albanian-speaking population in Switzerland. In this united “imagined community”, however, women remain in subordinate roles. Finally, I will argue that the image of the “entrepreneurial Albanian” is also put forward in order to counter the hitherto negative reputation of “Albanian” men in Switzerland.

Before explaining these developments, I will start by presenting the methodological issues of this study that is mainly based on oral history interviews. I will then outline the main literature on “nation-building”, masculinity and the nationalist memories of the “liberation of Kosovo”.

Methodology

This article investigates the connections between masculinities and the “nation” within the memories about the mobilisation on behalf of Kosovo among Albanian-speaking migrants from Yugoslavia in Switzerland. Here, I consider gender as a “discursive production” (Benwell 2014: 241) and thus observe how meanings based on language generate, confirm and spread the gender discourses (Ahl 2006, Marlow 2012). Such discourses might, for instance, indicate “how men can and should act, how they should think, and what are appropriate male attitudes interests and priorities [...]” (Marlow 2012: 63). Moreover, these discourses are not absolute but rather contingent upon time and space, which in the case of migrants might point to multiple references across transnational spaces (Marlow 2012, Erel and Lutz 2012).

I mainly examine gender configurations within oral history interviews conducted between 2009 and 2012 with Albanian-speaking migrants from the former Yugoslavia in Switzerland. I also draw on limited participant observation and documentary research. The interviews were

conducted with 50 migrants who engaged on behalf of the “Kosovo cause” in Switzerland between 1981 and 1999. Ten people were interviewed more than once. Seven interviews were held in Kosovo and the rest in Switzerland, where most of the activists reside on a discontinued or regular basis. The interviews were mainly conducted in French and German. The sample includes organisation leaders but also activists who did not formally belong to any political group. I only interviewed five women as a result of both the difficulty of locating former female activists and the frequent rejection of my invitation to an interview by female participants.

The analysis started with a careful reading of the transcribed interviews which quickly revealed the almost complete exclusion of women from the narratives. Faced with such male predominance, I decided to focus on the construction of masculinity in the narratives of the past activism collected. I then coded the interviews using HyperResearch to identify the elements producing these narratives of masculine experiences. I thus identified different attributes, such as specific moral values, attainments, activities, roles, views about the past actions as well as relations with other narratives’ characters. After this first cycle of coding, I reorganised the data through focused coding and further analysed these meta-codes (Saldana 2009). I also took advantage of the narrative aspects of the interviews and analysed each interview as a whole, looking in particular at the arrangement of the different sequences by the narrators (Kohler Riessman 2008). To identify the “basic storyline”, I reduced the narratives to summaries that shorten the accounts but retain the main developments and elements deemed important by the narrators (Maxwell and Miller 2010: 468-471).

Although I sought to distinguish the different images of masculinity encountered in the narratives, it is clear that no interviewee ever talked about them in an absolute way. Moreover, while some interviewees seem to mould their discourses on some well-known types and follow them closely almost throughout the interview, many others identify with different forms of masculinity during the same interview, skipping from one to another or blurring them.

“Nation-building”, masculinities and the memories of the “liberation of Kosovo”

Observing the links between gender and nationalist projects, Joane Nagel (1998: 243) famously declared that: “the scripts in which these roles are embedded are written primarily by men, for men, and about men, and that women are, by design, supporting actors whose roles reflect masculinist notions of femininity and of women’s proper ‘place’”. Faced with this masculine

domination, scholars have often underlined the mutually reinforcing relationship between masculine interests and nationalism. While gender discourses contribute toward forging “national” meta-narratives, these meta-narratives and practices of the “nation” uphold masculine power (Bhabha 1995, Waetjen 2001).

Other theorists have warned against positing an excessively direct and mutually supportive association between masculinity and nationalism, calling instead for a more contrasted as well as historically and politically situated analysis (Waetjen 2001). They have argued against considering the meaning of masculinity as fixed and stable, and have consequently underlined the changing articulation of particular forms of masculinity with nationalist discourses according to specific historical conditions (Bracewell 2000). Contested views of masculinity and men’s contrasted positions in society might have various influences on how the “nation” is imagined, who participates in this imaginative work and who benefits from it (Waetjen 2001). Recent literature on masculinity and “nation-building” in Kosovo has adopted such a nuanced perspective (Luci and Krasniqi 2006, Krasniqi 2009, Ströhle 2010). On the one hand, scholars have underlined the almost exclusive masculine focus of the domain as well as the near complete exclusion of “women” and femininity from the discourses about the recent past (Luci and Krasniqi 2006). On the other hand, Kosovo experts have offered a differentiated analysis of the link between “nation-building” and masculinity by highlighting the presence of two opposing types of masculinity within the public discourses and political references: the “heroic” and the “peace-loving” masculinities (Krasniqi 2009: 164).

The “heroic” type has dominated the post-war Kosovo narratives and political discourses about the resistance against Serbia (Di Lellio and Schwandner-Sievers 2006a, Luci 2011). It underlines the role of Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) fighters, who took up arms against Serbian forces at the end of the 1990s, as “national savours” (Krasniqi 2009: 163). This model constructs a “brave heroic male” (Krasniqi 2009: 163) and praises values such as armed resistance, martyrdom and self-sacrifice (Schwandner-Sievers and Ströhle 2012).

The “peace-loving masculinity” is mainly symbolised by Ibrahim Rugova, historical leader of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) and long-term president of Kosovo. He is usually recognised as the foremost defender of non-violent resistance. He represents in particular “a type of forward-looking civic nationalism premised on the Western construct of the nation-state” (Krasniqi 2009: 161). Furthermore, Ibrahim Rugova is also known as the “father of the

nation”, a role that he symbolically endorsed during the early 1990s and that regained importance in the memory struggle since his death in 2006 (Schwandner-Sievers 2010b).

Kosovo experts have demonstrated the specific historical conditions in which these forms of masculinity are embedded and their role in the production of different political visions, values and leaders. The narratives are rooted in two distinct periods: the non-violent resistance against Serbia under Ibrahim Rugova as well as the intra-Kosovan reconciliation of the early 1990s and the “fighting back” mood of the war period (Luci 2011: 3). As the war ended in 1999, Kosovo saw the emergence of two opposing and distinct elites that fought for power (Ströhle 2010). On one side, there was a traditional elite formed under Socialist Yugoslavia. These leaders had ruled the Albanian-speaking population in Kosovo during most of the 1990s via parallel structures largely supported by the Albanian-speaking population abroad (Ströhle 2010). These structures operated simultaneously with the official Kosovan state institutions run by the Serbian regime since it took political control of the Yugoslav province at the end of the 1980s and imposed harsh politics of exclusion and discrimination on Albanian-speakers. On the other side, a new emerged: the leadership drawn from the KLA ranks. Often coming from the countryside, these individuals had opposed the Yugoslav state under the socialist regime while embracing the strict Marxist-Leninist doctrine defended by Albania (Ströhle 2010). As one of the weapons in their struggle for power, the new elite endeavoured to downgrade its opponent with the help of a new master narrative of liberation that judged individuals on their participation in the armed conflict against the Serbian forces (Ströhle 2013).

No scholar has hitherto endeavoured to address questions of memorialisation and gender among the Albanian-speaking population outside the Balkans. Yet the mobilisation of the Albanian-speaking diaspora on behalf of Kosovo has earned a solid reputation within the research on political transnationalism. Indeed, researchers have often noted the decisive role played by the massive engagement of the Albanian-speaking population, particularly in Germany and Switzerland (Adamson 2002, Koslowski 2005, Skrbis 1999). They have highlighted the wide diversity of activities and strategies undertaken such as humanitarian and cultural projects, financial transfers, political lobbying, information campaigns and the planning of armed resistance in Kosovo (Hockenos 2003, Perritt Jr. 2008, Dahinden 2010b, Moore 2010, Koinova 2010).

This article proposes to expand on the still relatively poorly understood connections between “nation-building” and masculinity by exploring the narratives of the “liberation of Kosovo” in Switzerland (Dominguez Andersen and Wendt 2015). In particular, it will highlight the role of multiple discourses across borders. The analysis falls within the latest developments in masculinity studies that seeks to take greater account of transnational dimensions (Hearn 2015). Such a move has especially contributed toward underlining the importance of colonialist and imperial processes for the construction of masculinity and “nation-building” as well as highlighting marginalised, non-Western and diasporic masculinities (Farahani 2013, Dominguez Andersen and Wendt 2015).

Narratives of the transnational “Albanian entrepreneur”

In this article, I argue that a particular form of masculinity, the “entrepreneur”, penetrated the nationalist discourses of the “liberation of Kosovo” in Switzerland. Although this interpretation has not reached the status of the “peace-loving” and “heroic” forms that dominate memories of the struggle in Switzerland, it still largely infuses them. To analyse the particular connections between this form of masculinity and “nation-building”, I will start by briefly examining the transnational expansion of “neoliberal” discourses and their integration in mainstream thinking and practices. I will then explain the different forms in which the “entrepreneur” is portrayed in these discourses and show their masculine orientation. Finally, I will explore the consequences of conceiving the transnational “Kosovo Albanian nation” as an “entrepreneurial people”.

The “entrepreneur” in the “neoliberal” discourses

At the outset, the term “neoliberalism” related to a theory that called for the reconsideration of the role of the state and individual responsibility in society (Springer, Birch, and MacLeavy 2016). Welfare states in particular were criticised for their inefficiency, excesses and tendency to extend the citizens’ dependency (Rose and Miller 1992). Individuals, for their part, were recognised as possessing an “entrepreneurial” potential that must be liberated under free market conditions that would teach them to make the best life choices in order to ameliorate their situation (Dardot and Laval 2010). States had thus to be reduced and replaced by individual “entrepreneurship” (Rose and Miller 1992).

From the 1970s onward, a mixture of principles and norms often assembled under the general term “neoliberalism” have been gaining in popularity and acceptance in the fields of economic and political thinking as well as practices (Harvey 2006, du Gay and Morgan 2013). Western governments, for example, started imposing a “progressive” master narrative about the key role of “entrepreneurship” within the state’s economy (Perren and Jennings 2005). They also embraced measures to reduce the state’s presence by “marketising” public services and transferring the authorities’ responsibilities to society (Marttila 2013). Economic logic based on opportunity seeking, competition, cost and benefit assessment and investment subsequently started to apply to all components of social life (Rose 1999). These ideas affected not only the political authorities but also various types of organisations, institutions and even individuals’ behavior (du Gay and Morgan 2013).

As “neoliberal” logic increasingly came to infuse the mainstream discourses and practices, the “entrepreneur” became the “general role model for the social subjects’ conduct of themselves” (Marttila 2013: 4). In the everyday discourses and practices, individuals have largely been transformed into “entrepreneurs” who are constantly “embracing risks and taking chances” (Mirowski 2013: 119). Studies about “entrepreneurship” in Europe and Northern America have highlighted several notorious representations and narratives of the “entrepreneur” and “entrepreneurship” in the popular, management, business and economic discourses (Casson and Casson 2013). First, the “entrepreneur” as an “opportunity-seeker” is one of the most popular images (Dardot and Laval 2010). This “enterprising” individual is constructed as alert, active, competitive, able to identify opportunities and ready to take risks in order to maximise his results in different domains of life, such as education, health, employment, etc. (Ong 2006, Dardot and Laval 2010). Second, the “neo-schumpeterian innovator” represents another “entrepreneurial” character that gained widespread prominence in the 1970s and 80s (Dardot and Laval 2010). This figure is routinely described as a pioneer, always ready to take initiatives. He is depicted as possessing traits such as strong motivation, a desire for success, open-mindedness, boldness and a high consideration of his own work (Ogbor 2000, Bruni, Gherardi, and Poggio 2004, Grebel 2007). Finally, the “entrepreneur” is often constituted as an extraordinary individual, a hero, who enjoys immense prestige in western societies (Anderson and Warren 2011). For example, contemporary narratives highlight stories such as the “heroic entrepreneur” who is “succeeding against all odds” or the “classical narrative of the poor boy made good” (Smith 2002 as quoted in Smith and Anderson 2004, 135).

In the fields of international development politics and migration research, migrants acting as transnational “entrepreneurs” and development actors in their home countries have also enjoyed great popularity in recent years. Numerous international and non-governmental organisations, states of origin and of destination as well as academic circles have encouraged and promoted the transfer not only of financial resources but also of human and social capital toward development since the late 1990s (Faist 2008). Such reasoning provides a highly positive image of migrants as the “vital agents of international development” (Glick Schiller and Faist 2010: 2).

Crafting the “entrepreneur” in the narratives of the “liberation of Kosovo”

Narratives about the engagement of Albanian-speaking migrants from Yugoslavia in Switzerland from the 2010s widely include “neoliberal” norms and values. In particular, the narrators elevate the model of the “entrepreneur” as a central figure with whom they attempt to associate themselves.

First, the mobilisation in Switzerland is often constructed as an “enterprise” conducted by leaders who seek to exploit the best opportunities and are ready to take risks to further their cause in a highly competitive environment. One ex-KLA member, for example, explains how the leaders of the Popular Movement for Kosovo (LPK), a formerly Marxist-oriented organisation that presents itself as the founder of the KLA, devised their engagement:

We played the game. Do you understand what I mean? We played like chess, with pawns. What is on our side that will enable us to win? We got what we wanted. [...] We knew, we determined these assumptions. From 1981 to the beginning of the war, we organised demonstrations all over Europe. In 1990, the demonstration lasted two weeks. It was organised in order to prepare the world, for them to see the injustice we were facing. With all these demonstrations, we wanted to show the world that something unjust was happening here [in Kosovo]; for the world to see it and to help us. Hence, it took 20 years of work. That was strategic work. We thought about everything: what steps led us to our objective, and we knew we couldn’t win against Serbia alone. We undertook the steps that moved NATO and UNO. That was our strategy.

The engagement described appears to leave nothing to chance but rather to be grounded on precise calculations. Likewise, the interviewees evaluate their past activities by comparing them with those of their “competitors” based on cost-effective arguments. One former activist of the

LPK, for example, analyses the competition between his organisation and the Kosovo Government in exile regarding the collection of funds outside Kosovo:

That's the problem, madam. Because, for example, as a worker in Switzerland. If I had 1000 [Francs] to give and I didn't know how to donate my money. Bukoshi [the Kosovan Prime Minister in exile], the LDK, they were clever. They created this 3% Fund, and said: 'Look, people', I say this symbolically maybe. 'Look, dear Albanians, we'll give you freedom but the houses will stay [intact] as they are, right?' And we said, 'Dear Albanians, if you want freedom, the houses... they must also disappear', and this is what happened. And the people were more influenced by this at the beginning. Because freedom and my house will remain, that's an interesting offer. I give you Mr. Bukoshi 1000 Francs or 1000 Deutschmarks.

This quote establishes the transnational scene as a competitive environment in which various groups and activists with different strategies and arguments fight for control over resources and people. For their part, the Albanian-speaking migrants are depicted as individuals behaving according to rational cost-benefit calculations.

Second, the narrators also often craft an image of themselves and their co-activists as pioneers. They frequently underline the innovative and novel character of the activities undertaken as well as the flexibility, creativity and activism of the militants. This is, for example, the case of the story told by N. J., who first arrived in Switzerland to work during his university vacations in the mid-1980s and later decided to remain there as he was experiencing political and financial difficulties in Kosovo. In Switzerland, he found a job as a lorry driver and, over the years, climbed the professional ladder so that, by the time of the interview, he was a trade union representative. He succeeded too in accessing higher education in Switzerland. During those years, he also managed to "found" a family and "provide" financially for it, although he often "failed" to fulfil his paternal obligations, particularly regarding his children's education, because of a lack of time. N. J. declared himself to be one of the founders of the Albanian cultural association of his town in the early 1990s. He was president of the club for five years, which was formed due to the migrants' need to gather together and support each other in the face of the serious human rights problems in Kosovo. The association also participated in integration and cultural projects as well as children's education in Albanian language. N. J. was also the founder of the LDK for his town, over which he presided for two years. The creation of the LDK was necessary because it brought about for the first time a non-Marxist and "legal" organisation that was struggling for Kosovo, thus breaking away from the past clandestine, pro-

Albania groups that were active in Switzerland. He interpreted these as harmful to Kosovo's cause. He quickly became dissatisfied with the LDK, however, as he saw this broad, popular movement becoming an exclusive party that was competing with other Albanian organisations. He thus decided to withdraw from it and later participated in the creation of a new association with other "intellectuals" who, like him, regretted the fragmentation of the forces. This new association sought to "gather together and activate this intellectual potential". During the interview, N. J. also mentioned working towards creating a new organisation that could represent the "Albanians" within the Swiss state institutions.

Like this example, the narratives collected are often constructed as a succession of initiatives and innovations that gave form to new organisations and methods of engagement. These initiatives often not only seek to contribute to the "liberation of Kosovo" but also address the situation of Albanian-speaking migrants in Switzerland in the fields of integration and representational politics. Moreover, many of the interviewees, like N. J., display a tendency to belong to multiple and/or successive groups of migrants. Thus, the stories not only praise the activists' engagement for their homeland but also generally underline the Albanians-speaking migrants' propensity toward innovation, adaptation and proactivity.

Third, many of the interviewees portray themselves as exceptional individuals. They insist on the unique skills and considerable engagement provided to the movement. Moreover, they also often recall adventurous stories that started with distressful conditions in Switzerland and led to extraordinary experiences and achievements. This is the case for B. M. who was active in an underground organisation in Kosovo and fled the country in 1990. In Switzerland, he occupied various roles in the LPK at the local and international levels and became the head of the KLA diplomatic group during the war. As such, he met the highest American and European diplomats while still at university in Switzerland. He explains his first encounter with Richard Holbrooke, the then US special presidential envoy to the Balkans, in June 1998:

There was a conference in Crans-Montana. Fatos Nano, the Albanian Prime Minister, was there. I went to see him there, as the Prime Minister of another state, the motherland as we said. On returning home, he called me and said: 'Could you please come at 23:00?' We did not have a mobile phone at the time to communicate easily. R. A. [a colleague from the diplomatic group] was returning home by train...so I decided to go alone. So, Holbrooke invited me to a meeting at 23:00 in

Crans-Montana. And I had an Audi, a medieval car. I was in front of the hotel where there were many very important personalities. I had no smart clothes...so I entered the hotel...I wanted to arrive early. You never know, with the traffic...this was not a meeting to miss. At about 22:00, I sat, drank a coffee, smoked a cigarette. And the waiters, every time they came to clean the ashtray, were surprised: 'What's this guy with an 86 Audi doing here?', 86, the Middle-Ages. And at exactly 23:00, four of Holbrooke's bodyguards arrived: 'Mr. M.?' 'Yes.' I'm tall. They were so tall, I felt like I was surrounded by four skyscrapers, like that. So I went to the luxurious apartment. 'Good evening, do you speak French?' 'Yes' [...]

The narrative continues about further close meetings with leading US diplomats that quickly resulted with the recognition of the KLA as a partner to include in the peace talks and the conditional US consent to the independence of Kosovo. According to B. M., after these meetings, the United States changed their policy toward Kosovo and started supporting the KLA, a group that had hitherto been condemned for its terrorist acts. B. M. tells the story of these meetings as extraordinary achievements for an inexperienced man.

Finally, the narratives also reflect the more specific discourses of the "migration-development nexus" and migrants' entrepreneurship currently prevailing in the fields of migration as well as development policy and studies. The interviewees like to mention their post-war engagement in developing initiatives and talks regarding Kosovo within various fora that are often connected with the Swiss authorities. In particular, they frequently mention a desire to invest in and transfer their knowledge back to Kosovo. One activist explains:

I know that, after so many years of my life, I also belong here. I can't imagine no longer having a relationship with Switzerland. I see my next task like that: the transfer of duties and knowledge as well as contacts and bridge building. I want to support my fellow countrymen and women here and in their country of origin. I've always gained a lot, personally and professionally, from my voluntary engagement on behalf of others. It wasn't my goal; it just happened. I [collected] all of these positive experiences through a desire to learn something new so that I could transfer this knowledge to my country of origin and society. Adapt it to the country of origin, to the society of origin and also to the countrymen and women here. This affected

me and I'd feel disappointed if I were unable to transfer this. This preoccupies me now more than before. It is highly probable that this will be my next challenge.

These words show the impact on the migrants' discourses of "neoliberal" measures and policies that attempt to transfer the responsibility from the states and international organisations to individuals as the new agents of development.

The adjustment of the narratives of transnational engagement for Kosovo to "neoliberal" discourses thus succeeds in constructing a new type of activist, "the entrepreneur", who is ready to exploit opportunities, face risks and innovate in a competitive environment. He is also portrayed as a hero who started from nothing and succeeded through great achievements and as a transnational actor building bridges between different countries and people.

The transnational "Kosovo Albanian entrepreneur" as a masculine model

The central character of the "entrepreneur" in the narratives of transnational mobilisation is primarily created as a masculine connoted figure. Indeed, the stories project the current "neoliberal" norms of behavior, thinking, attitudes and interests exclusively to the male militants of the 1980s and 90s. How has this masculine dominance of the term "entrepreneur" come about? First, the narratives collected mainly depict the mobilisation as men's stories and largely exclude women's experiences. This focus testifies to the partial division of the roles along gender lines in the actual mobilisation as well as the dominance of male activity sectors in the memories. In the 1990s especially, male migrants led the main political organisations that operated in Switzerland. For their part, women were engaged in cultural, humanitarian and educational work. They also demonstrated along with the men and children in the streets, participated in women's organisations and were responsible for transmitting "national" values to the younger generation. However, as Albanian-speaking scholars, journalists and former activists constitute the history of the struggle for the "national liberation", they hardly ever recall these activities that were dominated by female migrants.

Second, the general image of men and women in the narratives is often constructed according to opposing and contrasting relations. Generally, women are mainly depicted as passive, self-effacing dependents. In Kosovo, they are frequently described as the victims of rape. They are the mothers who mourn their children lost in the war or imprisoned, or those who are unable to

raise their children because of their husband's absence or the difficult economic situation. In Switzerland, they often only exist in the narratives as a member of the family. For their part, men are conventionally described as energetic, innovative and creative.

Even the rare narratives or short passages directly mentioning the women who engaged in the mobilisation confirm this opposition. Independently of the interviewee's gender, the women engaged for the "national" cause are frequently portrayed as dependent figures. Indeed, they are almost all brought into the discussion as the wives or daughters of male activists and do not enjoy an activist status of their own. This is confirmed by the difficulty I encountered in locating and convincing female interviewees to participate in this research. They were often unwilling to narrate their experience because they did not consider themselves as "activists", a term mainly reserved for men. Moreover, the "wives" and "daughters" are portrayed as shadowy helpers, such as secretaries, typists, accountants and cooks. They play peripheral roles compared to their husbands or fathers who represent the norm in the matter of engagement. The portrayal of female militants, apart from a few rare exceptions, thus remains in the traditional realm of passivity and support in opposition to that of their husbands and fathers who were responsible for deciding, taking initiatives and leading the struggle. The image created of the women engaged in the "national" cause does not fit with that of the "entrepreneurial" character.

These findings are in line with the literature on gender and "entrepreneurship" that has long demonstrated how the mainstream thinking about "entrepreneurs" and "entrepreneurship" clearly belongs to the masculine realm. Indeed, the prevailing discourses, media and academic research commonly conceive the "entrepreneur" as a man (Ogbor 2000, Hamilton 2014). For example, the "entrepreneur" is characteristically defined by images that typically evoke men: "the entrepreneur as the conqueror of unexplored territories, the lonely hero, the patriarch" (Bruni, Gherardi, and Poggio 2004: 407). Similarly, "entrepreneurship" is described in terms such as accomplishment, initiative and risk taking, that belong to the traditional masculine domains of activity and pro-active behavior in opposition to common feminine designations like passivity, dependency, intuition and sensitivity (Bruni, Gherardi, and Poggio 2004, Hamilton 2013).

Moreover, discourses about the "entrepreneur" in Kosovo do not deviate from this general tendency. There, the concepts of "entrepreneur" and "entrepreneurship" gained in importance in a post-communist and post-war context (Olaison 2014). This was a time characterised by a

large and influential presence of international organisations imposing Western models (Olaison 2014). The “entrepreneurs” thus came to be conventionally conceived as men while female experiences of management and building up businesses are silenced (Olaison 2014). As such, the Albanian-speaking migrants interviewed for this study appear to share the same understanding as that present in Kosovo of the “entrepreneur” as a masculine connoted character.

The “entrepreneurial” narrative: toward a more consensual memory and self-representation?

The “entrepreneur”, as the new “Albanian” masculine model, emerges within discourses that target both the Albanian-speaking population and the wider public opinion in Switzerland. First, the “entrepreneurial” discourse about the transnational “Kosovo Albanian nation” corresponds to an endeavour to unite “Kosovo Albanians” in Switzerland under common “neoliberal” values and principles. Indeed, the narrative, created in a transnational context, appears to be a promising compromise for addressing the long-standing memory conflict. This new version has the advantage of creating a new type of man that does not completely reject the two dominant versions but rather manages to retain and integrate many of their main features. It thus recognises that there are several different ways to be a man. The figure of the “entrepreneur” fits well with that of the “fighter” as both characters traditionally enjoy heroic and extraordinary tales of risk-taking and adventure. The “entrepreneur” is, at the same time, a typical expression of the western “neoliberal” “modernity” embraced by Ibrahim Rugova and the LDK.

Furthermore, the “neoliberal” narrative shapes the migrants and their activities in terms that do not correspond to the traditional ideologies and politics that have hitherto prevailed in the memory contest and thus appear more neutral. Indeed, the engagement corresponds to the constant search for a variety of innovative solutions to solve Kosovo’s “domination” by Serbia. This alternative version does not focus on legendary figures such as Ibrahim Rugova or Enver Hoxha, the communist ruler of Albania, or on political and economic doctrines like western democracy, capitalism and Marxism-Leninism. Hence, the new narrative is sufficiently flexible to accommodate many different types of activities, from the most peaceable and intellectual to the most contentious and life threatening. These activities however still occupy fields that are conventionally understood as masculine such as politics, public life and violence, in opposition to the private realms traditionally inhabited by women. Therefore, although this re-reading

succeeds in delivering a history that reconciles different narratives into a heterogeneous but united memory, it remains divisive in terms of gender.

Furthermore, the entrepreneurial narrative accommodates more easily the reality of the mobilisation in Switzerland, in which many activists switched from one organisation to another or created new ones whose names have not made it into the public domain. To date, the traditional confrontation between partisans of the “freedom fighter” and the “non-violent resistant” has resulted in condemning and often designating as “traitors” the activists who participated in various organisations and shared evolving political views. Today, changing the discourse of reference and praising “neoliberal” values contributes toward their rehabilitation: their flexibility, mobility, creative spirit and continuous innovations are hailed. These integrative efforts however only concern “Albanian men” as women remain in the same subordinate situation in the collective “Kosovo Albanian” self-understanding in Switzerland. Finally, the construction of the past in “entrepreneurial” terms appears to have directly targeted me, as a Swiss researcher, and more generally public opinion in Switzerland and beyond. Since the 1990s, Albanian-speaking migrants have suffered from a poor reputation in Western Europe (Schwandner-Sievers 2008). In Switzerland in particular, young Albanian-speaking men are often portrayed within the media and mainstream opinion as “reckless drivers” and “Balkan machos/violent” (Burri Sharani et al. 2010: 39). By transforming activists into modern “entrepreneurs” and adopting the currently fashionable “migration and development” discourse, the interviewees endeavour to produce a more progressive image of their current selves and escape the hitherto degrading labelling.

Conclusion

The narratives of “entrepreneurial” masculinity propose an interpretation of the recent “national” past that is unknown in Kosovo. This alternative model manages to integrate the dominant “brave heroic” and “peaceful” images while simultaneously proposing a more consensual, progressive and positive image of “Albanian men”. This contemporary re-reading of the 1980s and 90s appears to be embedded in the recent transnational circulation of the wide-ranging “neoliberal” norms and their translation into states’ policies and everyday practices. Moreover, this new interpretation also finds its inspiration in the activists’ exposure to discourses promoted by international organisations, states (in this case mainly Switzerland) and

research institutions that urge migrants to take an active role in the development of their homeland.

By depicting the “Kosovo Albanian nation” as an “entrepreneurial people”, memory creators propose an interpretation that unites the hitherto antagonist narratives of the “nation” and their corresponding masculinity notions. The imagined transnational “Kosovo Albanian nation”, based on seemingly unified memories, might, in turn, potentially reconcile memory creators and defendants. Moreover, a widely-shared and strong narrative about the past might also contribute toward eliciting a common self-understanding as well as feelings of belonging and cohesion among the wider Albanian-speaking population in Switzerland. However, as this compromise relies on the masculine connoted figure of the “entrepreneur”, the imagined transnational “Kosovo Albanian nation” remains divided along gendered lines. The direct benefits for “Albanian women” of this re-reading of the past thus appear to be missing. Furthermore, the fashionable and contemporary discourses of “entrepreneurship” propose an image of a knowledgeable, constructive and modern “Albanian man” that aims to counter the negative stereotypes widely shared among the public in Switzerland.

By rearticulating the “Albanian people” with “neoliberal” discourses, memory creators are appropriating masculine ideals originating from other contexts and historical periods. They create an “imagined community” that is not based on narrow “national” values but on “entrepreneurial” logic that is widely shared across the world. Consequently, it may be questioned whether such endeavours are contributing toward de-nationalising “Albanian-ness”. In turn, this “entrepreneurial model” might convey “neoliberal” values and interests that escape narrow “national” thinking and influence the common self-understanding and position of Albanian-speaking migrants in Switzerland vis-à-vis other “national groups”.

Finally, given the diffusion of “neoliberal” thinking and practices across the globe, it would be interesting to research other cases of nationalist memories among Albanian-speaking migrants. For example, scholars might perform a similar study in the United Kingdom, where the privatisation of public assets has been largely advertised and implemented by all governments since Margaret Thatcher (Eagleton-Pierce 2016).

Notes

1 Although many of the narratives collected include “entrepreneurial” logic and norms, this does not mean that the interviewees embrace “neoliberalism” as an ideology. On the contrary, many are former Marxist-Leninists who still hold leftist political views.

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6 Conclusion

This PhD research started as a historical work on the transnational mobilisation of the Albanian-speaking population in Switzerland in the 1980s and 1990s. It then changed focus to concentrate on how former activists narrate national belonging in the memories of their engagement in Switzerland. In this last section, I will briefly re-state the main purpose and findings of the study. I will then comment on its limitations and future research avenues and conclude with the main contributions made to the research area that concerns itself with Albanian-speaking migrants as well with the study field of nationhood and ethnicity.

6.1 Main purpose and findings

The thesis aimed to explore how Albanian-speaking former activists narrate their belonging to the “nation” several years after their homeland mobilisation. During the 1980s and 1990s, these men and women passionately engaged on behalf of their homeland. This was a time of intense identification and attachment to the “Albanian nation”. Many of them were even ready to give their life to “liberate” their homeland. They drastically reduced their engagement on behalf of Kosovo after the withdrawal of the Serbian forces from the province at the end of the 1998-1999 war.

This PhD work is part of the fairly recent trend in the field of nationalism that studies how nationhood is reproduced and conveyed in everyday life and away from its most extreme forms (Billig 1995, Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008). Instead of studying the emergence of the “nation” and the nation-state over a long period of time, like most previous scholars, these researchers prefer to focus on how nationhood is cultivated and maintained in ordinary life situations. The thesis also adopted a micro approach that makes it possible to scrutinise the reproduction of nationhood according to specific socio-historical contexts (Brubaker 2009). On the one hand, this meant taking into account the transnational context in which the former activists are embedded. More specifically, I examined the position of the research participants in terms of self and external identification and considered the diversity of the discourses that they encounter within the local, national, transnational and international spaces. On the other hand, this also implied paying particular attention to the reconfiguration of the symbolic boundaries and categories over time in the transnational fields in which the research participants are embedded. I attempted to take greater account of the role of time and history in the production of discourses of belonging. In particular, I distinguished different conceptions of Albanianess that have

changed over time: discourses of victimisation, active protests, armed struggle, democratic mobilisation and entrepreneurship.

Furthermore, I conceived the narratives as a means that people use to make sense of both their experiences and of themselves (Chase 2003, Somers 1994). Through the narratives of the past, they are able to construct a self that corresponds to their needs and wishes in their present social context (Halbwachs 1997, Misztal 2003). At the same time, the narratives of the past also constitute the “cultural stuff” that are used to draw boundaries between groups (Barth 1969). They create categories and define who does or does not belong to a group. They are also used to create hierarchies within groups, by dividing people into higher and lower symbolic positions.

In this study, I have explored how the former activists constructed Albanianness and expressed national belonging in three different areas. First, I scrutinised how they narrated their increasing sense of national belonging developed during the demonstrations on behalf of the national cause in the 1980s. They explained how they felt more “Albanian” and also closer to other “Albanians” by moving in a crowd and shouting together slogans about Kosovo. In the demonstrations organised in the 1980s, but also during the mass meetings of the 1990s, national belonging became synonymous with festive and exhilarating atmospheres and relationships. During the commemorations of the 30th anniversary of the first demonstration held abroad in 2011, the former activists appeared to be longing to experience the same thrilling atmosphere again. On the anniversary, they had a chance to revive this exceptional period of their life. This was not only the occasion to meet with former co-activists and remember the old times but also to receive some acknowledgment for their engagement and rise temporarily to a more privileged status.

Furthermore, I also scrutinised how the former activists conceived their sense of cohesion and belonging developed during the demonstrations. They explained the state of “effervescence” (Durkheim 1995/1912) reached in terms of their life story. They adapted the narratives of their life to integrate the demonstrations in ways that made the extraordinary feelings that they had developed meaningful. As such, they conveyed the two mainstream discourses about what it meant to be an activist in the 1980s - the intellectuals and the workers – and combined them with the feelings that had arisen during the protests.

Second, I explored how the former activists constructed Albanianness in ways that help them contest their perceived low symbolic position in Kosovo. I first demonstrated how the former activists who remained in Switzerland have suffered from what they understand as a low status in Kosovo in the post-war years. They complain that they have not been recognised or thanked for their mobilisation and “sacrifice”. They feel let down by the new state and also suffer from being cast in negative terms as members of the “diaspora” in Switzerland.

The research participants used the narratives of the past engagement in order to improve their position in their homeland. They composed their stories following different boundary-making strategies that were understood as possibilities to regain some form of symbolic recognition. They sometimes attempt to expand the boundary of Albanianness in Kosovo to include themselves, as members of the “Albanian nation” abroad. Often, they conceive Kosovo as a transnational nation-state and the Albanian-speaking people as a transnational nation. Indeed, for most of the research participants, the nation-state clearly represents an entity that naturally stretches across borders to unite all of the members of the “nation” living in other states. Borders are usually not seen as a barrier to national inclusion. They also seek to cross the boundary to include themselves directly in the “Albanian nation” in Kosovo. In such cases, they tend to convey an “exilic” type of memory, as they still take their homeland as the starting point and centre of their narrative (Lacroix and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2013: 687). In other cases, they endeavour to change the values attributed to each side of the boundary, by elevating the “diaspora Albanians” compared to those still in Kosovo. In a fourth situation, the former activists also attempted to imagine a new story of Albanianness in Switzerland, distinct from that told in Kosovo. In these two cases, and especially in the last one, the research participants appeared to compose distinct memories that become independent from those of the homeland, the “diasporic memories” (Lacroix and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2013: 687).

In fact, it seems that several research participants hoped to see their standing also improve due to my research project. For them, my work represents a possibility to have their mobilisation published and discussed within a broader audience, which could bring some form of recognition. As such, the boundary-making strategies adopted and the resulting categorisations of Albanianness were not only crafted for me, but often also probably for a larger imagined audience.

Third, I scrutinised how some Albanian-speaking migrants in Switzerland have recently endeavoured to imagine themselves in a new way; namely, as “entrepreneurs”. In recent years, several authors have demonstrated how the figure of the “entrepreneur” tends to be imagined as a masculine connoted character (Ogbor 2000, Hamilton 2014). Indeed, “entrepreneurs” are conventionally conceived as adventurers who are ready to take risks and initiatives in order to discover new territories, a typical male picture (Bruni, Gherardi, and Poggio 2004, Hamilton 2013). As such, the newly-imagined “Albanian” figure in Switzerland tends to overlook women. This new form of Albianness seems to serve at least two objectives. On the one hand, the “Albanian entrepreneur” serves to reconcile past antagonisms between opposing memories and groups of activists. On the other hand, the “entrepreneur” represents currently a relatively positively connoted and popular figure, which definitely represents an advantage for Albanian-speaking people who still suffer from a poor image in Switzerland.

The three articles took me on a journey through the reconfiguring of the symbolic boundaries and categories by the Albanian-speaking former activists in order to produce a more satisfying image of their present self. The first article emphasised the years of demonstrations in Switzerland, that were related as thrilling experiences involving responsibility, resourcefulness, comradeship, solidarity, and identification with the “Albanian nation” and one’s fellow demonstrators. The second article reported the climate of decay of the post-war years in which the former activists were forced to reposition themselves transnationally. Finally, the third article explored one specific proposal, designed to enhance their position: the construction of the “Albanians” in Switzerland as “entrepreneurs”.

6.2 Limitations of the study and future research avenues

The research evolved from a historical work on the mobilisation of the Albanian-speaking population in Switzerland on behalf of their homeland into a work on memories, with a particular focus on the reproduction and negotiation of national belonging. This evolution was accompanied by several methodological and theoretical choices that affected the sample of the study, the methods used to explore the object of the study, the analysis and interpretations of the data as well as the manner in which I wrote the articles. All of these different research sequences could have gone in other directions, providing a completely different study at the end. In the next paragraphs, I wish to reflect on some of the specific choices that particularly impacted the study as well as several possible avenues for future research.

First, as I started the research with the objective of conducting a historical study, I began constituting a sample that focused more on the situation during the mobilisation rather than on the post-war circumstances. This means that the sample initially reflected far more the heterogeneity of the activists in the 1980s and 1990s than their diversity in the 2010s. Although I tried progressively to correct this bias, it was very difficult to identify the criteria deemed important during the post-war period to produce a heterogeneous sample. Without prior knowledge on the positioning of the former activists within the Albanian-speaking population in Switzerland, and in particular in the field of memory work, it was relatively difficult to constitute a balanced sample. Consequently, I interviewed many of the figures of the mobilisation in Switzerland as well as individuals who still play important roles in the “community”. As a result, this study tends to convey the voices of the leading activists of the 1990s and 1980s as well as those who dominate the memory work in the post-war period. The study thus probably reflects quite accurately the power relationships within the group of Albanian-speaking memory entrepreneurs active in Switzerland, although this was not the initial goal.

In future research, more attention could be paid to the sample. In particular, the sample constituted in the current research contributes towards reproducing and strengthening the existing power relationships by largely conveying and analysing the voices of the memory leaders and leading activists. One possibility would be, following one strand of the oral history tradition, to concentrate less on the dominant actors of the memory field and more on the silenced voices (Portelli 1991). By following such a strategy, other facets of the mobilisation and of the current discourses of belonging might have emerged. It would be interesting, for

example, to expand the research to include the voices of the numerous women who participated in the mobilisation instead of concentrating on some of the leading male activists in order to observe other constructions of national belonging. This would also imply the use of a different terminology. In particular, proactive terms such as “activist” or “engagement” should be avoided because they imply hidden categories and hence silence numerous participants, particularly women.

Second, another issue relates to the interviews: they were not conducted in Albanian but rather in French, German and, on a few occasions, Albanian but with the help of a translator. Although I started the study with some knowledge of the Albanian language, I was insufficiently fluent in it for such an exercise. Moreover, most of the interview participants had a very good command of French or German. In particular, some of them had studied at Swiss universities and several others worked as translators. Although they were not always able to find the precise word they needed, most of them seemed satisfied with the quality of our communication. At any rate, they often considered me ignorant and provided me with narratives and explanations crafted for an outsider. In the relatively rare cases where the participants experienced significant difficulty in expressing themselves in French or German, the interviewees usually concentrated on getting some important messages across. They also commonly asked their relatives or friends to come along to the interview to translate for them and also brought along material to support their explanations, such as newspaper articles and photos. It is difficult to imagine how different the interviews would have been if they had been conducted in Albanian. In the eyes of the narrators, I would have probably remained the same academic outsiders so the broad content of the interview would have been similar, although possibly more precise at times. In future research, it would be interesting also to involve interviewers who speak Albanian and have ties with the Albanian-speaking population. The interaction and narratives thus constructed would probably be quite different.

Third, during the next phase of the study, when I started analysing the data and refining my approaches, I had to make several choices, for example, regarding the analytical focus and strategy as well as the theoretical framework. In particular, it was challenging to scrutinise how the interviewees narrated national belonging without seeing national belonging everywhere. I was very attentive to blatant ethnic and national issues in the interviews and overlooked other potential topics and categories of belonging (such as age, education, social background and work situation) that might have played a role. Consequently, further research could be more

sensitive to other possible categories of belonging and also to how these intersect with nationhood and ethnicity.

Furthermore, as the research is largely based on the fields of oral history and memory studies, it essentially relied on an approach that focuses on the mobilisation and integration of different types of discourses to compose narratives. This perspective is also enhanced by the insights brought by the theories of nationhood that underlie the centrality of individuals' practices and discourses in the reproduction of nationhood. These approaches serve to reveal the interviewees' narratives choices and decisions. More generally, they demonstrate that individuals might play an important role in negotiating and conveying notions of nationhood. However, these approaches tend to overlook the structural conditions in which the research participants are situated. The study, for example, reveals little about the material constraints in their life.

Fourth, during the analysis and writing phase, I distanced myself from the study participants and naturally oriented myself more towards academic fora and debates where I had the chance to discuss and present my research. At the same time, it was very difficult to engage in further interpretative work with the participants as they often saw my study as a way to impose *their* interpretation of the past and as a work that would celebrate their impressive mobilisation. I definitely started crafting my work for an academic audience. By doing so, I lost a great opportunity to include the study participants in the analysis and writing phase of the research. This could have contributed towards refining my interpretations and findings. In future research, some form of collaboration with the participants in the late phases of the study should definitely be attempted in order to enrich the work.

Fifth, for the purpose of this study, the analysis of the interviews resulted in three articles with three specific topics. Obviously, much more attention could have been paid to other themes. For example, instead of focusing mainly on the post-war and post-independence period with some links to the years of mobilisation, I could have oriented my interviews and developed an analysis framework that followed more closely the evolution of the construction of Albanianess from the 1980s until the post-independence years among activists who mobilised for the homeland. Given that oral history was the main method used in this research, it would have been possible to consider the evolution of narratives of national belonging over the years.

This would have also have benefitted from the help of the written sources collected at the beginning of the study, such as newspapers articles and texts produced by the former activists.

Finally, on the basis of the great diversity and wealth of narratives of national belonging related by the research participants, it appears that they have gained narrative experience in this field through their long journey across numerous discourses, practices and performances of the nation. The study thus offers a foundation for further research on how individuals gain experience in navigating among and negotiating the discourses of nationhood and ethnicity over the years.

Despite these limitations, this study has largely contributed to the scholarship on the Albanian-speaking migrants as well as on the literature on nationhood and ethnicity. I will review the main research contributions in the following section.

6.3 Contributions of the research

This PhD dissertation contributed to knowledge in two main domains: the research area about Albanian-speaking migrants and Albanianess, as well as the theoretical field of nationhood and ethnicity.

While this PhD thesis provides many details on the Albanian-speaking population in Switzerland, the former activists there and their transnational engagement, I wish to focus on two specific contributions. First, the thesis highlights the hitherto unknown trajectory of the Albanian-speaking activists in Switzerland. Indeed, while numerous journalists, historians and experts on homeland politics have underlined the extraordinary mobilisation of the Albanian-speaking population in Switzerland in the 1980s and especially the 1990s (see for example Hockenos 2003, Chiclet 2000, Perritt Jr. 2008), no scholar has ever analysed their situation after the “liberation” of Kosovo. This PhD work describes their course from the years of engagement to the search for a new status in the post-war years. While it reports their difficult position in Switzerland, it also shows how they feel excluded, forgotten and symbolically degraded in Kosovo. As such, it also adds to the scholarship that highlights the difficult relationships between Albanians in Kosovo and the “diaspora” but that was mainly written with the point of view from Kosovo.

Second, while several authors have scrutinised the use of memories of the recent past in Kosovo in order to construct Albanianess and define who has the right to gain and share power, no such study had been conducted within the Albanian-speaking population in Switzerland. This PhD thesis fills this gap by demonstrating how the former activists in Switzerland mobilise and negotiate different discourses of the past in order to improve their present situation. They compose different narratives of the mobilisation in order to improve their situation in Switzerland but also transnationally. Their interests in Switzerland differ from those in their homeland. At the same time, they are exposed to distinct discourses of the “nation” in both Kosovo and Switzerland.

Furthermore, it also demonstrates a very original attempt to craft a new image of the “Albanians” as “entrepreneurs” in Switzerland. This alternative interpretation of the recent “national” past is unknown in Kosovo. It indicates the very good knowledge demonstrated by some former activists of the discourses promoted by international organisations and Swiss state agencies that urge migrants to become “entrepreneurs” and take an active role in the

development of their homeland. It also shows their interest in effecting change and achieving a better position in Switzerland in recent years.

Then, this PhD forms part of the scholarship that scrutinises “banal” and “everyday” nationhood and underlines the importance of individuals’ agency in imagining, performing, negotiating, consuming and choosing the “nation” (Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008, Billig 1995). The study scrutinised the former activists’ agency in negotiating their belonging to the “Albanian nation” in the memories of their mobilisation. In particular, it analysed how they mobilise various past and present discourses that are available in the different local, national and transnational spaces they inhabit in order to compose their memories. They use these discourses to create different forms of Albanianess and reposition themselves following the reconfiguration of social relationships in the post-“liberation” years. As such, agency becomes a creative art of imagining the “nation” with the help of narratives of the past to enhance one’s present symbolic status.

Furthermore, the research did not apply any pre-defined dichotomy that would have divided the different research participants, actors of mobilisation in Switzerland and memory entrepreneurs between “elite” and “ordinary” individuals, as often happens in the recent studies of the nation (Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008, Billig 1995, Antonsich 2015). By not assuming any a priori distinction, I was able to analyse how the research participants attempt to create and contest different symbolic categories and hierarchies, and at the same time position themselves within this differentiated world.

This research has proposed further innovative theoretical approaches and findings: the association of boundary-work strategies and memories, the specific focus on transnational responses to stigmatisation, the link between masculinity and entrepreneurship in a migration context, the use of oral history to study banal and everyday nationhood, and finally the original consideration of the fate of former transnational activists. I will briefly review these specific findings here.

First, the research originally integrated the theoretical insights on boundary work with the exploration of memories. The analysis sought to demonstrate how the former activists adapted their narratives of the past to improve their present situation. It greatly benefited from the recourse to Wimmer’s typology of ethnic boundary changes (Wimmer 2008a). By resorting to this model, it became possible to distinguish the different strategies adopted by the former

activists. In particular, it contributed towards uncovering the various logics of classification pursued by the interviewees as well as clarifying their position towards the “Albanian nation” as conveyed in Kosovo.

Second, the transnational perspective adopted allowed me to consider the identification and positioning processes of the former activists in all of their complexity. In particular, as the study demonstrated, the research participants not only encounter discrimination in Switzerland but also face a self-described demeaning status in their homeland. As such, they not only need to respond to stigmatisation and negative images in their host country, a topic that has been already largely examined, but also in their homeland, a largely understudied issue.

Third, the research also contributes to the scholarship on masculinity and nationhood. In particular, it provides an interesting case in the specific field of transnational studies and masculinities that is still characterised by a dearth of research (Dominguez Andersen and Wendt 2015). It shows how the former activists are able to mobilise and combine discourses present at different local, national (in Switzerland and Kosovo), transnational and international levels in order to produce the image of the “Albanian entrepreneur” in Switzerland. While this image fits better their own present situation, it still leaves Albanian-speaking women in a subordinated or absent role. Indeed, most of the research participants do not seem to contest the established male-female hierarchy.

Fourth, the research avoids providing a static picture of individuals consuming and talking about the “nation” that fails to take into account both their sociohistorical context and the changes of discourses over time (Smith 2008b). This endeavour was possible thanks to the adoption of an oral history approach that makes it possible to place memories at the centre of the analysis. Memories are particularly interesting because they link the past events, experiences, narratives and boundaries of the “nation” with new interpretations and concerns. In the interviews, the research participants thus often convey, negotiate and link past narratives with new ones in order to explain their current understanding and position.

Fifth, by analysing the discourses of belonging expressed by individuals who are “retired” activists in the national cause, it focuses on a highly original topic. Indeed, studies on homeland politics and long-distance nationalism usually focus on active, “hot” forms of engagement. They do not consider the fate of the former champions of the national cause. However, as this

thesis shows, it is also relevant to study the trajectories and identification processes of activists who leave the “hot” kinds of nationalism and need to adapt to the reconfiguring symbolic environment of their new life.

This PhD thesis thus enhances the existing scholarship by bringing to light the unknown case of the Albanian-speaking former activists in Switzerland. From outstanding activists for the national cause in the 1980s and 1990s, they felt relegated to an inferior, disregarded status during the post-“liberation” years. This study demonstrated how these men and women fought to improve their symbolic position with the help of the narratives of their past engagement.

Annex

Interview guide

Introduction – before recording

- Introduce myself
- Explain the objectives of the study and thank the participant
- Explain how the interview works: get the interviewee's own point of view; start with a broad question and later more specific ones; no obligation to answer all the questions; always possible to interrupt the interview
- Get consent form signed
- Respond to any possible question

Main question and clarification

Could you please tell me the story of your engagement for your homeland?

Clarification questions

Specific questions

- Questions emerging from the interviewee's narratives and
- Questions prepared (possible topics):
 - Why/when/how did you start to be active?
 - Framing the problem of "Kosovo" / "Albanians" in the former Yugoslavia
 - Activities conducted? Participation in demonstrations?
 - Own field of activism/organisation: main goals, structure, principles, relationships, etc.
 - Knowledge and perception of the different organisations that were active in the 1980s and 1990s in Switzerland and transnationally?
 - "Heroes" of the national movement

 - Background in the former Yugoslavia: family, friends, education, job, living conditions, place where grew up, etc.
 - Migration history
 - Life in Switzerland: education, job, family, living conditions

 - Perception of the situation of the "Albanians" in the former Yugoslavia and abroad? Evolution of this perception over the years?
 - What it means to be/live as an "Albanian"? In the 1970s-80s-90s? Today? And earlier (previous generations)? In the former Yugoslavia? Abroad?
 - What it means to be active on behalf of the homeland? In the 1970s-80s-90s? Today? In the former Yugoslavia? Abroad?

 - Judgment on own past activism?
 - Judgment on past activism in Switzerland and transnationally? Links with current situation in Kosovo.

Confrontation – alternative explanations (not always asked)

- I heard other explanations regarding xxxx, what do you think of this?

Conclusion

- Any other topic to address?

- Thank you

When the recorder is turned off

- Discussion on how the interview was conducted. Evaluation of some of the questions and topics.
- Asking for other potential interviewees

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