Collective Identity and Economic Development

A Case Study of How People’s Perception of the Collective Identity Affects The Economic Development in Kosovo

Visar Berisha

Development Studies
Department of Government
Level C
15 credits
Autumn 2015
Supervisor: Suruchi Thapar-Björkert
Abstract

This paper aims to show how identity can be of importance to issues relating to development. More specifically, it deals with how the Kosovar Albanians perception of their collective identity have affected Kosovo’s economic development. The study draws primarily from the theories of Identity Economics and Orientalism and presents a hypothesis which is then tested empirically through the analysis of the in-depth interviews and participant observation carried out in Kosovo.

The results show that Kosovar Albanians have, to a degree, internalized the Orientalist discourse, which often portrayed them in racist terms as the ‘other’, in their view of their collective identity and that this has had a negative effect on how they perceive their potential in the global economic system, which in turn has undermined the country’s economic development. Thus, identity seems to be of significance when it comes to issues relating to development. More research is, however, recommended for the results to be considered conclusive.

---

1I would like to thank all the respondents who participated in this study and who made this research possible. I would also like to thank Dr. Suruchi Thapar-Björkert for her excellent guidance, support and time.
# Table of contents

- **Introduction** 1  
  - Purpose and Research Question 2  
  - Relevance 2  
- **Kosovo: a Historical Context** 3  
  - Early Period 3  
  - Annexation, Colonization and Independence 5  
- **Theoretical Framework & Previous Research** 6  
  - Development 6  
  - Orientalism and Balkanism 7  
  - Identity Economics 9  
  - Hypothesis 10  
- **Method** 11  
  - Ethnography and Participant Observation 11  
  - Interviews and Observations 12  
  - Analyzing the Data 13  
- **Analysis and Results** 15  
  - (Self-)Oppression 15  
  - Internalized Orientalism 18  
  - Nationalist Economy 21  
- **Concluding Remarks** 25  
- **List of References** 27  
- **Appendices** 31
Introduction

"They [the Serbs] said 'they [the Albanians] are people with tails...they are not human'...I fear that we are confirming what they said about us". The quote comes from a school principal who shook his head as he answered one of my question. Unfortunately, he was not alone in making such remarks and I believe that such expressions, rather than being innocent, are tremendously destructive for a society. During my many trips to Kosovo, I have come in direct contact with a society that is in a painstaking effort to try and move beyond the latest devastating war, which left it crippled both socially and economically. The horrific effects of the war have been even clearer to me coming from Sweden, because the strident contrast between the two countries enabled me to see more clearly what Kosovo was lacking. Most noticeable was the poverty I witnessed, expressed through and amplified by the remnants of the material destruction, which were and still are visible in the rural and urban landscape. Going back every summer, I have become acutely aware that the country was not developing at the speed that many of its residents had hoped and fought for.

Sixteen years after the war, the poverty level is still around 30%, unemployment around 35% and GNI per capita only $3,990, making it one of the poorest countries in Europe (Figures for 2014) (World Bank, 2015; UNDP, 2015). Similarly, corruption is among the highest in Europe, it is only partly free according to Freedom House and the political scene is characterized by turmoil, uncertainty and conflict. In these past months, for example, the opposition has blocked the parliament in protest of two deals made with Serbia and Montenegro respectively, using whistles, banners and teargas to disable the legislative institution. In response, many of the opposition leaders and MPs have been arrested (Transparency International, 2015; Freedom House, 2015A; BBC, 2015; Koha, 2015). The list of reasons explaining this lack of development is naturally a long one, however talking to the Kosovar Albanian population, I often come across a certain rhetoric or discourse that is often lacking from the literature on development. What is expressed is a blame on the population itself; in often derogatory words the lack of development is seen as a result of the inadequacy, the ignorance, the irrationality and other innate characteristics of the Albanians which hinders the country to move forward. This is slightly paradoxical because, according to my personal experience, the Albanian population is very nationalistic otherwise but, nonetheless, this derogatory language about the collective is often used. Furthermore, my experience is that whoever utters this attitude almost categorically exempts him or her self from the sweeping characterizations made,

---

2 Kosovo was before the war a province of Serbia (within Yugoslavia) but has since its declaration of independence in 2008 been recognized by 108 countries (MFA-KS, 2015). Therefore its status is still unclear internationally, I will, however, refer to it as a country.

3 For further information see Appendix 1
without exempting him or her self from the collective as such. This is all anecdotal but it is an interesting observation and the point of departure for this essay.

**Purpose and Research Question**

Is the above mentioned observation a recurring phenomenon in Kosovar society or is it simply a coincidence and not representative for the population at large? And if it exists and is widespread, does it have an effect on the country’s development? The purpose of this thesis is precisely to answer these questions. More specifically, the research question is: *how does the Kosovar Albanians perception of their collective identity affect Kosovo's economic development?* I will use theories and existing literature from a range of scholars, as well as my own experience and intuition to develop an initial hypothesis which I will then test empirically through the analysis of the qualitative data collected from in-depth interviews and observations in Kosovo. I would also like to mention why I have focused on specifically the Albanians in Kosovo and not on any of the other minorities or the population as a whole. Firstly, the Albanians make up the overwhelming majority (over 90%) in the country (CIA, 2015). Secondly, Kosovo declared its independence as late as 2008, following the war in the late 90s, and therefore, among other reasons, there is no Kosovar nation per se, instead, people, with few exceptions, identify as belonging to other nations (Albanian, Serb, Croat, Roma etcetera) with a Kosovar citizenship (labeling themselves as Kosovar Albanian or Kosovar Serb for example). Thus there is no clear Kosovar collective because many of the different ethnic groups live in isolation from each other (Peci, 2013; Duijzings, 2000). I also chose the Kosovar Albanians because it is a group which I myself belong to, at least partially as part of the Kosovar Albanian diaspora, meaning that I am better equipped to understand and communicate with this group as I carry out my field study, I will discuss this further in the method section.

**Relevance**

The case of Kosovo is unique in many ways, but it still shares many resemblances with other countries often labeled as developing or poor; its history is one of occupation, colonization, poverty and war (Malcolm, 1998). Research on Kosovo is thus both interesting and important in itself, as it helps us understand the situation in the country better, but it also provides us with more tools to analyze other, and similar, countries. Furthermore, its scientific relevance is the contribution it makes to the existing literature and research. To my knowledge, no one has used Akerlof and Krantons (2010) theory of Identity Economics to analyze a country’s economic development. Therefore, this research presents a new idea which might indeed prove to be interesting. The other contribution that this study makes is that it deals with the process of the internalization of the
Orientalist discourse, which has been treated by others but only slightly and never in the context of Kosovo. The combination of Identity Economics and the concept of internalized Orientalism presents yet another, to my knowledge, original idea which adds to the scientific relevance of this thesis.

On the other hand, this research also has relevance outside the scientific realm, since it might be used for policy formation by politicians and actors from the civil society, as well as providing more knowledge and new perspectives primarily for the Kosovar people but also for those who are interested in Kosovo or work there. The accumulation of knowledge is naturally also an important scientific value.

Kosovo: a Historical Context

The area which now constitutes the state of Kosovo, has historically been a highly disputed territory, with many claimants, rulers, conflicts and wars. The last war ended just before the turn of the 20th century and was the direct result of past conflicts and violence that laid the groundwork for further conflict and more violence for the coming generations. Like much else, one cannot understand the current situation in Kosovo without having at least a sense of its history. In this section, however, I do not intend to provide an exhaustive review of the history but highlight those aspects that are most relevant for this thesis.

Early Period

Miranda Vickers (1998) writes that “Following the Second World War….Serbian archaeologists have been hard at work seeking to refute the theory of the Illyrian ethnic origins of the Albanians” (p. 1). Similarly, she writes, ” The Albanians claim that they are consequently descended from the Illyrians and are the indigenous inhabitants of Kosovo” (p.1). These efforts of trying to legitimize claim over the territory by invoking historical 'facts' is in many ways quite representative of the conflict between Albanians and Serbs. The question of who is truly autochthonous to the land is still highly disputed and even added fuel to the war in the 90s. Witnessing in the special court for war criminals, for example, Serbian para-military Zoran Raskovic recalls: ”We started defending our country with the best intentions by committing some horrible crimes. We… killed lots of civilians” (Nikolic, 2015). The fact that he takes for granted that it was ”our land”, despite the fact that the overwhelming part of the population were Albanians, is quite telling (Vickers, 1998).

Going back to the origins, the earliest signs of Slavic presence in the area surrounding Kosovo dates back to the middle of the 6th century when a large tribal population of Slavs,
prominently Serbs and Croats, crossed the Danube river and settled in the areas which are today modern Croatia, Bosnia, Kosovo and Montenegro, slavicizing and forcing the existing latin-speaking groups southwards. The origin of the Albanians is, as mentioned before, still highly contested. The two main theories is that they originate either from the Thracians in the eastern part of the peninsula or from the Illyrians on the western part (overlapping with modern Albania). Albanian historians have preferred the latter option since it makes them indigenous to the land where they are present today, while others attribute to them a Thracian background in order to deny them that autochthonous status. This protracted debate has culminated in favor of the Illyrian side, which seems to have considerable linguistic support (Malcolm, 1998).

During the centuries that followed the slavic settlements, the different ethnic groups in Kosovo lived side by side and the area was ruled by Bulgarian Tzars, Byzantine Emperors and finally by the Serbian speaking Nemanja Dynasty which in the 12th century expanded its control southwards from the Serb controlled Rascia region (today south central Serbia)\(^4\). Their rule lasted until the latter part of 14th century when they lost control over Kosovo to the expanding Ottoman Empire. Worth mentioning is the famous Battle of Kosovo, which occurred in the fields just north of Prishtina in 1389. Led by the Serbs but consisting of Hungarian, Bulgarian, Bosnian and Albanian commanders and troops, they opposed Ottoman expansion but ultimately lost the battle, clearing the way for Ottoman rule. This battle has had tremendous mythological importance for the construction of the Serbian national identity in later centuries, primarily because Kosovo had become a centre for Serbian religious life during the medieval period. (Malcolm, 1998; Vickers 1998; Bakić-Hayden, 2009). For the Serbian people, Bakić-Hayden (2004) writes, the war became a "paradigm for a just struggle, self-sacrifice and dying on the 'cross of honour' for a golden freedom" (p. 34). Through the oral and later also written epic poems about the 1389 battle, Kosovo gained a place as the "national spirit" (ibid, p.31) of the Serbian people.

The Ottoman Empire ruled the area in the centuries that followed, encountering opposition and rebellion but also cooperation from allied local strongmen and rulers. During this period, Kosovo consisted mainly of an Albanian and Serbian speaking population, where the former began converting to Islam in increasing numbers because it extended their rights in the Ottoman society and thus granted them bigger freedom, while the Serbs either maintained their Orthodox Christian faith or converted and assimilated into the Muslim Albanian population\(^5\) (Malcolm, 1998).

---

\(^4\) See Appendix 2 for map

\(^5\) This conversion and assimilation process naturally also occurred in the other direction, as Noel Malcolm (1998) writes.
Ottoman rule continued until the 19th century when uprisings grew fiercer and better organized as the development of national identities enabled the opposition to unite in national liberation movements. Serbia gained its independence from the Ottoman empire as a result of the settlement following the Russian - Ottoman war in 1877-8, but Kosovo fell outside its borders and was annexed by Serbia only in 1912 following the Second Balkan Wars and the resultant settlement reached at the London Conference around the turn of same year (Malcolm, 1998; Vickers 1998).

In the Serbian state building efforts following the annexation of Kosovo, officials and politicians were forced to deal with the demographic ‘problem’ in Kosovo, where the majority of the population were Albanian. In an effort to deal with this, Serbia initiated an internal colonization program which included Serbianization efforts directed towards the Albanians, forced migration, denial of national rights, incentivizing new Serbian settlements etcetera. These efforts largely failed as the Albanian proportion of the total population continued to grow and is today around 90% (Clark, 2000; CIA, 2015). I will later discuss these colonization efforts in bigger detail.

The following decades, Kosovo (as a province of Serbia) was first included in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, or the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and then after the Second World War, in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It is important to mention that during the German occupation of Kosovo in the Second World War, the Albanian people were granted more rights for self-rule which had the consequence of significant expulsions of Serbs and Montenegrins from Kosovo in the winter of 1943-4. (Malcolm, 1998)

After the Second World War, Albanians received significantly more rights, although some oppression still existed, mainly through the acts of Aleksandar Ranković, the interior minister who until his dismissal in 1966 had directed harsh anti-Albanian ‘security’ measures which forced up to 400,000 people to flee to Turkey (Daskalovski, 2003). The situation became increasingly better for the Albanian the decades that followed, especially after the province gained autonomy status, which entailed self-rule and full citizen rights for the population. The war of 1997-99 was in many way the direct result of the removal of the autonomous status which was opposed by the Albanians, initially through non-violent civil disobedience in the early 1990’s, and later through the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) which attacked Serbian security forces and provoked a disproportionally violent responses from the Serbian state which in effect initiated the war which ended only after NATO intervened militarily, forcing Serbia to withdraw their forces. The following years, Kosovo was under UN administration rule, declaring itself independent in 2008, recognized by 108 states but categorically rejected by the Serbian state (MFA-KS, 2015, Hehir, 2010; Malcolm, 1998).
The purpose this theoretical background has been to show the dynamics between the two main ethnic groups in Kosovo, closely tied with a history of violence, colonization and subjugation, but also to provide the background for the remaining part of this study and to see if such a historical past has had any reflections in how the Kosovar Albanians have constructed their collective identity.

**Theoretical Framework & Previous Research**

In this section, I will present and discuss the theoretical framework used in this research. In connection to this, I will also give a review of the existing research and relevant literature in the field as well as define the most important concepts used in this thesis. It is worth mentioning that theory and literature are not completely isolated from one another; instead they intersect and enhance one another, as Bryman (2012) writes in his book on social science research "The literature acts as a proxy for theory. In many instances, theory is latent or implicit in the literature" (p.22).

**Development**

The concept of development is the main driving force in this research, with aim to further add to the knowledge in this field. Therefore a review and discussion of development theory is necessary, as well as a definition of the term development as it is used here.

The idea of development, even though the term as such was not always used, has been present in European thinking since the end of the 17th century when, as Gilbert Rist (2014) writes, "the ideology of progress acquired a dominant position" (p.37). The idea was that "progress…was not a choice but the finality…of history" (Ibid; p.40). Further consolidated with the emergence of social evolution theories in the 19th century, progress was seen as a single, linear and natural path that all societies had to take, albeit not at the same speed. The obligation, or 'burden', of the West was to help those who had not "advance[d] at the same speed as Western society" (ibid) by domination and colonization in their justified mission civilisatrice, which sought to 'modernize' the 'rest' (Rist, 2014). Initiating the development discourse, President Truman's 1949 inaugural address, as Easterly (2006) writes, represented a "genuine change of heart away from racism and toward respect and equality…[even though]…a paternalistic and coercive strain survived…'Uncivilized' became 'underdeveloped.' 'Savage peoples' became the 'third world’” (p21).

In the light of this, the meaning of the term development is not as straightforward as it might first appear. The UNDP take into consideration health, knowledge and standard of living when assessing human development in their annual Human Development Report (UNDP, 2014). Amartya Sen (1999) places the importance on freedom when conceptualizing his idea of development, viewing it as both the primary mean and end of development. He acknowledges the
importance of economic growth, but states that poverty must be seen as a deprivation of capability instead, determined not only by income, but also by age, social status, gender, health etcetera. Similarly, Tatyana Soubbotina (2004), writing for the World Bank, states that "indicators of wealth… provide no information about the allocation of those resources" (p. 7). From this brief review it is clear that the current understanding of the term development encompasses more than merely economic growth. For this research, however, I will limit its definition to only include economic development, for the following reasons. First, economic growth is naturally still a very important part in the term development. Second, this definition is consistent with the theory of Identity Economics, which is one of the main theories used in this thesis. Thirdly, this narrow definition is better suited for the research question posed and the scope of this study.

Orientalism and Balkanism

One of the shortcomings of the development literature is that it, to my knowledge, does not sufficiently deal with identity. Below, I will present my first theoretical tool and show how it might be of interest for development studies.

The theory that identity can be, and often is, constructed in opposition to a group or a nation labelled as the "other", was originally developed by Edward Said (1978) in his tremendously important book Orientalism. In it he argues that the construction of the 'East', as irrational and childlike, was negatively contrasted to the 'West' which was rational and mature and that this was based upon an "ontological and epistemological difference" between the two. Further, this difference was institutionally based, constructed and perpetuated by scholars, politicians, writers and others in the 'West' and later also in the 'East' as the orientalist discourse essentially became a truism.

In similar terms, Larry Wolff (1994) describes how in the eighteenths century, Europe itself was divided into a 'Eastern' and 'Western' part, where the latter ascribed itself the role of the 'civilized' in contrast to the other half of the continent. The idea of Eastern Europe, Wolff writes, is entangled in the orientalist discourse but is, due to its geographic proximity, more ambiguous as the line between East and West was not "unanimously fixed in the eighteenth century" making the "invention of Europe as an intellectual project of demi-Orientalization" (p. 7). This ambiguity is also present in the theory developed by Maria Todorova (2009) in her book Imagining the Balkans where she coins the term Balkanism as a concept similar to but not quite the same as Orientalism. Much like Said and Wolff, her argument is that the Balkans, as an entity, has been constructed by the 'West' on the basis of their perceived differences. Where Orientalism and Balkanism differ, according to Todorova, is in the ambiguous or transitional character of the Balkans which,
because of its geographic position, "have been compared to a bridge between East and West, between Europe and Asia...[and also]...a bridge between stages of growth, and this invokes labels such as semideveloped, semicolonial, semicivilized, semioriental" (Ibid, p.16). A vital distinction is made vis-à-vis Orientalism as she continues: "This in-betweenness of the Balkans, their transitionary character, could have made them simply an incomplete other; instead they are constructed not as other but as incomplete self" (Ibid, p.18). The space created in this ambiguity enabled the people in the region to perceive, and portray, themselves as more European than 'others' in the region, as they started to form a national identity in the 19th century. This ambiguity also deconstructs Said's notion of the 'Orient' as one, uniform, entity formed by the West as the 'Other'. Rather, the 'Orient' is multilayered or, as Bakić-Hayden (1995) calls it, nested, where "Asia is more "East" or "other" than eastern Europe; within eastern Europe itself this gradation is reproduced with the Balkans perceived as most "eastern"; within the Balkans there are similarly constructed hierarchies" (p.918).

In Kosovo, identity has historically been used as a (geo)political instrument by actors claiming their right to the land. After Serbia annexed Kosovo in 1912, it faced a demographic 'problem' in its nation-building efforts since the majority of the added territory were Albanians. Thus a process of Serbianization, much like the whitening projects in Latin America in the 19th century, began, where intellectuals and politicians either claimed that the Albanians were in fact Serbs who had lost their identity (re-Serbianization) or that they were part of the orient, as the Muslim 'Others', who had to be removed much like the Ottomans had been removed. These strategies included violence, forced migration, closing of Albanian schools and replacing the inhabitants with Slavs in a process of internal colonization (Malcolm, 1998; Müller 2009; Larson 2004; Vickers 1998).

An important, although less salient, aspect of Orientalism is how the Orientalist construction of the other are internalized by the dominated themselves. Some authors call it the colonizing of the mind and argue that those who are dominated also internalize the colonizers worldview, their cultural values, their view of politics and knowledge, their psychology and understanding of their identity. Thus, the orientalist construction remains in the mind of the formerly colonized, which, even in the post-colonial period, is still 'colonized'. This is reflected in how they view progress, development, civilization and modernity; they are stuck between the 'self' and the 'other', between the traditional and the modern of which they can only mimic but never fully be a part of (Fanon, 1952; Thong, 2014).
Identity Economics

George Akerlof and Rachel Kranton (2010) provide the second main theory used in this thesis. Phrasing it Identity Economics, their theory includes identity and social categorization as motives explaining peoples economic activities (in addition to pecuniary motives). More precisely, the social categories which exist in society entail certain norms for the people in these groups which in turn affects their behavior. One example is how ‘race’ affects peoples economic choices. Analyzing the situation of African-Americans in the U.S, who to a high degree are socially and economically disadvantaged compared to white Americans, they argue that the behavior of some African-American workers cannot be explained by ”standard economics, which presumes that people make choices to optimize economic outcomes” (Ibid. 104). Instead, echoing Said, they claim that American history is characterized by ethnic conflict where the white Americans have created an identity of themselves as opposite to the other, black, Americans, who in turn have ”adopt a view of themselves in opposition to the…[white]…dominant group” (Ibid. 100). From this they build their argument that whites, as the majority, form the dominant insiders while blacks are the outsiders, creating an element of submissiveness between the two which affects their economic choices. Thus, their actions are not solely determined by their economic utility but also identity utility (the gain when actions conform to values and norms), adding: ”In the trade-off between work and dignity, dignity wins out, and more will choose an outsider identity” (Ibid. p.104).

Based on the idea of Identity Economics, Roca and Serrano (2010) make the claim that ”national identity determines partly the behavioral patterns of individuals; as a consequence, identity has an impact on their actions and products” (p.263), national identity, thus, becomes an important factor for the products that are manufactured. Furthermore, a nations brand is important as ”consumers have a preconceived idea of a country, which eventually is decisive for international success of products from that country” (Ibid. p.264). To this I would like to add that a country’s brand also affects the economic decisions of the people within that country.

These theories are based on the concept of identity, which needs to be discussed further before continuing. Every person has inevitably different identities simultaneously because every person belongs to different groups or categories of people at any given time. But certain, primary, identities are more important than others in that sense that they are more robust, less flexible and more authoritative for the person as it becomes a way to understand oneself. Gender is one example of this, and ethnicity, although less robust, is another. Ethnicity is constructed on shared language and notions of similarities and differences, it also ”waves together the fate of the individual with the collective fate…and it can be enormously consequential” (Jenkins, 2004, p.65). I use the concept of collective identity in this regard; the Albanian ethnicity becomes the common primary denominator
for the collective, being Kosovar is an important but nonetheless secondary layer of identity. However, I am personally aware that ethnicity is after all flexible and can change, but nonetheless I think it is sufficiently important and robust to be used in this manner. (Jenkins, 2004; Duijzingz, 2000).

Finally, apart from the social categorizations that exist within a country, people are also categorized on a global scale. Quijano (2000) claims that the global capitalist system is built from a Eurocentric worldview where ‘race’ (biology and culture or, in our present terms, ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’) was placed as one of the basic criteria to classify the population in the power structure of the new society, associated with the nature of roles and places in the division of labor and in the control of resources of production” (p. 216), this is what Quijano calls The Coloniality of Power. In other words, the global economy today is structured around the categorization of people and, as a consequence, a division of labour which assign people certain ‘roles’ in the economy.

**Hypothesis**

Based primarily on the theoretical framework outlined above, but also on my own experience, understanding and intuition of the situation in Kosovo I have developed a hypothesis which I will test empirically in the analytical section of this thesis. My hypothesis builds on three fundamental parts. Firstly, the Orientalist and Balkanist discourses which have historically been and continues to be applied to Kosovo, have been internalized by the people themselves, affecting how they view their collective identity and place in the world. Secondly, the theory of Identity Economics entails that social categorization and norms in society affects peoples economic choices, where certain people are seen as more fit for certain jobs etcetera. Thirdly, the Coloniality of Power thesis entails that there is a categorization of people on a global scale as well, and not only within a society, and that this categorization is built on race, culture, ethnicity etcetera. Combining these, the following hypothesis is attained: Kosovar Albanians have incorporated the Orientalist and Balkanist discourse, which often portrayed them in racist terms as the 'other', in their view of their collective identity and this has had a negative effect on how their view themselves and their potential in the global economic system, which in turn has undermined the country’s economic development. The idea is thus that the Kosovar Albanians view themselves as belonging to a certain category of people who are not really capable, either intellectually or culturally, to compete with other, more Western, countries. This means that they view products from (more) Western countries as being more qualitative, more trustworthy and so on and as a result, they will neither try to compete with them nor buy similar products produced domestically. This categorical thinking is further enforced by the global economic system which stems from a Eurocentrism and colonialism (Quijano, 2000).
Method

The hypothesis that I have proposed derives from two main sources: my personal experience and intuition and the theories explained in the theoretical framework above. It is, nonetheless, only a hypothesis, which needs to be tested empirically. In this chapter, I will describe and discuss the different aspects of the method used in this study to gather and analyze the qualitative data that I have collected primarily through in-depth interviews, but also from participating in and observing the Kosovar society.

Ethnography and Participant Observation

My link to Kosovo is not only the result of my academic interest, but also, and primarily, the result of my personal connection to it, as the country where I was born, where I still have a large part of my family and where I have spent a considerable amount of time in. My connection to Kosovo is not merely physical, but also spiritual, not merely formal, as a citizen, but also cultural and as such, my field study there cannot be anything but ethnographic in nature. Bryman (2012) writes that the "ethnographer immerses him-or herself in a group for an extended period of time, observing behavior, listening to what is said in conversations, both between others and with the fieldworker, and asking questions” (p. 432). I did not stay for an extended period of time for my field work, in fact I only stayed for 10 days, but I have spent weeks, even months, there in other circumstances, always, through my family, entirely immersed in the country and its culture. Therefore, I can say that I have a deep understanding of the society in Kosovo, and as a native speaker Albanian, I have been able to both observe and participate without major limits. For example, I have been able to spark up informal conversations with people on the streets and in cafés, I have been able to observe and understand interactions between other people, I have been able to read the news and so on. I noted much of what I experienced in a field diary, which I will also use in my analysis. All of this makes me more confident that I will be able to more adequately analyze the data that I have collected. Naturally, the data would be richer and the analysis more robust had I in fact spent more time there, but nonetheless, I believe that the data that I did collect is of important value. However, being fully immersed in the field does not necessarily mean that I am also one of them. Firstly, growing up in Sweden, I am also culturally and intellectually Swedish and I was both perceived as such by others, who saw me as an Albanian but nevertheless an outsider, and I also saw myself as an outsider with regard to how I dressed, talked, behaved etcetera. More importantly, I was aware of my privileged position as a student from a rich country, equipped with western tools of knowledge and way of thinking, which undoubtedly affected our interviews and my interpretations of them.
Nonetheless, because of the reasons stated above, I am confident that this has not been a major problem.

Lastly, I would like to mention the gender aspect of this study. Gender is one of the main social categories that Akerlof and Kranton (2010) bring forward in their theory of Identity Economics. As such, it is tremendously important. I will, however, not do a gendered analysis because it is beyond the scope of this study with regard to its primary aim. My research question focuses on the collective identity which is based on ethnicity, gender, naturally, is not a part of the collective identity in this regard, but is yet another layer which affects a certain group within that collective. Therefore, a gendered analysis, with a similar question, is possible, and indeed very interesting, but outside the scope of this thesis.

Interviews and Observations

The bulk of the empirical data used in the analysis below comes from the in-depth interviews I did with respondents, observation and participation became analytical tools for me as I tried to understand the answers that I got because it enabled me to place them in a proper context.

I chose in-depth interviews because I knew it would be difficult to get any meaningful answers through a quantitative method. One important part of my hypothesis is that Kosovar Albanians do not perceive the collective as capable of competing economically with western countries. It is therefore a sensitive and complex issue, where questions relating to it cannot simply be answered in a questionnaire (this will become evident in the analysis, as the respondents many times gave paradoxical answers). As Ambert et al. (1995) writes “the aim of qualitative research is to learn about how and why people behave, think, and make meaning as they do, rather than focusing in what people do or believe in a large scale” (p.880). As such, this is an explanatory study because I do not only present the answers I received but I will also try, based on the theoretical framework, to give an explanation to why I believe those answers were given and how they relate to the bigger picture. The interviews were semi-structured, meaning that I had an interview guide with about twenty questions, which worked more as a tool to facilitate the interviewing process rather than controlling it. Often, respondents shared their initial thoughts with me right after I introduced my study and the interview continued from there, I only used the guide in order to get the conversation going and to steer it in the right direction. New questions were also added to the interview guide as I noticed that certain issues recurring in the answers which I had not expected initially. Also, the selection of the respondents was done selectively and strategically. Since I could not conduct too

6 See Appendix 3 for interview guide

7 See appendix 4 for list of respondents
many interviews, I had to choose respondents from different sectors and different levels of the Kosovar society, this is also called maximum variation sampling, as opposed to random selection which makes this study less generalizable (Bryman, 2012). Therefore, I chose politicians who are the formal representatives of the population; actors from the civil society; students; teachers and ‘blue-collar’ workers. I tried to get an equal amount of men and women in the study but in the end the majority, seven of them, were men and the rest women. The interviews lasted between 30 to 60 minutes and were carried out in places chosen by the respondent, often in in cafés, but also in more formal surroundings like the parliament building. I used a digital voice recorder for all of my interviews which was crucial for the transcription process but it did, however, have an intimidating affect on some of the respondents, who became more conscious and formal in their answers. In those instances, I tried to relax the situation by talking informally about more general issues, often it had an effect, making the respondent more comfortable. I have also changed the names of the respondents in order to ensure their anonymity.

Finally, my observations often occurred through my participation as I asked questions relative to my research in informal conversations and often got more sincere answers. My observations also enabled me to interpret these answers in relation to the social context, they were not merely sterile words to be understood in and by themselves, but rather through the lens of reality, as I understood it to be.

Analyzing the Data

There are several methods for analyzing the qualitative data. For example, Bryman (2012) mentions Grounded Theory and Analytical Induction, Aksel Tjora (2012) uses the Stepwise-Deduction Inductive method (STI), and Margrit Schreier (2014) explains the Qualitative Content Analysis, to mention just a few. What differs them from one another is how the data is collected and analyzed and where the inductive and/or deductive process occurs and what emphasis is placed on it. For example, in Analytical Induction, a hypothesis is developed and then tested through the collection of data, which might or might not change the initial hypothesis and/or the research itself. Thus it is first a deductive process, developing a hypothesis, and then an inductive process, changing that hypothesis. Similarly, the STI method begins with an inductive process where data is collected, categorized and used to develop concepts and theories which are then, deductively, controlled empirically by collecting and categorizing further data. The method that I have chosen can best be described as Thematic Analysis, which is a broad term for methods that seek the major themes in the qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2008). The method I use is nonetheless deductive in nature as I have developed a hypothesis that I have then tested empirically through the collection and analysis
of qualitative data. However, there is also an inductive process, as the interviews have made me aware of elements that I have not previously thought of and which I have included both in my interview guide, my analysis as well as a way to nuance my hypothesis and conclusions. Thus both elements have been present in my work, often intersecting and occurring, not in predetermined steps like the schematics in the literature, but rather as reflective steps to move the scientific work forward. The schematic figures in the literature are acknowledged by the authors to be just that, simplifications fit for the literature but not always for practical use (Bryman, 2012; Tjora, 2012).

The analytical process of the data gathered, began with a transcription of all the interviews, which I then read in order to get a first sense of what the main traits in the data were. After that, I began the actual codification process where I first highlighted and commented interesting answers from each interview, keeping as much of the natural language as possible, and then I collected and codified these comments as variables. This provided me with about thirty variables which I then divided into nine categories from which I could extract the three main themes used in the analysis. When I later carried out the analysis, I went back to the highlighted and commented transcriptions and reread the answers to make sure that the interpretation was done within the context of the answer as a whole (Tjora, 2012). I have also tried to incorporate direct quotes from the interviews in my analysis, in those instances when they corresponded well with other answers on the same subject and could be used as a natural representative example, allowing readers direct access to the primary data and not just my interpretation of it.

My hypothesis contains certain concepts and ideas which needs to be operationalized. Firstly, I need to operationalize the idea of internalized Orientalism which is theoretically explained as the process where the dominated internalize the orientalist discourse and worldview. This is difficult to measure quantitatively because people, when asked directly, will naturally not portray themselves as inferior, so we need to look for indicators in order to estimate its occurrence. The indicators can be terms like modernity, civilization, development, West and East, us and them and weather they are used in a negative or positive way. If, for example, a person says ”we need to change our mentality in order to be fully European” (as one of the respondents did), it implies that ”we” should aspire to be fully European, which is assumed to be better, by getting rid of the non-Western, presumably Eastern, elements of ”our mentality”. The next term, however, is more straightforward: economic development or growth is operationalized simply as an increase in GNI per capita, a measurement used by the World Bank (2015). The third term is collective identity which can also be operationalized using indicators which show that a person view him or herself as belonging to a certain ethnic group. Except for economic development, however, these operationalizations are not trouble-free. The interpretive process creates both validity problems, because there is a gap between
the theoretical and operationalized definition, and reliability issues. This, however, is a problem for qualitative research in general (Bryman 2012).

Analysis and Results

The question which has been the motivation for this paper is whether or not a people's perception of their collective identity can have an effect on the economic development of a country and I have chosen to look at the case of Kosovo, and the Kosovar Albanians, in an attempt to answer this question. In this section, I will analyze the qualitative data that I have gathered predominantly from the in-depth interviews, but also from my own field notes, participation and observations as well as data from artistic work, national newspapers and social media.

From the codification and categorization process, I have extracted three main themes from the empirical data. The first is Oppression, a recurring theme in the interviews which deals with how the Kosovar (Albanian) society has been, and continues to be, an oppressed society and how this has become a part of their identity; the second I call Internalized Orientalism and deals with how the construction of the Albanian ‘other’ has been internalized by the Albanians themselves and how it still has an impact on their perception of their collective identity; lastly, the third theme I have chosen to call Nationalist Economy and deals with how Albanians in Kosovo view the domestic production and their potential for economic development. I will deal with each separately below but it is worth mentioning that these themes are not isolated from each other but rather intersect and affect one another in significant ways. The categorization is only done in order to structure and analyze the data.

(Self-)Oppression

"Even in liberty we are oppressed” was the concluding remarks of Jeton Lekaj, an MP from one of the opposition parties, as he answered one of my questions. His idea was that the Kosovar society had historically been, and continues to be, a very oppressed society and that this was one of the reasons for the lack of development in the country in the postwar period. Oppression, I realized, was a recurring theme in all of my interviews, often brought up as respondents elaborated their answers. On the whole, they expressed two different categories of oppression: one was the oppression carried out by others (mainly the Ottomans and the Serbs) and the other was the oppression which had its roots in the society and the Albanian people themselves. This part of the analysis will be structured in this fashion.
Oppression by others was the more common of the two and was mentioned by the respondents when they explained why they thought that Kosovo was still struggling economically and why important elements were still lacking in the society. According to them, oppression and occupation had had a very destructive effect in the country, not allowing its people to “to be free, to express what we know and feel” and ”to read, build a society, to educate our children, build museums, care about the cultural heritage and so on”, ”like the Scandinavian countries [which] have not had war in many years”. Interestingly, oppression is also seen as something which has limited the Kosovars Albanians knowledge and intellectual development and limited their possibilities to use and express this knowledge in meaningful ways, forcing ”young people to leave their country, not because they wanted but because they had to”. Some of the respondents also said that the lack of national liberties in the period when Kosovo was part of Serbia, was a tactical move by the latter in order to prevent Kosovar Albanians from developing a national identity which, being the majority in the country, could jeopardize their control over the territory. So the respondents viewed oppression both as a reason explaining the lack of economic, cultural and intellectual development but also as a tactic used by others in order to prevent a national identity. An historical example of this is given by Miranda Vickers (1998) who writes that the ”Serbian assumption had been that the Albanians were not a nation but rather a number of mutually estranged tribes [but following the First Balkan War], the Albanians had gradually begun to establish an increasingly explicit notion of themselves as a separate people, and [the Serbian Consul in Prishtina] emphasized that this must be taken seriously” (p. 73). The Kosovar Albanians are viewed as a people who has emerged from an oppressive past; oppression is not sealed in history but rather intertwined as an important element in the creation of the identity itself. They are who they are because of their oppressive past, with all that it entails (lack of intellectual, cultural, economic development etcetera). To give but one example from Kosovar Albanian thinker and writer Agon Hamza (2013) who writes that, ”a new version of the Albanian language was developed during [the 90s]: an inverted Albanian, a ‘self-censored’ language, which served as a means for free communication from the Serbian police, secret service, and other repressive apparatuses” (p.96).

Oppression, and occupation, is also seen as one of the main reasons for why the war broke out in 1997, a war that had devastating effects on the country and on the society. Besim Haliti, an MP from one of the governing parties, reminds us: ”don’t forget that Kosovo has experienced 40 years in…occupation and genocide. So after the war we started at zero, at absolute nothing”. Likewise, other people expressed similar thoughts, often interchangeably using occupation and war as causes which ”affected the economic development regardless of the natural resources that [Kosovo] has”. Apart from the impact on economic development, oppression, and the violence that resulted from it, was often used to explain the lack of formal institutions in the country which almost
all of the respondents viewed as a big problem in Kosovo today. It was oppression which had denied the Albanians the right to build their institutions independently from the Serbian republic and later the war which had destroyed whatever institutions that existed, creating the current situation where the institutions are "politicized and corrupt", where the Albanians "live without the rule of law", with "nepotism", "clientelism" and an "uncontrolled privatization which has damaged the industry profoundly". The importance placed on the (weak) formal institutions was something that I initially did not expect, but it became evident as one respondent after the other mentioned them as an explanation for why Kosovo had not developed in the ways they had expected, often emphasizing this with a rhetorical question, such as "how would Oslo function in a similar situation, or New York, without any functioning institution?". Relating to the research question, the importance of oppression offers an interesting insight. The Kosovar Albanian people is seen as a collective lacking the necessary knowledge and experience, as a result of the oppressive Serbian rule which denied the Albanians the possibility to attain these, and as such the collective is viewed as less capable to produce adequate results in certain economic sectors and to compete in the international market, I will come back to this. Oppression from others is also seen as a reason for the lack of functioning institutions in the country and as such, a reason for the weak state that has emerged after the war. Again, oppression is seen as an element in the collective identity, and so is the mistrust or suspicion toward formal institutions, which have been either oppressive themselves or whose weakness is the result of oppression.

The other type of oppression that many of the respondents talked about was the oppression which derives from society itself, or, as some called it, self-oppression. Two of the respondents attributed this to the canon of Lekë Dukagjini, a traditional customary law, which the Albanians followed for many centuries and which, in some regards, is still in practice through cultural norms and informal rules. The canon places the family, or the clan, in the center, rather than the individual, and contains rules that determine the behavior in the public sphere as well as the in private, regulating, for example, issues concerning marriage and hospitality. As such, it is oppressive for the individual who looses a big part of his or her autonomy to others who are accepted to make the decisions for them (Mangalakova, 2004). This customary or societal oppression, was seen by many as an obstacle for development, not allowing people to "think individually" and freely outside the boundaries of the family or the community. As a respondent said: "the level of emancipation is still not there, which means that people still don’t think by themselves". The effects, according to the participants, of this societal oppression was best described by Jeton Lekaj:

"The weakness of this society is that it is very oppressing, we oppress one another...in the family where children are not taught to express themselves...then in the education system...instead of focusing on the individuality of each and
strengthening it, there is a tendency to not allow people to express themselves, and when you cannot express yourself, you cannot know what you want and when you don’t know what you want, you subscribe to this norm of oppression. [This creates] weak individuals, and in order to have a strong society with strong convictions, you need strong individuals with firm beliefs and firm convictions…we are unable to build a strong society with…this trait of cultural oppression”

For parliamentarian Lekaj, lack of individuality and firm beliefs creates weak individuals and therefore a weak society, which hinders it from moving forward. This oppression can, according to some of the respondents, sometimes also be the cause of peoples bad behavior, where ”the only means to freedom is to break every possible rule they can because there is just so much oppression you can take, as a human being.”. Disregarding the formal institutions thus becomes a way to deal with suffocating informal institutions which exist in every aspect of an individuals life. This self-oppression and lack of individuality is seen as a negative attribute which is nonetheless a characteristic of the collective, making it “weak” and unable to think “critically” and “freely”. This multilayered oppression, it not only seen as political or as an isolated part of the historical past, but rather as an element affecting the creation of the collective identity itself as well as Kosovo as a state.

**Internalized Orientalism**

”We Albanians, as a people, only know fear and this, it seems to me, is because of lack of culture or perhaps our genes”. These are the words of Bekim Konjufca, a High School principal, who, in frustration and anger over the current situation in Kosovo, expressed this to me with an honest voice during our interview. He continued by saying that he was fearing that they, the Serbs, would after all be proven right when they, in racist terms, said that the Albanians were not able to build a functioning state. His words were disturbing but unfortunately, such expressions were not uncommon during my interviews and participant observations in the country. In fact, several of the respondents uttered similar remarks, claiming that the Albanians are ”a bit lazy”, ”thieves”, ”unable to control themselves” and ”primitive”, not dissimilar to the ways the West has portrayed the Orient, or the Serbs the Albanians, in their effort to construct the ’other’. As Müller (2009) writes, after the annexation of Kosovo and the Paris Peace Conference, the Serbian ”discourse of an Orientalized representation of the Albanians” (p.82) continued, portraying the Albanians as ”structurally incompatible to [the national] scheme, due to their alleged uncivilized, non-European, and non-national nature” (p.83).
The title (in black) reads: "How can the visa liberalization occur with citizens like this?" alluding to the driver in the blue van who decided to make a u-turn using the crosswalk. Recently, the EU council denied Kosovo visa liberalization, which would enable citizen to enter the EU without visas. Photo and article from Gazeta Blic (2015)

The respondents made these claims not with malice, but rather with regret and frustration and often in relation to their assessment of the strained economic and political situation in Kosovo. However, during the short period I was there, I often heard similar expressions being uttered by people in their everyday life, often, it seemed to me, reflexively, saying things like "look at how that Albanian drives", "they're Albanian, what do you expect?" or "Albanians are so slow" (when we waited to exit the plane in Prishtina for example). Thus, it is not mainly driven by frustration and anger, but rather, it seems to me, that it is entrenched in how they view the collective, which is why such expressions are used so reflexively. Bujar Skenderaj, a manager at the Innovative Center of Kosovo, explained this by saying that "such expressions are more a habit than an rational expression... because I often find myself doing the same thing", a habit indeed, but where does it come from? All of the respondents, as well as other people I spoke with, recognized these expressions and agreed that it was a widespread phenomenon among the Albanians in Kosovo and something that they themselves had experienced. Most of them used words like "occupation" and "oppression" to explain its origin, claiming that it came from outside the Kosovar Albanian people: "the Serbs have always tried to portray us as stubborn, people without culture, as savages", "They [the Serbs] said 'they [the Albanians] are people with tails'" and "we are still in the emancipation phase" (thus still not truly free from these oppressive ideas). It seems, therefore, that the Kosovar Albanians have indeed internalized at least some of the Orientalist and Balkanist constructions (by the West in general, and Serbia in particular) which have portrayed them as the 'other' and furthermore, when asked about it, they seem to be aware of it. This is echoed in the song Cold November by the
Kosovar Albanian rock-band Jericho, who often use traditional Albanian instruments, melodies and poems in their music, where they sing: "How long will it take before we [the Albanians] love ourselves?" (my translation) (Jericho, 2012).

There is, however, another, and paradoxical, side of the coin. All of the respondents, including those who often used derogatory words about Albanians either earlier or later in the interview, when asked directly, claimed that they felt proud for being Albanian. Often, they talked about how the Albanian people descend "from the oldest people in the region" and in "Europe", from "the Aryans" and "the Illyrians", and how they were part of a "peaceful" and "humane nation" which had never had "expansionist" or "hegemonic aspirations", "unlike the Serbs which had always aspired to form a Great Serbia". They talk about their "religious tolerance", "hospitality" and "Besa" as ways to explain why they are "proud to be Albanian". Thus, there seems to be a paradox where, on the one hand, there is national pride, but on the other, and often without being conscious of it, out of "habit" perhaps, they have internalized the orientalist discourse and racism which they have experienced from others. This becomes evident in how they view themselves in relation to other nations in the region, saying things like "[Kosovo], it's the Balkans, but slightly worse than the Balkans" and "they [the Serbs] work harder than us, but we cannot say that" but also "we treat the minorities better [than the Serbs] and "we are more internationalist [than the Slavs]". So there is a constant comparison with other nations in the region on who is better, more civilized, more democratic and, as a result, more Western. This is an empirical example of nested Orientalism, explained by Todorova (2009) who writes that "the construction of an idiosyncratic Balkan self-identity, or rather of several Balkan self-identities…were invariably erected against an “oriental” other…anything from a geographic neighbor and opponent…to the…portions of one’s own historical past" (p. 20) and in this "the Albanians who, situated in the western Balkans, are perceived as easternmost by the rest of the Balkan nations" (p. 58). In the same manner, all but one respondent tried to portray Kosovar Albanians as "more Western than Eastern", that the west was better of the two was simply assumed. Ahmet Gashi, a professor and former minister of education, science and culture shared a story during our interview:

"I once attended a dinner by [Angela] Merkel, and gave my visit-card to a German MP and she…thought I was Arab. I explained that it was Ahmet with a T and not a D at the end, it is an Albanian name, not Muslim or Arab. I was named by my grandfather who was an Astro-Hungarian soldier, hearing this she laughed and embraced me. We

---

8 A code of conduct in Albanian culture which emphasizes honor, keeping of promises and hospitality.
must work to remove the prejudices that the West has toward us. They knew [Ibrahim] Rugova\textsuperscript{9}…would not moved to the east, because he could have gone to Saudi Arabia or somewhere else, but didn’t.”

For Professor Gashi, it was vital that Albanians were seen as European and not as Eastern, distancing himself from his clearly muslim name and further claiming his ‘Europeaness’ as he mentions that his grandfather had served in the Astro-Hungarian army. Later in the interview, he repeated several times that in today’s Kosovo, unlike when the Serbs ruled, all of the minorities have the right to their own schools in their own language and encouraged me to ”Write this down, it is very important that you tell them this”. Again, minority rights, and democracy, are seen as a Western value and his insistence for me to ”tell them this” was an effort to make the Kosovar Albanians appear more Western. Writing about anti-semitism, Jean-Paul Sartre (1946) writes: ”They [Jewish people] have allowed themselves to be poisoned by the stereotype that others have of them, and they live in fear that their acts will correspond to this stereotype”, it seems that this is precisely what Professor Gashi is doing, but it is the Oriental, or the Balkanite, or the Albanian, stereotype which he tries to avoid. Many of the other respondents said similar things, claiming that ”we [Albanians] are culturally spiritually European” who have ”contributed a lot in science, in art with artists and actors who are well known in the West”, often mentioning the ”Nobel prices” given to Albanians. Again, it is an effort to assert themselves as Europeans, and thus as ‘civilized’, by showing how the Albanians have contributed to Western culture and knowledge.

Finally, this analysis is to a degree coherent with the arguments of Chávez and Guido-DiBrito (1999) who, writing about minorities in the U.S, note that ”racial and ethnic identity are manifested in very conscious ways…triggered…by two conflicting social and cultural influences. First, deep conscious immersion into cultural traditions and values…[which]…instills a positive sense of ethnic identity and confidence. Second, and in contrast, individuals often must filter ethnic identity through negative treatment and media messages received from others because of their race and ethnicity” (p.39).

**Nationalist Economy**

The third major theme which I could distinguish relative to the research question of this study, is what I have chosen to call Nationalist Economy, a broad term including both how the respondents view domestic production and how they view the potential of Kosovo, and the capability of the Kosovars Albanians, to develop economically through trade, industry, agriculture, entrepreneurship,

\textsuperscript{9}Kosovar Albanian spiritual and political leader which lead the independence movement in its early phase and would in the post-war period become the president.
services etcetera. I chose nationalist and not simply national because the answers I received often had a nationalist dimension to them, for example stating that "I try not to buy Serbian products as much as I can, because I don’t trust them". This extra dimension of preconceived ideas about products from other countries, and about domestic products, is, I believe, not reflected in the more neutral term national economy. I will analyze these two categories, domestic production and the economic potential of Kosovo, in more detail below.

A common answer when talking about domestic products was that "We [the Kosovar Albanians] need to prioritize them, and not the foreign ones" in order to "stimulate them" so they can "develop and grow". There is thus a conception, and a broad agreement, that national products should be treated preferentially because it will have a positive effect on the economy as a whole. Furthermore, there was a nationalist element in many of the answers, as Lule Bektashi told me: "In this regard we have shown ourselves weak because we have imported millions of euros worth of goods from Serbia". The idea is that domestic goods should not only be prioritized because they might be of higher quality, but also because the choice has a political value, choosing domestic products is a way to help Kosovo, choosing foreign products is both seen as not doing so as well as helping the exporting country. This is further explained by Pickel (2003) who writes that economic nationalism is a political action, which can "either facilitate or hinder external economic integration or internal industrial reorganization" (p.116) and that it "make[s] sense only in the context of a particular national discourse" (p.122). Thus, the nationalist tendencies of the respondents’ views on economy is the result of the political discourse in Kosovo which seem to advocate protectionism and preferential treatment of the domestic production.

Banners put up as part of the "Buy Albanian" campaign, in the center of Prishtina, the capital of Kosovo. The left banner is the Albanian flag, not the flag of Kosovo, and the text on the right banner reads: Buy Albanian: Consume, Produce, Albanian. Apart from these I saw several similar billboards spread around the city. Photo by me.
This discourse was also present in a campaign initiated by the municipality of Prishtina, the capital city, which urged residents to "Buy Albanian", as the campaign was called, in order to "encourage Albanian consumers to buy Albanian products and services" (Municipality of Prishtina, 2014) as a way to help the economy of the country. A trade fair was organized as part of this campaign, in the center of the city, starting on November 28th, which is the independence day of Albania, celebrated by Albanians all over the world. So the nationalist element is not merely present in this campaign, but rather the foundation of it altogether. Identity, as Akerlof and Kranton (2010) writes, does in fact seem to have an importance for people's economic activities. The campaign was met with skepticism by one of the respondents who claimed that it "is not seen as very good by some in Kosovo. Kosovo is a multi-ethnic country; can I buy cheese that is made by a Bosnian that lives in a village somewhere in Kosovo? It is a domestic product even though it is not an Albanian". This points to the nationalist aspect of this campaign and the problem which it entails. It might be seen as exclusive and ethnocentric and as such, it might be counterproductive.

This awareness expressed by the respondents, that buying domestic products can have a positive effect on the economy as a whole, was not accompanied by the readiness to act accordingly. When asked directly, almost everyone said that they "try to buy as much domestically produced goods as possible but...the quality is not always that good" and that they "rather pay a bit more for something that is good". So quality was still seen as the most important determinant for them as consumers and almost all could recall bad experiences with domestic products, which made them quite skeptical of domestic products in general. However, they also expressed an awareness that "an attitude has been created where products produced in Kosovo are seen as less qualitative". Mertia Salihu, a farmer and representative of a small agricultural association, told me about how their products were initially met with skepticism: "In the beginning they were a bit more skeptical, but lately they have gained a better appreciation of our products, this is very good and our products are now very popular". Her experiences were shared by Drtia Bujupi, another small producer of agricultural goods who likewise claimed that "people [are beginning to] realize that our products are fresher and healthier". Nonetheless, on the whole, the respondents seemed quite skeptical toward domestic products, claiming that quality often suffers as producers try to maximize their profits by using cheaper ingredients and material:

"Initially they produce quality products and then, you know how we [Albaniens] are, they say "It doesn’t matter now because we can still sell it". The Slovenes or the Austrians for example, would never lie to you like this, but here, I still have a lack of trust toward domestic products, and I believe that this mistrust is present in the population as well, and I think that they need to prove themselves to us, to prove that their products are of high quality."
This quote from Bekim Konjufca, is interesting on several points. First he says ”you know how we are” referring to the Albanians who are willing to lie to their costumers about the quality in order maximize their profit, contrary to ”the Slovenes or the Austrians”. This relates to the idea of Nation Branding which is when ”consumers have a preconceived idea of a country, which eventually is decisive for international success of products from that country” (Roca and Serrano 2010 p.264). To this one might also add domestic success.

The second interesting part in this quote is how he believes that ”this mistrust is present in the population” as a whole, something that, as I mentioned earlier, was reiterated by several of the other respondents during our interviews. The third point comes from the last sentence of the quote, which seemed to allude to the free-market as a way to ensure the quality of domestic goods. This was also something that many of the respondents expressed, some of them using the actual term and claiming ”that it is only the free-market which can fix this, I will buy the best products and let the market do its thing, make them produce higher quality goods.”

When I asked about domestic products, agricultural products and other food products was what most of the respondents immediately thought of, using examples like wine, wheat, vegetables and dairy products as examples when they answered my questions. Agriculture also seemed to be the sector in which they thought Kosovo had the most potential to develop. As for other industries, most of them seemed to be quite skeptical, saying that ”we need to be realistic, we cannot aspire too much” and that Kosovo should ”not try to compete with the advanced industries and big economies in Europe”, ”we cannot build planes…we can not compete in those fields, but [rather with] agriculture products”. The reasons given were among others, lack of education, lack of knowledge and know-how, but also the corrupt institutions where ”half of our established politicians are also a part of the organized crime…[who only] want profit…our industrial base was destroyed by them”. Lack of institutions with the responsibility to certify the quality of products was also seen as something that was damaging the domestic production, as the consumers could not trust the domestic products and chose foreign ones instead. For those who ran small agricultural companies, the lack of institutions meant that they ”cannot expect any help from the institutions, they don’t have the possibilities or the funds…we do our best on our own”. As mentioned earlier, the lack of adequate institutions is again brought forward as a reason for the lack of development.

In conclusion, the respondents perception of domestic products seemed to partly be the result of their personal experiences with them, most of which seemed to be negative, partly due to the lack of adequate institutions that could regulate what was produced and how it was promoted and sold, and partly due to the preconceived ideas and lack of trust toward the domestic producers. These, one might expect, affect and further reinforce one another as the lack of institutions leads to
lack of quality which further reinforces the lack of trust and so on. At the same time, corrupt politicians can personally gain from weak institutions and a less regulated market.

**Concluding Remarks**

Does a people's perception of themselves (their identity) affect their development? This has been the main underlying question which has motivated this study. More specifically, I have looked at the case of Kosovo and asked how the Kosovar Albanians' perception of their collective identity affects the country's economic development. To answer this, I first developed a theoretical framework based on theories and literature relevant to the question. Using this framework, but also my own experience and intuition, I suggested a preliminary hypothesis which I then tested empirically through in-depth interviews and participant observation in Kosovo. Based on the analysis of these interviews, I can conclude that the main strains of my hypothesis are supported. Firstly, identity does in fact seem to have an effect on people's economic activities, just like the theory of identity economics predicts (Akerlof and Kranton, 2010). Moreover, identity seems to be intertwined with the economy in Kosovo, as economic choices are seen to also have a political and nationalist dimension to them, the 'Buy Albanian' campaign is one clear example. Secondly, there seems to be an internalization of the Orientalist and Balkanist discourse among the Kosovar Albanians, who to a certain degree have adapted a view of themselves in accordance with the often racist portrayal of them as the 'other'. Thirdly, combining the two, it seems that the Kosovar Albanians view themselves as less capable to compete economically with other countries. The reasons given for this are among others that they have preconceived ideas about the quality of domestic products, lack of trust toward domestic producers, lack confidence that they have the cultural, intellectual and technical potential to compete with other countries other than with agricultural products, a perception that 'Western' products are almost by definition better and so on. Albanians in Kosovo also seem to view themselves as an oppressed people and this oppression is part of their collective identity and is often used as a way to explain, and sometimes justify, why there has been a lack of development in the postwar period. This is something that was not included in my hypothesis, but is neither contradictory to it. It is yet another element which has affected their identity formation. In sum, Kosovar Albanians' view of their collective identity is strained by negative perceptions and interpretations, both experienced and imagined. Furthermore, this lack of confidence or self-reliance, I believe, is an important hindrance to their economic development because they simply do not trust themselves sufficiently to get a healthy economy going, which might be one of the reasons why they import almost ten times more than they export (ASK, 2015). However, this result must be viewed as a a first step in a quite under-researched field and I am well aware that much
more needs to be done before something conclusive can be said. Nonetheless, my research points at something interesting and that is that perception of the collective identity can in fact be something that affects their, or their country’s, development and I hope that more research is done in this field.

The ambition of this study has been to make a contribution to how we understand and research issues relating to development, and I believe I have done so on several points. First, my theoretical contribution has been to highlight the importance of identity and to incorporate the idea of internalized Orientalism with the theory of Identity Economics as a, to my knowledge, new approach in the field of development studies. As I mentioned, more needs to be done but my result points at something which might be of considerable importance. My empirical contribution has in addition to testing my hypothesis and giving it some empirical support, also been to highlight the importance of institutions. Even though this does not directly relate to my research question, the absence of strong and functioning institutions was again and again brought up as an important reason for the lack of development in Kosovo. This is consistent with previous research but my research further shows that it is accurate in the context of Kosovo and that it is something that the people are aware of. In matters of policy, I think my research does have some value for both Kosovar politicians and authorities but also for the international community which operates in the country. If the result of further research points in the same direction, then we need to incorporate it in how understand and work with development in Kosovo. My research shows that Albanians in Kosovo, to a degree, still view themselves as second class citizens in a global society built on Eurocentrism and colonialism (Quijano, 2000). They view themselves as intellectually and culturally less developed and this, in my view, is a major obstacle for their road forward. People’s perception of their collective identity, therefore, needs to be de-colonized, politically, culturally and in a systematic way. This does not mean that policies should be nationalistic, isolationist, anti-Western and so on, but rather that they target the negative aspects in how people view themselves. On a larger scale, I believe this also applies to other underdeveloped countries, many of which have also been subjugated to colonial rule and racist ideologies, which have undoubtedly affected peoples perception of themselves and which make identity an important element in their development efforts. Finally, I hope that more research is done in this field and that identity is not merely viewed as a topic important for sociologists but also for those of us who are interested in the development and progress of countries, because I think there is a lot of potential there which, until now, has received very little attention from scholars, authorities and activists.
List of References


Appendices

Appendix 1

A. Graph and data below from The World Bank (2015). GNI per capita in Kosovo (Atlas method, current US$) compared to the average GNI of developing countries in Europe and Central Asia.

B. Graph and data below from The World Bank (2015). Life expectancy (Years) compared to the average of developing countries in Europe and Central Asia.

C. Table and data from The World Bank (2015). Poverty rate has been falling since 2005 but the figure is still alarmingly high. 29.7% seems to be the latest assessment of the poverty rate both according to The World Bank and UNDP (2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Poverty Rate (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>45.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
D. Graph and data from UNDP (2014). Unemployment rate has fallen in recent years but is still around 30% and considerably higher for young people.

E. Graph below from Freedom House (2015B). The overall score is 5.14 and as such more authoritarian than democratic according to the Freedom House rating.

F. Teargas in the Parliament of Kosovo has been a common sight lately as the opposition has tried to block it. Security forces are seen wearing masks. From article on BBC (2015)

G. Albin Kurti, the main opposition leader, is being arrested, together with 95 other activists protesting. From article on B92 (2015)
Appendix 2

A. Historical boundaries of Serbia and Kosovo. From University of Texas (2015).

Boundaries of Serbia

Serbia and Montenegro have asserted the formation of a joint independent state, but this entity has not been formally recognized as a state by the United Nations.
Appendix 3

Interview Guide:

1. Name, age, occupation?
2. Do you see yourself as an Albanian or as something else?
3. What does being Albanian mean to you?
4. If you have children (or grandchildren), would kind of name would you like them to have? (Albanian, religious, European?)
5. Is there a difference between the Albanians from Kosovo and those from Albania?
6. Would you say that Kosovar Albanians have a rich culture?
7. How do you see other Kosovar Albanians?
8. Have you noticed or experienced any negative remarks toward Albanians by other Albanians? (Why do you think this occurs?)
9. Is Kosovo a part of Europe, culturally rather than politically?
10. Do the Europeans see us as European?
11. Is there a difference between Kosovar Albanians and Serbs?
12. How do the Serbs view us?
13. Have we internalized the racism which has been directed toward us historically?
14. Do you think that Kosovar Albanians are as productive and capable as other people in the Balkans and/or Europe?
15. What does development of Kosovo mean to you?
16. Why has there been a lack of economic development in Kosovo in the postwar period?
17. Are we able to compete in the European market? (If not what are the main reasons?)
18. Does Kosovo have the intelligence, knowledge, capacity (human capital) to develop economically?
19. What is your thoughts on domestic products?
20. Do you select domestic products or avoid them?
Appendix 4

Respondents:

1. Besim Haliti - (42 years) Member of Parliament in Kosovo from the LDK party.
2. Dritia Bujupi - (middle age) Farmer and owner of a small agricultural company.
3. Merita Salihu - (middle age) Farmer and representative of a farmers association
4. Bujar Skenderaj - (27 years) Manager in the Innovation Center of Kosovo
5. Lule Bektashi - (25 years) Chemist
6. Jeton Lekaj - (middle age) Member of Parliament in Kosovo from the Vetëvendosje party.
7. Avni Shkreli - (45 years) Teacher and professional plumber.
8. Recep Krasniqi - (48 years) Engineer and Teacher.
9. Alma Demaj - (25 years) employed at IPKO Telecommunication and consultant at the The Ideas Partnership (NGO)
10. Ahmet Gashi - (72 years) Professor and former Minister of Education, Science and Culture in Kosovo.
11. Bekim Konjufca - (42 years) principal at a High School