

# Vetevendosje

A minor field study of the Kosovo Albanian resistance  
movement

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# Abstract

Vetevendosje is a Kosovo-Albanian social movement which main political demand is self-determination. Social movements most commonly disappear or get institutionalized when reaching their political aim. What is interesting is that Vetevendosje did not follow this pattern. Even though the prime minister of Kosovo declared independence on the 17<sup>th</sup> of February in 2008, Vetevendosje is still alive and vital. A minor field study was carried out in Kosovo with the purpose of creating deeper understanding for how Vetevendosje managed to survive the political scene of Kosovo. Interviews, informal conversations and observations made it possible to study how political opportunity structures have influenced Vetevendosje's activities but also the choice of framing strategies, how successful these are and why. When looking closer on the movement's history, close connection to the civil society, their different actions and campaigns, it is not difficult to discover why they are still alive and remain as a significant political agency in Kosovo.

*Key words:* Kosovo, social movement, Vetevendosje, political opportunity, framing

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# Table of contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	Purpose and delimitation .....	1
1.2	Disposition .....	2
<b>2</b>	<b>Method .....</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1	The interview method.....	3
2.2	The observational method.....	4
<b>3</b>	<b>Theory .....</b>	<b>5</b>
3.1	Political opportunity .....	5
3.2	Framing.....	6
<b>4</b>	<b>Analysis .....</b>	<b>8</b>
4.1	Political opportunity .....	8
4.2	Framing.....	11
<b>5</b>	<b>conclusion.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>References .....</b>	<b>20</b>

# 1 Introduction

The “new born”, The “child of EU” or “UNMIKistan”. After ten years of international governance, Kosovo has received quite a few nicknames. It is with pride that the international community now presents the rebuilding process in Kosovo as being a success. They project the image of Kosovo being a celebrated new born baby, waiting to be raised by the international community.

But not everyone agrees with this picture. Vetevendosje means self-determination and is the name of a challenging Kosovo-Albanian social movement that emerged on the Albanian political scene in 2005. Vetevendosje disagrees with the image that the international community in unity with the Kosovan government is presenting to the outer world. They are convinced that Kosovo is not the success story it seems to be while persistently arguing and working for Kosovos right to self-determination as well as for the unification of Albania.

A social movement is said to most commonly die out or become institutionalized once it reaches its political aim (Goodwin etc, 1999:18). But not this one. When the Kosovan government declared independence on February 17<sup>th</sup> 2008, everyone thought it was the end of Vetevendosje. But two years after the declaration of independence the self-determination movement is not only alive but vital. It has 63% public support (UNDP), which is more than ever before. This caught my attention.

So I went to Kosovo. In search for clarification. To feel the atmosphere. Study the movement and find out how they have managed to survive the political scene of Kosovo.

## 1.1 Purpose and delimitation

Knowing how Vetevendosje have managed to get in and survived the political scene of Kosovo, will give a deeper understanding for Vetevendosje’s actual relevance to the present situation and the future of Kosovo. It is thus necessary to study the movement’s ability to sieze political opportunities and its success in choosing framing strategies to get a sense of to what extent it is or could be a political force to acknowledge (Tarrow, 1998:123-124). It may devolve into a small and rather isolated movement but it may also evolve into a powerful social movement.

I will therefore answer the following questions:

How have political opportunity structures influenced the activities of Vetevendosje?

What framing strategies do they use? How successful are they and why?

## 1.2 Disposition

The thesis begins by going through the methods used for collecting material. First there will be a discussion about the interviewing method and then about the observation method. The chapter that follows, concern the choices of theory. A discussion of political opportunity structures is followed by a discussion of framing strategy. Moreover the analysis chapter is divided in two. The first part goes through the political opportunity structures and the second part treats framing strategy. The thesis ends with a short conclusion.

## 2 Method

There is a broad spectrum of methods for social movement research. Semi-structured interviews are most commonly used with participant observations as complement (Klandermans & Staggenborg, 2002:93). This is also the combination of method that was used to collect material during this field study. I will in this chapter explain more closely how these methods were exercised.

### 2.1 The interview method

The semi-structured interviewing method is when the researcher prepares with questions but is flexible and let the interview object decide how the interview should unfold. It is a method that is often used when the existing material on a movement is very thin (Klandermans & Staggenborg, 2002:93). Since no scholar previously has studied Vetevendosje, semi-structured interviews were a proficient way to collect material. I made 13 recorded semi-structured interviews and two semi-structured interviews that were by demand not recorded. Moreover most of my interviews were key informant interviews or informal conversations. The numbers of these are hard to count, since I was among the activists much of the time I spent in Kosovo.

The interviews sometimes evolved into *oral history interviewing* and *life history interviewing*. Oral history interviewing is when history or the past of the movement is studied from the perspective of the interviewing object. This is a good method when history is not well preserved and when the researcher want to understand certain aspects of history such as changes in political opportunities. Oral history interviewing concerns the interviewing objects own life story for understanding of the persons behind the movement (Klandermans & Staggenborg, 2002:102-103). Since it is Vetevendosje that is the object of my study, what is interesting for me is the activists writing of history and description of reality. The thesis is thus mostly based on the perception of the activists.

Since a big part of the field work was based on observation, a natural consequence was the development of conversations and social networks. This phenomenon led me to many more or less informal conversations with the activists. Before, during and after events, meetings or actions, I got in contact with activists that I was not introduced to by the leaders. People of different ages, regions but also people that were in the periphery and did not make so much noise of themselves. These informal conversations gave me a not only broader but also a more unpolished and personal insight in the movement. It is important to keep in mind that I was still a guest. That consequently means that the themes and information my informants elicited, was highly selective. I intentionally asked the same questions to different persons in order to understand the concordance within the movement.

## 2.2 The observational method

Participant observation is when the researcher observes and is partial active in the activities of a movement (Klandermans & Staggenborg, 2002:120). Observations are based on the researcher's perception, which can never be totally objective. Also the researcher's presence will still always be a factor that makes the situation not absolutely natural. Even though I did my best to blend in, everyone was still aware of my purpose in attending. The activities I attended were the ones I was invited to, which resulted in an observation made based on very selective parts of the movement and its activities. The advantage of my numerous observations was that I got a very special insight in Vetvendosje.

I started out by asking if I could attend some of the movement's events and meetings. Since most of the interviews and contacts I had were with the activists close to the central leadership, I was during these occasions striving to stay among the activists with less authority in the movement. When the relationships had become less formal, I started to hang out in the office of Vetvendosje. Sometimes I did not have anything to do there, and sometimes I did not understand what they said, but I still stayed there just for people to become used to my presence. In a way, one can say that the reason I tried to blend in as much as possible was to get an as true picture of the movement as possible. When people get comfortable, they naturally speak more freely.

I attended a couple of meetings and events. The language spoken was often Albanian. Consequently I did not always understand the discussion. It made me more observant on the social fine points such as the unofficial hierarchies, the relations, responses and interaction among members and between the movement and the public.

# 3 Theory

Theories used in social movement research are often centered on political opportunity, framing and mobilization. This thesis will only use the political opportunity and framing perspectives. Mobilization will not be used, due to the activists own focus on the former two.

## 3.1 Political opportunity

A central theme in social movement research is the acknowledgement of the social movement's political opportunities and constraints. Social movement researchers' often assert and emphasize the significance of the political structure and the constraints that social movements' face (McAdam etc, 1996:2). The political structure, in which the social movement appears, is fundamental and crucial for the formation of the movement. It creates political voids that make room for collective action (McAdam etc, 1996:276). Political opportunities are often found and created in structural transformations, changes in alliances and in cultural contradictions that occur (McAdam etc, 1996:268). Sometimes it can be used as an independent variable. This is when the aim is to analyze social movements influence over time. We can from this perspective get a dynamic analysis on the political contexts that generate opportunity for challenging political views and movements.

Political opportunity can also be used as an intervening variable when we want to do comparisons. Analyzing rules of representation and institutional arrangements can help us understand why certain movements use certain strategies and have certain effects on political outcomes. Furthermore, political opportunity can also be seen as a dependent variable when we want to understand a social movement's long term influence on a political opportunity structure. Political opportunity structures can create openings for social movements' to act. But social movements' can also create the opportunities themselves. So there is an interactional relationship between social movements and political opportunity structures (McAdam etc, 1996:275-276).

Consequently the occurrence of a social movement is not alienated from its societal circumstances. Political opportunities, organizational traditions and newly shaped contentious expressions affect the appearance, course and form that a social movement will take (Tarrow, 1998:146). To study the formation of Vetevendosje it is therefore of importance to analyze it through its historical and contemporary political context. Thus to get a deeper understanding for the emergence and the durability of Vetevendosje on the political scene in Kosovo, I will use political opportunity as an independent variable. The analysis is made on the foundation of a timeline that is formatted on the basis of Vetevendosje's own history writing. With the starting point in my interviews with the movement, the timeline will start at the time of the disruption of the Albanian resistance movement in 1999 and end at the time of my study in the spring of 2009.

Anthony Oberschall wrote in his analysis of the resistance movement against the communist regime in Eastern Europe an analytical platform from which social movement analysis can be structured about. He created an analyzing tool that divides a state's *institutional* aspect in a domestic and an international arena. The international arena refers to a state's international alliances. It also refers to the state's signals to the outer world. The domestic arena refers to the monopoly of power. But however strong the monopoly of power and international alliances have made a state, lack of moral legitimacy and authority over its own institutions are weaknesses that can make a state vulnerable to being overthrown. Oberschall also identified *short term events*. The short term events characterize small events in the domestic or international arena that can take a powerful state down. Change of alliances, failed reforms, divided elites and erosion of authority are domestic events that create political openings for opposing groups. In the international arena, reforms among neighboring allied states and challengers gaining support among international allies, create openings as well (McAdam etc, 1996:95).

## 3.2 Framing

“Frames are the specific metaphors, symbolic representations, and cognitive cues used to render or cast behaviour and events in an evaluative mode and to suggest alternative modes of action” (McAdam etc, 1996:262).

The negotiator between the political opportunity and the mobilizing structure is the framing process. Framing concerns the issue of discourse, ideology and symbols. It is the shared ideas of collective action. It helps to interpret the world, show who is to blame and show ways to change (McAdam, 1996:269). People need both to have a feeling of infuriation and injustice in some part of their lives, but also the feeling of hope and optimism. The social movement needs to strengthen the feeling that collective action can resolve the problems. If the social movement has the political opportunity and the mobilization structure, but not the framing, they will fail in mobilizing (McAdam etc, 1996:5). Social movements are not the only participants in the framing process. It is an ongoing process of defining ideology and perspectives that is pushed forward by most actors in society. Politicians, journalists, writers, etc, all influence the direction of the framing process.

Benford and Snow wrote an article where they summarized and structured all important parts of the research on social movements' framing processes (Benford & Snow, 2000). They have divided the dynamic of framing for collective action into two groups. One concerns *characteristic features of a movements framing* or *the core framing tasks*. Thus it treats the *diagnostic and prognostic analysis* of social movements. Diagnostic framing refers to a movement's problem identification and attribution. One of the attribution processes within the diagnostic framing is called *injustice frames*. Simply put, this concerns the ways in which the movement defines the source of and the victims of the injustice they object. *Consensus mobilization* and *action mobilization* refers to the problematic issue of a movement's ability to nurture agreement and action (Benford & Snow, 2000:6).

The ways in which these two identified groups can vary in different social movements, is treated under the label of *variable features*. The variable feature *resonance* concerns how well the frame is contextualized to the people's perceived reality. It is a way to analyze the extent to which the injustice frames are marketable in the society (Benford & Snow, 2000:10). A

frame's *credability* creates variation in resonance. Credability is dependent on different factors. One is *frame consistency*. It regards a social movement's consistency between beliefs, claims and action. The consistency is expressed through *contradictions between beliefs and claims* and through *contradictions between frame and tactical action* (Benford & Snow, 2000:11) Social movements can also vary in *inclusivity/exclusivity* and *flexibility/rigidity*. How inclusive or flexible the frame is, determines its possibilities to attracting different groups in society and the chances of becoming *master frames*. Master frames are frames that are very inclusive, flexible and influence other frames (Benford & snow, 2000:9-10).

## 4 Analysis

### 4.1 Political opportunity

UN has moral legitimacy and authority in most parts of the world. It is a powerful ally. In 1999, KLA (Kosova Liberation Army) was invited by the international community into negotiations with Serbia. They were pressured into signing the Rambouillet agreement. There was now not only Serbia and the Albanians. There was now a third political player in Kosovo- the international community. This third player created an internal conflict and shattered the till then united Albanian resistance movement, KLA (Interview Glauk Konjofca). Albin Kurti was at the time of the negotiations working for Adem Demaci (the national hero of Kosovo) at the political office of KLA. Adem Demaci, Albin Kurti and the rest of the political office resigned in protest against the other faction's willingness to sign the Rambouillet agreement (Albin Kurti). The remaining faction of KLA allied themselves with the international community and was now strengthened in their relation to Serbia (Activist 6).

Adem Demaci, Albin Kurti and the rest, were soon after their resignation imprisoned by Serbia for two and a half years (Albin Kurti). With no opposition left, the remaining part of KLA could together with the UN conveniently fill up the political void in Kosovo. When released in 2001, the shattered opposition from the student movement, KLA and prison started to get together. In 2003, they started KAN in Kosovo. KAN (Kosova Action Network) was an Albanian resistance movement previously organized only abroad (Albin Kurti). There was big uncertainty about the public opinion and the strength of the new regime. So the opposition laid low, while mainly occupying themselves with human rights issues, social justice and culture within KAN.

In the year of 2004 the biggest riots after the war erupted. It all started with a shooting at a Serb. The Serbs protested by roadblocking the Pristina- Skopje highway. At the same time, Serbs revenged by chasing three little Albanian boys into the Ibar river. Protests blew up all over Kosovo. Serbian churches were being burned. The Albanians marched to the highway to stop the blockade. The international force was not prepared for this form of conflicts and did not know how to handle the situation. Eleven Albanians and eight Serbs died during the conflict (Supporter 1). This was the first uprising and the first mass confrontation since the war ended in 1999. This political episode showed that everything was not okay. People were dissatisfied. This was also the first time the real strength of the new regime was tested. The revealing of the regime's weakness is an important political opening for dissenters (Tarrow, 1998:77).

At the same time, the democratic transitional process allowed discussions about starting negotiations with Serbia on the subject of the future status of Kosovo, to come into existence.

Even if this issue only caused a minor division of opinion among the political elite, it was still the first time the new regime was divided on the whole. The riot, the weakness of the regime and the political liberalization, all together created a political opening that was seized by the opposition. KAN immediately started the process of converting into a real political opposition and took in 2005 the last step into becoming Vetevendosje (Albin Kurti).

The four years of Vetevendosje's political activity resembles the Eastern Europe democracy movement in the 80s. With their 3000 active members who mostly have a background of university studies, Vetevendosje represents a quite small intellectual elite. Their work is like the Polish Solidarity movement in that it is characterized by the cooperation between the intellectual few and the working class (McAdam, 1996:96). With more than 300 local public meetings, they have through meeting people and speaking within people's experiences, slowly increased their support. They have also cooperated with unions and other parts of the civil society in Kosovo. In August 2008, Vetevendosje and other Albanian movements in the Balkans took initiative to create RrOSh (Network of Albanian Organisations). RrOSh work for strengthening the political, economical and cultural work among Albanians (Albin Kurti). Consequently their work has now intensified and broadened to the whole of the Balkan.

In conversation with activists concerning their feelings about their influence in their direct surroundings, some aspects of the activists' experiences are worth mentioning. One of the activists that studies at the University told me how he along with some other students organized a blockade on his faculty. It was a successful protest and all students knew he was engaged in Vetevendosje. After some time, another faculty wanted to make a protest. They got in touch with him for advice and help with organizing their protest. They had even asked him to be involved with their protest (Activist 9). One of the leaders explained furthermore how a couple of unions that were going out in protest had called Vetevendosje to ask them for help in organizing their protests (leader 1). Albin Kurti told me how they had organized demonstrations with different organizations and that a representative from the union held a speech at Vetevendosje's latest demonstration (Albin Kurti).

With few political opportunities, they have themselves created openings and opportunities. During their first two years, their activities were mostly recognized by campaigns and actions mainly pointed at the regime (Leader 1). Through campaigns against the regime, they succeeded in questioning its moral legitimacy. Albin told me that creativity is very important in their actions. He said that it is important for them to do new and unexpected things every time so that the police do not know how to handle them (Albin Kurti). Their strategy results in making the regime look weak every time they do an action. Thus through attacking the property of the regime i.e. UN cars, the UNMIK building etc, they succeeded in undermining the regime's authority.

Like the resistance movement in Hungary in the 80s they have in a very thorough way, used cultural references and old symbolism as a tool in creating a conflicting political identity that represents the "true" Albanian soul. They try to take back the symbolism and political rhetoric that people feel the political elite of today is trying to suppress (activist 7& 8). It is a strategy to win the power-battle within the Albanian resistance movement that was lost to the people who now are the political elite of today. As such, it is a continuation of old political conflicts. One of the leaders, Glauk Konjofca, told me that if they failed before, they are now trying to make it right (Glauk Konjofca). Their name Vetevendosje is a very old word for self-determination that was used by the national resistance movement a long time ago (Albin Kurti). During one of their demonstrations, they had a big typical Albanian market with

Albanian musicians and dancers. Also they have demonstrations every 28<sup>th</sup> of November which is the original Albanian Flag Day (Activists 2&3).

An interesting aspect is also their political demand of Albanian unification. From the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century till the beginning of the 90s, the goal of the Albanian resistance movement was the unification of Albanians in all the Balkans. In 1989 the LDK (League of Kosovo) party was founded with the later to be president of Kosovo, Ibrahim Rugova, as its leader. In the beginning of the 90s, LDK was a grass root movement. They turned the political aim of the Albanian resistance movement into a slightly different direction. They were now not speaking about unification anymore. Instead they started to speak about independence. They said that the Albanians in every state must handle their own situation and that they were fighting for the independence of the Kosovo-Albanians. This shift in political direction continues even in contemporary Kosovo. Glauk Konfjoca brought this up and explained that Vetevendosje now tries to switch the political aim back to the former idea of unification again (Glauk Konfjoca).

Albin Kurti was convinced that whenever media attacks them in public, support declines. Whenever media is good and supportive in public, support rise again. Since the media is owned by people in the political elite in Kosovo and is very bound to the political parties, it is essential that we define media as a part of the political elite (Activist 1). Here a political ally can be identified. When media supports them, they are strengthened in the form of public support. In discussion with the economic spokesperson of Vetevendosje, Visar Ymeri, the impression he gave was that the local media were much more supportive than the national media. They give Vetevendosje a lot of space on local television and Albin Kurti has a weekly column in a national newspaper. An example of how the national media picture Vetevendosje is the case of 10<sup>th</sup> February 2007. Vetevendosje had a big peaceful demonstration. The international force opened fire. Romanian soldiers killed two activists. At the time of the demonstration, the political elite including media, mobilized against Vetevendosje. Very aggressive forms of repression permeated the aftermath of the demonstration. Activists of Vetevendosje described that period as the absolute worst time of the movement. They showed me newspaper articles from that time. One of the articles had a picture of young boys holding Molotov cocktails. The picture was not from that demonstration and the persons in the picture were not activists. They proved this to me by showing an old newspaper article where the picture had been used in a totally different situation long before the demonstration (Leader 2 & activist 8). Media in unity with the politicians criminalized the movement. They arrested Albin Kurti and gave him five months in prison plus five months of house arrest before his trial. Many other activists were arrested as well. One of the leaders described how they all had to go underground for months and that all of their offices were destroyed. He explained that the lists of people and companies that helped Vetevendosje with donations were taken and that all donations stopped after that. So the political repression was legitimized by media and the support declined (Leader 2).

However, during the trial of Albin Kurti, there was a wind of change. Unexpected support from the Albanian political elite appeared and there was a change in alliance. The court in Kosovo was run by UNMIK. Albin Kurti did not want to take part of the trial since the court was a part of the system he did not recognize as legitimate. Still Albin Kurti was against his will, given a defense lawyer by UNMIK. This lawyer had recently expressed aversion towards Vetevendosje on television. Vetevendosje found the tape and exposed it to the court. So they had to find another lawyer. Vetevendosje asked the newly appointed lawyer to resign from his duty and pay the fines that followed his resignation. One lawyer after another was

appointed and then resigned in unity with the will of Vetevendosje. At this time a lot of human rights organizations and media were present to follow what was seen in the public eye as an unjust trial. In the end, the court asked the president of the Albanian lawyer association to attend. He did not even appear. In a letter to the court he declared the trial against Albin Kurti to be unjust, that the Albanian lawyer association condemned it and that he would therefore not take part of it. The court had to let Albin Kurti go. Thus that round was won by Vetevendosje (Glauk Konjofca). The weakness of the regime, UNMIK, was once again revealed and reforms among allies had appeared. This was a very important and strengthening episode.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of February 2009, I attended the commemoration day of 10th of February. Afterwards, we were all sitting in the office watching the newscast that covered the activities of Vetevendosje that had occurred earlier that day. The coverage seemed quite good and the activists looked pretty satisfied (observation 1). I was told that media had changed a lot in their attitude toward 10<sup>th</sup> of February and Vetevendosje as a whole. That the media's aggression toward them had cooled down and the media had become nicer (Activist 9). This can be seen as a small shift in support and allies. Also the fact that two Romanian soldiers shot two activists during the demonstration in 2007 and were never prosecuted created understanding for Vetevendosje in the public eye. The Kosovan political elite had shown their weakness towards the international community.

The problem though, seems to concern mobilization. They have the public support that they need. But not nearly the amount of active members. When discussing the problem with activists, they pointed out that it is a big risk to get engaged. People need to feed their families and risk losing their jobs if they become active in Vetevendosje ( Activists 6, 1 & 4)

To sum up Vetevendosje's four years of activity, it has overall been an uphill battle. Like the Czechoslovakian and Polish resistance movement of the 80s, they have little by little, built up a legitimate political identity and opposition on the political scene in Kosovo and in the Balkans. With small but effective steps, they have built up a strong foundation of supporters. It seems as if this is their continuing strategy in the wait for the day when political opportunities will appear that will give them the mobilization strength to change the system in Kosovo. It would be interesting to dig deeper into the political opportunity structures that made it possible for Vetevendosje to establish. An interesting aspect to study further would also be the conflict within the Albanian resistance movement and its connection to the contemporary political conflicts.

## 4.2 Framing

Constantly recurring themes during the interviews and conversations with activists was their diagnostic framing, their actions and campaigns. The message they wanted to convey repeatedly consisted these variables. Some activists were annoyed and felt I asked the wrong questions whenever I tried to move the conversation in another direction. Consequently I will try to revolve the framing analysis around the subjects they wanted to draw my attention to.

Vetevendosje have been accused to be nationalist extremists by their opponents. Albin Kurti rejects this accusation. He said he can agree on the word radical, but not the word extremist

(Albin Kurti). The most dominating, dualistic classification of nationalism divides nationalism into two features: the *civic* and the *ethnic*. The civic can be defined as the type of nationalism where people find affinity through mutual dedication and loyalty to common political principles, institutions, state and civil society. The ethnic can be defined as the type of nationalism where people feel kinship through common culture, history, language and traditions (Özkirimli 2005:22-23). As mentioned above, Vetevendosje use the Albanian history in their framing. Thus they use ethnic nationalism in their framing. As also mentioned above, they appoint the political elite of Serbia as an injustice frame. Not the Serbian people. When speaking of the injustices of the war, they always include the injustices made towards the Romans and the Serbs. The head of the political science department and the head of the international relations department of Pristina University, opposed the accusation of them being extremists. They said that the only thing Vetevendosje is asking for is sovereignty, and that there is nothing extreme in demanding that (Agim Zogaj) (Afrim Hacı). Vetevendosje compares the contemporary usage of the word ethnicity with the old usage of the word tribe. That was the word that was used in the old colonizations about the natives. Thus they try to legitimize their political demand of sovereignty through comparing themselves with the national movements under the old colonizations in the 60s. Their use of violence is restricted to violence against property and the violence against property is nothing more than paint or eggs. One of the leaders laughed when discussing this issue. He said that the definition of the words “violence” and “extreme” is totally based on the societal context. If you would throw eggs in Palestine, people would laugh at you. When you throw eggs in Kosovo you are an extremist (Leader 2). With all of this in mind, it seems as if nothing really implies that they are nationalist extremist.

When looking at the core framing tasks and talking to activists on the subject of their perceived limitations, a clear pattern can be outlined. Throughout the movement, activists with different hierarchical and regional belongings, consistently addressed *consensus mobilization* and *action mobilization* as the main obstacles for reaching their aim. The common view was that they have succeeded in fostering agreement and support in the Kosovan community (Activists and leaders). The problem they experience, concerns action mobilization. Motivating people of Kosovo to not only agree, but also to act. One of the leaders, when talking about this matter, said that this is part of the strategy. That the first step was to act in an informative way. They have now succeeded with the first step of the strategy and are now starting to work on the second step, which concerns motivating people to become involved. This can also be shown in the way their methods gradually changed over the years. They went from activities dominated by campaigns and symbolic actions that require a small group of people to demonstrations which is an activity that include more people (Albin Kurti). Externally, the critics would often refer to this problem as the weak point of Vetevendosje. The spokesperson of the Kosovo interim government, Memli Krasniqi, opposed of Vetevendosje. When arguing against the movement, he several times used the low number of participants in different demonstrations as an indication for their insignificance on the political scene in Kosovo (Memli Krasniqi). There is no necessity for total causality between action mobilization and being a significant political actor or not. Being successful in matter of consensus mobilization can in itself be a strong indicator for being a political agency of significance. Thus causality can also be found between consensus mobilization and being a significant political actor. Since consensus was perceived to be the biggest problem for Vetevendosje, it would be interesting to follow the movement and watch over its developments in handling this problem.

Studying a social movement's collective action frame, the core framing tasks can as mentioned earlier be categorized as *diagnostic framing*, *prognostic framing* and *motivational framing*. What follows the diagnostic framing is the *injustice frame*. In their model of explanation, a pattern can be discerned for who is to blame for the unjust situation. The guilt is mainly leveled at three objectives: Serbia, the international community and the Kosovan political elite. The usage of these three objectives in relation to, or in combination with each other, and these combinations in relation to the people, can be a bit entangled and difficult to sort out. To unravel their injustice frames, the first step is to describe the ways they use the objectives and the next step to analyze these through the usage of the variable features.

The resistance toward the declaration of independence is rooted in a critique of its presumptions. The declaration was based on negotiations with Serbia, and the realization of the *Plan of Ahtisaari*. Albin Kurti said that during the formation of Vetevendosje they felt that Kosovo is not a problem, but that Kosovo has a problem, and that that problem is called Serbia and UNMIK. They identified at that point two injustice frames (Albin Kurti). But later on, we can through their campaigns, see that they have a third one that is the Kosovan political elite.

So the injustice frame is in a way triangular. The international community is mainly condemned through the critique of the Resolution 1244, and the Plan of Ahtisaari. The critique towards Serbia is pointed at its political elite. They are criticized for wanting territory in Kosovo, creating parallel structures and resisting recognizing Kosovo. The critique of the political elite in Kosovo is leveled at two objectives. On one level it is aimed towards the corruption. On another level it is pointed at the government's connection to Serbia. This connection is a criticism of the government negotiating with Serbia regarding independence. The critique of the negotiations also touches the government's passivity when it comes to preventing the Serbian parallel structures.

Comparing the variable features and the public response to their different campaigns will give understanding for the effects of the injustice frames. One of the analyzing tools in this context is the variable feature called *resonance*. A comparison will indicate how well injustice frames resonates with the Albanian cultural and historical preferences.

A generational difference can be discerned in the movement. The clearest distinction can be made between the older activists and the younger activists. The older activists can be characterized by having a long political history from the resistance against Serbia and the struggle for autonomy. This is an observed cultural factor that generates authority and respect. The history of serving the Albanian people produces status and the image of knowledge. This gives the older generation, which include the leaders, credibility when articulating politics. Everywhere, people knew who Albin Kurti was and the public opinion about him was similar. The common perception was that he is a smart guy who has fought a lot for his people and deserves respect. Even his opponents, the people from the government, said these words when talking about him.

Vetevendosje use first and foremost three persons as spokespersons in media. Albin Kurti, Visar Ymeri and Glauk Konjofca. Visar and Glauk do not personally have the same history of serving their people in war as Albin Kurti. This was something people seemed to have opinions about as well. Despite of Visar and Glauk frequently representing Vetevendosje in media and public meetings, people in general would not know who they are when bringing up their names. The government spokesperson, Memli Krasniqi, said that the Albanian people

like and respect Albin Kurti, but that nobody care about the other two. An old friend of the older generation activists said he thought the problem of Vetevendosje was the fact that Albin Kurti had chosen the wrong persons to have by his side in public. He was of the opinion that Albin Kurti should have tried harder to recruit the experienced political forces from the war. He argued that it would have given weight and more public support for the movement (Supporter 2). Thus the resonance seems to depend a lot on the articulators' credibility in the Kosovan community as well.

The younger activists are on the contrary characterized by not starting their political path until joining Vetevendosje. The older generation most commonly joined the movement in the beginning, sometime around the formation of Vetevendosje in 2005. Their answer to why and under what circumstances they got involved differed from the younger generation's answers to the same questions. For the older generation, joining Vetevendosje was seen as an obvious continuation of the struggle they started during the Serbian occupation (Activist 5).

When active younger activists answered the questions of when they got involved and what made them get involved, two common answers could be discerned. There were those who were introduced and encouraged by family and friends (different activists). That is to say through social networks. Others got involved through the movement's different activities. There was a range of different activities that were referred to as being the convincing factor for joining Vetevendosje. The movement newspaper, seeing campaigns on the news, etc ( i.e. Activist 5, 9 ). But one of the referrals stood out among the others. A large number of active young activists referred to the campaign *Boycotting Serbian products* that was held during the summer of 2006 when answering the question of what made them join the movement. This campaign was in general perceived as a very successful campaign among the activists (different activists). In regard to the large amount of activists that joined at that time and still remain active, this perception seem to be fairly correct and a quite reasonable observation. The injustice frame in this campaign was Serbia. So in this respect, one could see this as an indication that Serbia as a source of injustice resonates well and unhindered in the Kosovan community.

It is not only the successes that are interesting. The failures can tell us a lot as well. One campaign that did not succeed was the campaign against the kosovan political elite in 2006. Their way of handling the political elite is of extra interest since the kosovan political elite is Vetevendosje's main competition.

They put out posters imaging an old western poster with the text *most wanted- dead or alive*. Along with the images of Albanian decision makers and two Albanian "national traitors". These two national traitors are wanted in reality for causing death of thousands of Albanians. Vetevendosje see the Kosovan government as corrupt traitors that work for their own interest and not for the interest of Kosovo (vetevendosje.org). Mixing the images of Albanian decision makers and war criminals, they created a likeness between the Kosovan government and criminals. The public response was strong. The symbolics did not get through. They were attacked by media and consistently condemned by the public. Media made it seem as if they really wanted to kill them. The critique was so severe that Vetevendosje made an attempt to moderate it by having a placard in their next demonstration with the image of the same persons but with the words *we ask them to commit suicide*. Albin Kurti used the most wanted campaign to give an example of a failed campaign (Albin Kurti). But when discussing the campaign with another leader of Vetevendosje, a slightly different perspective was outlined. He argued that the failure was short term, confined to the time immediately after the

campaign. In the long run, he would say, it only helped them to move the border forward of what was in the public eyes allowed on the political scene (Leader 1).

With the Albanian distrust and disappointment against the Kosovan decision makers in mind, one could assume that the problem with the most wanted campaign was the choice of injustice frame- the Kosovan political elite. But Albin Kurti argued that the reason of the failure was not the attack on the Kosovan political elite in general, but that the problem was media and the personification of the source of injustice (Albin Kurti). To get a better perspective of the Kosovan government as an injustice frame, let us examine what other campaigns and actions have been directed towards the political elite in Kosovo.

The actions and campaigns against the Kosovan political elite have not been many and have been different in their nature. They had one documented action against the Kosovan political elite when the elites' agreed to start negotiations with Serbia in September 2005. They poured red color on the ground right outside the entrance of the Kosovan parliament. The color represented the blood of Albanians. When the deputies entered the building, they stepped in the red color on their way in. Activists of Vetevendosje stood by and held a public speech about the politicians stepping on the blood of thousands of Albanians that gave their life for liberation, the very moment they agreed on starting negotiations with Serbia (Leader 1) (vetevendosje.org).

Other than *The tramped blood* campaign there has not been many actions against the political elite in Kosovo. In general, three strategies exist, i.e. actions, campaigns and critiquing through media coverage which include news paper articles and TV-interviews. The first and the second are used mainly for criticizing the international community and Serbia. Attempts to use this strategy to criticize the government have through the Wanted campaign shown not to be very safe and successful. As the latter strategy has been overall perceived as successful, i.e. getting good responses from the public/audience in criticizing both foreign sources of injustice and the local government, the reason for the campaigning strategy to have failed is not sought in the unwillingness of the public to criticize the government or disagreeing with the critique. Thus the Kosovan political elite used as an injustice frame seems to resonate in the Albanian community. Therefore the reason for the failure of the Wanted campaign must be something else.

With this in mind, the analysis of the Kosovan government as an injustice frame can be seen in a more true light. The difference between the most wanted campaign and the other attacks directed towards the Kosovan government has shown to be the method. Also, the Wanted campaign was directed towards persons, whilst the other documented campaign against the Kosovan government was directed towards the Kosovan political elite as a whole. The reason for the failure of the Wanted campaign can in this respect, as Albin Kurti said, have a lot to do with the personification of the source of injustice. Not the personification in whole, since a lot of personal attacks take place against the president, prime minister and other Albanian decision makers when using the other method, media, towards the Kosovan government. In addition to this, the critique in the successful Walked blood campaign, was generalized and not personified. Consequently the problem of personification seems to emerge when combining the campaigning strategy with personification.

As established above, the Wanted campaign deviated from the usual approach and method Vetevendosje apply when attacking the political elite in Kosovo. The framing theory from which I am working with implies that the *frame consistency* is one of the variable features that

is of importance for the credibility and the resonance. Snow & Co identified two ways in which the frame consistency can be relevant. One is *contradictions among beliefs and claims* and *contradiction between framing and tactical action*. When analyzing the case of the Wanted campaign and its lack of resonance, the variables already identified are not adequate enough. What we can say is that the most wanted campaign did not create contradiction between Vetevendosje's beliefs, nor did they contradict in framing and action. Thus to make this framing theory applicable on this case, the definition of frame credibility need to be broadened. In this case, the inconsistency rather concerns the method applied when using the Kosovan government as the injustice frame.

Deviation in strategy and method can create uncertainty but also discomfort among the supporters in relation to the movement. Vetevendosje is a non violence movement. When they changed method in the case of the Wanted campaign, the uncertainty of whether Vetevendosje really wanted to kill these people or not grew so strong that they had to clarify their non violent stand point by writing the "we ask these people to commit suicide" banners in their next action. The inconsistency in strategy and method can also create a political void that can be exploited by the political opponents. In this case the media used the void as an opportunity to question the movement's legitimacy and to amplify the uncertainty concerning their standing point in the question of the use of violence as a method. I therefore argue that there is another way in which the frame consistency can be relevant. A broadened definition of frame consistency should include *contradictions in strategy and method*.

The activists' perception of the public response is a big and important part of my study. In complementary addition to that, I made observations of the matter. Thus it would strengthen my analysis as to what degree they are successful in their framing strategies.

In my observations of public actions and campaigns, I observed the response of the people walking by to get a sense of the public attitude towards Vetevendosje. One of the actions I attended was a photo exposition on the 10<sup>th</sup> of February 2009. It was the commemoration day two years after the 10<sup>th</sup> of February incident. The commemoration day was celebrated in the same way both years that followed the incident. Vetevendosje started the day by visiting the families of the killed activists and visiting the graves. Thereafter there was a speech and a photo exposition at the very same spot where the activists were shot. The day ended with an official ceremony in the Red hall, with speeches by Vetevendosje, the families of the killed activists and Adem Demaci. The 10<sup>th</sup> of February 2007 was seen as one of the single most important moments of the movement (Activist 6). The photo exposition was held outside in the middle of the street. The exposition presented pictures of the police violence on the 10<sup>th</sup> of February 2007. A lot of people stayed and watched the photographs. The gathering of people was huge. There were so many people that it was hard to come through and actually take a look at the pictures (observation 1).

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of February 2009, the day before the first Independence Day of Kosovo, I attended another action held in the public. Vetevendosje criticizes the Kosovan independence for not being real independence. They say that you cannot negotiate or compromise sovereignty- either you are sovereign or you are not. So on the day before the Independence Day, posters were put up by activists all around the capital with media following them. The poster had the title used by their opponents on the day of the declaration of independence, but instead of a text followed with presenting successes of the government, they followed the title with a text that illustrated the failures of the independence. A lot of people that walked by stopped, read the posters, approached the activists and discussed the situation or just

encouraged them to fight on. The response to the action was perceived as surprisingly positive by the activists. Afterwards they happily briefed by telling stories about different comments and reactions people had given. However, the activists were not satisfied. They were concerned with the title, due to some confusion among people about Vetevendosje supporting the independence or not (observation 2).

The information they presented and the way they presented it, resonated well with the public at these two observations. The observations gave me the impression of their framing strategies in these events to be successful. An interesting aspect in the study of Vetevendosje, is the movements perception of their own influence in the Albanian community and the political scene in Kosovo. Albin Kurti mentioned their influence to be primarily discursive. He emphasized their influence on the public debate. How concepts and attitudes have changed considerably since the formation of Vetevendosje in 2005. He gave an example of how the word “decentralization” had turned in to a word used when cursing (Albin Kurti). It would be interesting to study the discursive processes of Vetevendosje. Analyzing the discursive interaction between them and the political elite, would give a better and deeper understanding for the power struggle and the successes of their framing.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of February 2009 I attended a public meeting at the city theatre in Gjilan. Gjilan is a city in the east of Kosovo. The situation was a bit different there than in Pristina. The fact is that Gjilan is one of the first cities that are turning into a Serbian enclave. The support for Vetevendosje is generally bigger in the areas that are transferring into Serbian territories. The meeting was a surprisingly big success. The theatre was over crowded. It was counted to be approximately 500 persons present. Sitting right next to me in the audience, was a Macedonian Albanian Woman that was the representative of a Macedonian friend organization to Vetevendosje. She explained to me that the problems of the decentralization seem far away in Pristina. Therefore the skepticism toward Vetevendosje is bigger there. Gjilan on the other hand understand the severity of the situation since they are soon becoming a Serbian enclave (Supporter 3). In 2006 there were big protests against decentralization in Gjilan. Also in Vitia thousands of people demonstrated in 2006 against the decentralization. Locally, the political parties and the organizations of the civil society were involved in the protests (UNDP). Thus it seemed as if Vetevendosje’s diagnostic framing resonates more in the regions where the consequences of the Ahtisaari plan is being implemented. Tarrow explains phenomenons’ like this with the people feeling that something will be irreversible if not stopped right now (Tarrow, 1998:72) (observation 3).

Something else caught my attention as well during the meeting in Gjilan. There were two speakers from Vetevendosje at the meeting and three from other friend organizations, but the main attraction seemed to be Albin Kurti. During his speech I observed the response of the audience to create a picture of the public support of the people in Gjilan. There were loud applause, the audience laughed at his jokes and looking at the audience, people nodded and seemed engaged in his speech. The response from the audience towards Albin Kurti differed from the response towards the other speakers and was unmistakably positive. Vetevendosje seem to have a very strong and charismatic leader. It seems though that the rest of the leadership has shortcomings. In the analysis of the framing strategies of Vetevendosje, a natural thought that follows this observation is the subject of the vital function of Albin Kurti. The question is what part Albin Kurti plays in the successes of Vetevendosje’s framing. An old friend of the older generation referred to the arrest of Albin Kurti after 10<sup>th</sup> of February 2007. He said that when a movements leader get arrested, the movement would naturally mobilize more than ever before, do an outbreak and rise against the government stronger and

more united. On the contrary he found the movement becoming quieter and weaker during the arrest of Albin Kurti (Supporter 2). This period of time is also associated with the government toughening the repression against the movement in general. The fact that a lot of arrests were made, that their offices were cleaned out and that they had to go underground for several months after, may be another answer. When talking to Albin Kurti himself on the subject of his role and function in Vetevendosje, a modest perception was discerned. He compared himself with a foton. A foton has no weight when being still. It has weight only when it is in movement. Thus he is supposedly only something through the movement and nothing without it. He also pointed out media as the source for creating the focus on him personally as a symbol of the movement (Albin Kurti). Either way, Albin Kurti's significance regarding Vetevendosje's framing can still not be foreseen. It would be interesting to study how Vetevendosje evolves after Albin Kurti's verdict comes and if he is imprisoned again. Then we would be able to see whether Vetevendosje rise and fall with Albin Kurti, or if somebody else steps up and take his place in the spotlight.

During my time among the activists, I found a surprisingly low number of female activists compared to the number of male activists. At the public meeting in Gjilan, most of the audience consisted of middle aged and older men. The reason for this could be that their framing strategy is packaged in a way that does not attract females, or actually being formed to attract men. The reason could also be that it is a general societal and cultural attitude. When discussing this issue with two female activists, the reason for the low number of female activists was perceived to be that women in general are not interested in politics. They said that the only thing they care about is makeup, clothes and guys. They also mentioned that when they are out handing out their weekly newspaper they often try to approach females, but that they are never interested (Activists 2 & 3). This implies that the reason of the low number of active females is societal and not intentional. The socialist movement in the 60s was not a very flexible master frame. It was known to be very exclusive to feminist ideas and females as a whole. The liberal democracy in the 80s was in contrary a master frame that was much more inclusive in this sense. It made the liberal democracy stronger and more long lasting as a master frame. The lesson learned by this example shows how important it is for a movement like Vetevendosje to focus on finding a framing strategy that is as inclusive and flexible as possible.

## 5 conclusion

The first question concerned the political opportunity structures influence on Vetevendosje's activities. The emergence of Vetevendosje has its roots in an old conflict within the Albanian resistance movement. The combination of the riot in 2004, the division of the political elite and the weakness of the regime was important political variables which constituted the political opportunities that opened way for Vetvendosje into the political scene.

Since the formation in 2005, the political opportunities have been few. Vetevendosje created many political opportunities themselves. Through political campaigns they put the regime's moral legitimacy under question. Through actions against the regime they managed to weaken its authority. Political allies have influenced their activities as well. Their public support has to an extent been dependent of how media have pictured them. They were also strengthened when the Albanian lawyers association allied with Albin Kurti against UNMIK during his trial.

The second question was divided in three. Their framing strategy is based on creativity and being unpredictable which makes the regime look weak. Another strategy is the consistent use of Albanian history. When analyzing different campaigns and actions, the general impression was given that they were successful in their framing when challenging Serbia and the international community. The reason was more than often that the framing strategy resonated well in the Kosovan community. Their failure in framing was reduced to one action that was pointed at the Kosovan political elite. The reason found was their inconsistency in strategy and method.

The head of the political science department of the Pristina University, Agim Zogaj, perceived Vetevendosje as an important political agency on the political scene of Kosovo. He was convinced that they are the decision makers of the future. Both Agim Zogaj and Afrim Hacı opposed the government in their view of Vetevendosje being extremists. They said that what Vetevendosje is asking for is not much. What they are asking for is basic (Agim Zogaj & Afrim Hacı).

After many interviews and conversations with Albanians, it is not hard to understand how Vetevendosje could take place on the political scene. It is neither hard to understand how they have managed to remain and become stronger. Vetevendosje have not yet reached their political aim. The image of Kosovo that the internationals are trying to project does not resonate with the self-perception of the Albanians. With 63% support, the Albanians have made it quite clear that they do not see themselves as a child that needs to be raised by internationals.

No, Kosovo is not new born. After centuries of occupation, war and repression, Kosovo is now an old man. A hardened old man that is still fighting for his freedom.

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UNDP- early warning report #14, #24

## Interviews

Albin Kurti, 14/1, 20/1, 26/1 2009

Glauk Konjofca 2009- 01- 19

Visar Ymeri 2009-01-22

Agim Zogaj 2009-01-22

Afrim Hacı 2009-01-22

Memli Krasniqi 2009-01-27

Supporter 1 2009-01- 07

Supporter 2 2009-01-10

Supporter 3 2009-02-12

Leader 1 2009-02-14

Leader 2 2009-02-09, 2009-02-11, 2009-02-14

Aktivist 1 2009-02-03, 2009-02-05

Aktivist 2 2009-02-16

Aktivist 3 2009-02-16

Aktivist 4 2009-02-03

Aktivist 5 2009-02-11

Aktivist 6 2009-02-15

Aktivist 7 2009-02-15

Aktivist 8 2009-02-04

Aktivist 9 2009-02-11

## Observations

Observation 1 2009-02-10

Observation 2 2009-02-16

Observation 3 2009-02-12