

**Nationalism and homophobic discourses in Albania. A case study analysis**

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**Abstract**

This research critically examines the homophobic reactions and discourses of a group of young men protesting against the first public admitted case of a male homosexuality in Albania. The aim of this study is to show how Albanian nationalism fits with the heterosexist ideology and how national belonging is questioned if hegemonic masculinity is threatened. In this paper, I use discourse analysis as qualitative research method to analyse homophobic written and verbal discourses, through media and social network pages. In addressing these issues, the paper begins with an overview of public assaults and anti-gay rhetoric by a group of protesters<sup>1</sup> rebelling against the first public admitted case of an Albanian gay man. Further, it provides an historical background related to the institutional representation of homosexuality in Albania focussing on

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<sup>1</sup> Even though it is a relevant point in discourse analysis, the analysis lacks interpretation of the social, cultural, political affiliation of the protesters against Klodi since data are not available. The only information visible from the media was that the protesters were a group of youngsters that felt compelled by this act of public performance.

same-sex relationships during communism and democracy. Heterosexist ideology is used to reinforce the strong connection between homophobia and Albanian nationalism. In conclusion, it argues that attitudes of Albanian men towards homosexuals are based on misogynistic, homophobic and heterosexist national values that place heterosexuals and heteronormative men, as the only dominant norm of the society by legitimizing in this way discrimination against sexual minorities.

**Keywords:** homophobia, heterosexist ideology, nationhood, same-sex relationship, hegemonic masculinity.

## **1. Introduction: The public declaration of homosexual case**

Around 400 people, mainly young men, marched on the streets of north-western town of Lezha on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2010, protesting that Lezha and Albania does not deserve the stain of homosexuality, after an emotional came out on TV of Klodian Çela, from Lezha, regarding his sexual orientation. Klodian Cela, a member of the Big Brother house, a famous reality show TV programme in the country, declared during the live show that he was homosexual. People protested in the town's main square, insisting on making him leave the house of Big Brother Albania, and if he didn't leave, they would step up and continue their protests in Tirana, Albanian's capital city. The protesters felt compelled to defend the honour of their town and the Albanian nation. However, Klodian Cela received the support of US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, as well as the US and Danish Ambassadors in Tirana. Despite this, his family members were threatened to death if they didn't get out of Albania. These men considered Klodi "the shame" of their city, of the North, and of the whole Albania.

## **2. Same-sex relationship in Albania during communism**

During the communist regime, homosexuality was seen as a criminal act against morality. In article 137 of the old Penal Code, performing homosexuality, could be

punished by up to 10 years in prison (Mai 2004, 49). Homosexuality in Albania has always been secret. Referring to the communist era, Dervishi says that when someone was punished for “the criminal offence” of homosexuality in public, it was given another charge by the prosecution, because the state didn’t want it be known by the public that such occurrence existed in the country (Dervishi 2010). Moreover, Kajsii (2010) reveals that homophobia in Albania was strengthened as a result of the nationalist ideology during communism. Nationalism in itself historically has been a masculine doctrine. In this context, homosexuality was seen as the absence of masculinity. As such, this deviation was considered as an “external display”, as part of the degeneration, weakness and the denaturalization of the individual. Communism, as a scientific doctrine that followed the laws of nature, could not produce ‘natural deviations’ such as the homosexuals because sex was supposed to happen only between women and men (Kajsii 2010). In general, communist regimes were hostile to sexuality because they sought «to ensure absolute control over the personality by attempting to de-individualising it, to destroy its independence and emotional world» (Kon 1999, 208).

### **3. Same-sex relationship in Albania during democracy**

The Albanian Parliament legalized same-sex relationships on January 20, 1995 (International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission 1995). Moreover, on 4 February 2010, the Albanian Parliament passed an anti-discrimination bill, which banned all forms of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity (Human Rights Watch 2010). During communism, heterosexuality was reinforced as a dominant norm. So, manhood became equal with the act of penetration in particular, and with heterosexuality in general (Kajsii 2010). With the fall of communism, discrimination on the basis of gender, race, language, gender identity, color, ethnicity, sexual orientation or any other cause is prohibited by law<sup>2</sup>. The

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<sup>2</sup> Even though Albanian state legalised same sex relationship since 1995, mostly influenced and pressured to catch up EU-legislation on sexual equality, the first public declaration of homosexuality was only in 2010, which meant that throughout this period homosexuality was performed behind the public scene.

legal protection against discrimination on the basis of the mentioned fields consists mainly of the Constitution of Albania and Law No. 10221 dated on 4 February 2010 “On Protection against Discrimination”. In addition there are specific provisions contained in the Criminal Code, the Family Code and other relevant laws applicable in certain cases of discrimination. Law 10221 is very comprehensive, but it is also very new and not yet implemented. It does not cover intersex people specifically, although they have an implied protection under it. Further, same sex marriage is not permitted under the Family Code of Albania. There is no legal provision in Albania guaranteeing the right of gay/lesbian couples to have children, whether through assisted reproductive technology/in vitro fertilization or adoption (Loloci n.d).

In 2010, Albanian ex Prime Minister, Sali Berisha, proposed a law that could legalize same-sex marriages. Since Albania is in the process of joining the EU, this law would best ensure the country to be in accordance to the anti-discrimination legislations that EU members must fulfil. Albanian homosexual community is estimated to be at maximum 70,000 people, but the LGBT movement in Albania is not as visible as in other Balkan states (Dade 2009). Albanian Assembly passes amendments that strengthen the legal protection of LGBT people from hate crime and hate speech. Two important amendments for the LGBT community were approved: The first has to do with circumstance crimes motivated by hatred because of sexual orientation or gender identity, which will offer more protection to LGBT people: «When the crime is committed by motives which have to do with gender, race, color, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, political, religious or philosophical views, health status, genetic predisposition or disability».

Another important change has to do with the inclusion in the Criminal Code of the hate speech concept towards LGBT people through information technology. On article 119/a, in the list of criminal code is also included the «dissemination of racist, homophobic or xenophobic materials...». In this criminal act it is predicted that: «offering in public or intentional distribution to the public through computer systems of information and communication technology, of materials with racist, homophobic or xenophobic content makes a criminal act and is punished by fine or imprisonment of up to two years» (Pink Embassy 2011).

#### 4. Homosexuals as “others”, “west” and Europeanisation frame

Throughout the article it is implied that there is a contrast in the cultural dimension between Albania and the West, and that the notion of homosexuality is highly incompatible with Albanian history and tradition. Renkin (2009) argues that there is a tendency toward social representation of LGTB persons, as sexual “Others”, mainly with the “West” and “Europe”. For Bunzl, there are particularly these notions of homophobia that makes it look like the “symptoms of modernity”, by implying antagonism to the nation (Bunzl in Renkin 2009, 24). The same way homo-nationalist discourses in the context of the EU accession process in Croatia and Serbia have increased resistance to struggles for sexual equality and citizenship (Kahlina 2014).

According to Kuhar (2011, 45) the “Europeanization frame” can be used to oppose the bill on the same sex partnership or to justify it reflect the general habit of new or not EU-member states to flexibility adapt or reject the EU’s dispositions<sup>3</sup>.

In fact, new EU member states in Central and Eastern Europe are more likely and dependent on international resources to introduce and make visible at higher levels the (LGBT) rights legislation and policy adoption as a means to gain external legitimacy and improve reputation (Ayoub 2014). In fact as homophobia is presented as a “natural” local reaction to what is perceived as imported, indeed imposed, western moral norms. Albanian men are imagined as experiencing a certain crisis, due to their desire to enter in the EU, while at the same time, not accepting the modernity of the west. During the first protest, that took place on the 11th of March 2010, one of the protesters claimed:

We won’t go in Europe with arse givers. If a condition for Albania’s entrance to the EU is a law permitting homosexuality, we would rather see the country not join the EU at all...we would rather stay here as Albanians, proud, because the pride of our nation, is much more important than this”<sup>4</sup> ‘Homosexuality has never been part

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<sup>3</sup> For example in Slovenia the government officials stressed that EU membership did not oblige Slovenia to adopt such legislation. However in Croatia the officials referred to EU legislation as something to be followed if Croatia wanted to be recognized as a country with equal human rights or as something that could be rejected if it preserve its own culture (Kuhar 2011).

<sup>4</sup> Retrieved November 12, 2010, 5:20 pm - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S4tv-ytm7a8&feature=related>

of our nation. He can go abroad or return to the place where he (Klodi) gained this experience, in Italy<sup>5</sup>.

The above claims can be interpreted by Renkin's arguments of perceiving homosexuals as "others", "West" and "Europe". On the one hand, Albanian men<sup>6</sup> want to go to Europe but without "arse givers". So, this means that normative masculinity is a condition for entering in Europe, and any "deviance" leads to non acceptance in the "larger family" (EU). Hence, it is for sure from this argument that homosexuality is not a "disease" acquired in Albania, but abroad. That is why these men are claiming that Klodi returns again in Italy where he has gained his experience as homosexual. Then, the other message invokes the idea that Europe is perceived somehow as "modernized", by setting certain criteria, for those who want to join the European Union. Obviously, the value of their pride is much more than the "West" and "EU".

It is interesting to compare Albanian men's argument of "us" versus "West/Europe" to Helms' arguments on representation of western and eastern dichotomies by Bosniacs in her article "West and East Kiss". Helms argues that the "west" was depicted by Bosnians as "modern", "superior" and "European", while the "east" was portrayed as "backward" and "primitive" (Helms 2008). In a similar way, Albanian men see Europe as "modern" but not necessary as "superior". In contrast to the desire of Bosnians to appear as European, Albanians prefer to stay prideful as they have always been. Moreover, Helms argues that many religious and nationalist Muslim leaders in Bosnia-Herzegovina claimed that Europe and "the west" were «morally bankrupt, lacking in spirituality and essence and doomed to self-destruction» (Helms 2008, 98). Likewise, Albanians relate Europe, as a potential danger for the nation. It is Italy and Europe for them that brought this deviance, or "disease"<sup>7</sup>, because they were "clean" before that<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Retrieved November 12, 2010, 5:20 pm - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S4tv-ytm7a8&feature=related>

<sup>6</sup> In this paper I will use the term "Albanian men", "these men" to refer to protesters and those men that have commented in the Facebook pages against Klodi. However, this does not refer to the whole Albanian men.

<sup>7</sup> However, this phenomenon is not peculiar only to Albania, it relates to the construction of globalized dimension of non-western identities. It is interesting to note that during Fascism in Italy homosexuality was seen as a deviance coming from other western contexts and it was highly repressed, as the Fascist rhetoric of new man implies a worrier being capable to restore a whole society, show virility, masculinity and reject homosexuality (Benadusi 2012).

Moreover, Renkin (2009, 22) goes further, arguing that psychological explanation that traces the root of homophobia in the unconscious individual reactions and fears of non-heteronormative sexualities, perceived as “Others” is an inadequate explanation. In contrast, Kajsiu (2010) argues that one of the major reasons for homophobia in Albania relies on the idea that homosexuals are perceived as inverting the heteronormative order since they are identified with sexual passivity and femininity (Kajsiu 2010). Heterosexuality as (Nagel in Mole 2010, 10) argues «became a taken-for-granted attribute of the nation and dominant group norm, against which actions and beliefs were judged». However, I think that in Klodi’s case, there are further explanations and arguments which I will elaborate in continuance that make Albanian men feel anxious and compelled to defend the pride and honour of their city and that of the Albanian nation.

## **5. Anxiety of non-hegemonic and non-heteronormative men. Homophobia and heterosexist ideology**

Anxiety of Albanian men represents itself, as a fear of non-hegemonic and non-heteronormative men. This point is crucial for the sociological interpretation of homophobia against the psychological perspective. According to Carrigan, Connell & Lee, (1987, 45) hegemonic masculinity is «a question of how particular groups of men inhabit positions of power and wealth, and how they legitimate and reproduce the social relationships that generate their dominance». In this way, the effeminate men are seen as a great threat for the traditional masculinity (Zarkov 2001). The concept of “hegemonic masculinity” developed in the 1970s refers to a dominant masculinity that has been idealized in U.S. culture and has become prominent by its emphasis on overt displays of force and power, on patriarchy, and on occupational achievement (Hardin *et al.* 2009).

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<sup>8</sup> As regards to social acceptance of homosexual orientation, according to the European Values Study conducted in 1999/2000, the percentage of Italians that answered that they would not like to have homosexuals as neighbours, was almost the highest after Greece and UK. Even though attitudes toward homosexuals show a great variation through years, it is interesting to note how Albanians though of Klodi as affected by the Italian, European culture (Weyembergh and Cârstocea 2006).

*Table 1 Definitions of Heterosexism\**

Author	Date	Definition
Herek	1990	Defined as an ideological system that denies, denigrates, and stigmatizes any non- heterosexual form of behaviour, relationship, or community
Herek	1995	Refers to an ideological system that operates on individual, institutional and cultural levels to stigmatize, deny and denigrate any non-heterosexual way of being
Sears	1997	Incorporates antigay attitudes, prejudice, and discriminatory behavior
Herek	2004	Refers to the cultural ideology that maintains social prejudice against sexual minorities
Alden and Parker	2005	A belief system that posits the superiority of heterosexuality over homosexuality

*\*Note: Definitions were obtained from a literature search which yielded 19 articles in 13 different Journals with key words of “homophobia and heterosexism”.*

Source: (Smith, Oades, Mc Carthy 2012)

According to Nagel, hegemonic masculinity is much more than ideal, as it represents itself as natural and sets standards for male behaviour, as well as actions and thoughts (Nagel 1998, 247). Certain characteristics of normative masculinity that Mosse proposed include: «willpower, honour, courage, discipline, competitiveness, quiet strength, stoicism, sang-froid, persistence, adventurousness, independence, sexual virility tempered with restraint and dignity and which reflect masculine ideals as liberty, equality and fraternity» (Mosse in Nagel 1998, 245). In light of these dynamics is important to address the problem of western feminist’s hegemonic discourses over gender and sexuality and the “centrality of homo/heterosexual definition in Western culture” (Moss 1995, 1)<sup>9</sup>. Though hegemonic masculinity is based on a western

<sup>9</sup> For example the identification of Russian Pussy Riot performances and politics as riot grrrls, with pop-cultural solidarity discourses in the US, and North/Western European, without paying attention to their transformation (Wiedlack and Neufeld 2014), reaffirms what Robert Kulpa and Joanna Mizelińska (2011) have called «Imbalance between the “West,” and the “Rest” of the world and universality of Eurocentric values» (Imre 2008). Hence, this is translated into “unequal relations between (respectively)



interpretation, its shape depends upon national specificities, historical, political, social and cultural context. In the article “Why Study Sexualities in Central and Eastern Europe?” Robert Kulpa and Joanna Mizielińska problematize the dichotomy ‘West/non-West’ as «mainly constructed on the basis of Anglo-American ways of experiencing sexuality, making the ‘Western experience’ the normative one, placed at the centre of narratives». Following the logic of western hegemonic masculinity, one of the protesters claimed:

Our guys are known as historic guys, with tradition and culture, and not as pederasts, all Albanians are known as such. We are known as heroic and not as assholes; Klodi is damaging the authority of Lezhian youth, North and the whole Albania; Lezhë and Albania does not deserve the stain of homosexuality; Klodi has tarred the civilized reputation of Lezhë, with the label of pederast; All these youth have been gathered to protest against the phenomenon of Klodi, that has defiled the whole Lezha town, culture and the whole Albanian nation<sup>10</sup>.

I will particularly reflect on the four words (historic, heroic, with tradition and culture), that according to these protesters, define Albanian guys. In order to understand clearly the symbolic meaning of these words, I will give a brief context and major historical events of Lezha city. The words “historic” and “heroic” might refer to remarkable figures in history including here heroic warriors, such as the Albanian national hero, and other heroic men, that were fighting to defend the nation from the enemy. I made this connection since on 2 March 1444, the Albanian national hero, Gjergj Kastrioti Skenderbeg, organized the first Assembly of heroes in Lezhe. Albanian heroic warriors gathered together and fought in wars for liberation from the Ottoman Empire.

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the “knowledge producer”/“theorist” and the “knowledge consumer”/“informant” (Kulpa and Mizielińska 2011, 22).

10 Retrieved November 12, 2010 , 5:20 pm <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S4tv-ytm7a8&feature=related>

The region of Lezhe is also considered as one of the most typical example of Albanian culture and tradition, and as carrier of national values, since it was even the place where the Albanian national hero died and was buried<sup>11</sup>.

Thus, these words have an important meaning, since they construct the characteristics of Lezhian youth, qualities that were inherited from a heroic past, from the heroic warriors and the national hero. So, it is “unacceptable” to violate such an historic tradition, where manhood was the most precious value of the nation. Non-normative men provide a real threat for the erosion of those values such as virility, strength and masculinity. Moreover, a famous Albanian journalist Kajsiu (2010) writes that the Albanian male accepts that he may even kill, steal or rape, “male’s stuff at the end of the day”, but to accept that he can even be gay, this means taking away the manhood from him, or his masculinity, around which he has built his identity. Thus, such arguments, rest first and foremost on the idea that, heteronormative men are the only paths for masculine construction of Albanian men.

The masculine stereotype, as one of the characteristic features of nationalism, is defined in contrast with all those who do not comply with the standards of manliness and who are, consequently, declared enemies of Albanian Nation.

Heterosexual Albanian men’s reactions against homosexuals, involve in the same time, conceptions of homophobia and heterosexism. Boellstroff (2004, 471) argues that while homophobia is explained in Freudian terms, as antipathy in the individual psychic, heterosexism involves according to Gramscian concepts, a dilemma to establish antipathy in hegemony. Moreover, it emphasises heterosexuality, as the only moral and natural way of sexuality. Likewise, Peterson argues that heterosexism is based on «corollary exclusion of non-heterosexual identities and practices» (Peterson 1999, 39). Renkin (2009) argues that nationalist criteria for being accepted as member of the nation, is to be heterosexual and reproductive. Further claims made from Albanian men were:

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11 Municipality of Lezha. (2009, October 01). Vend me te ardhme te garantuar (A town with a secure future). Retrieved November 2, 2010 from <http://www.lezha.org/mat.php?idr=2&idm=296&lang=AL>

He and people like him don't deserve to live<sup>12</sup> ; if all people will be like him, will Albania go ahead?<sup>13</sup>

According to the protesters, one of the reasons why they prejudice Klodi is that God has created women and men, to have a family and procreate<sup>14</sup>. Therefore, it is clear from these statements, the hate and anxiety related to homosexuals is highly related to the fear of not creating a normal heterosexual family that presupposes procreation. Obviously, Albanian men who protested still see heterosexual family created by God, and any deviance from the norm is considered a sin. According to Boellstroff, «heterosexism creates a climate where fear and hatred of non-normative sexualities and genders, can take root, and homophobia creates a climate where heterosexuality is assumed to be superior» (2004, 472). Indeed, as the above claims make clear, these men are concerned not only with the threatening of heterosexuality, but also with the fear of future procreation of the Albanian nation. Moreover, it is interesting to compare Albanians and Bosniac nationalist fears on sexuality and reproduction. While Albanians saw homosexuals as western, others as implicated on the threatening of the nation, who could threaten the existence of the nation itself. While acknowledging that homosexuals could not produce children it is seen as contrary to the public good (Attwood 1996, 102)<sup>15</sup>.

Nationalism controls women's bodies in relation to reproduction, but it seems that in the Albanian case, it controls men's bodies as well. Thus, if heterosexuality is the only mode of reproduction for them, homosexuality will collapse this order. Consequently, this panic can be related to the fear of the nation's death. The idea of 'nature' is often

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<sup>12</sup> Retrieved November 12, 2010 , 5:30 pm - <http://www.facebook.com/pages/le-te-mblidhemi-10000-fansa-per-te-financuar-ekzekutimin-e-klodit/105704446146531?v=wall>.

<sup>13</sup> Go ahead meaning on reproduction and birth. Retrieved November 12, 2010 , 5:25 pm - <http://www.facebook.com/pages/LEZHA-PA-BYTHQIRA/10150113188970562>.

<sup>14</sup> It should be noted that the population in Lezha belong to the Catholic (majority) and Moslem religions. Homofobia, serish protesta ne Lezhe (Homophobia again in Lezha). (2010, March 13). Webshqip. Retrieved November 2, 2010, - <http://www.webshqip.com/new/homofobia-serish-protesta-ne-lezhe.html>.

<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, as Gal (1994) points out, Hungarian policies on abortions reflect concerns about the death of the nation due to the low level of reproduction. Likewise, Albanians fear of homosexuals might reveal their anxieties about procreation. While Gal (1994) argues that Hungarian nationalist discourses blamed women as responsible for the death of the nation, Albanian men made homosexuals responsible as a potential threats to the nation's death. So, in the case of Hungary, the question of human reproduction and procreation relies heavily on women, while in the case of Albania it relies on "certain kind" of men.

invoked when attempts are made to explain the necessity of heterosexuality for the continuance of the Albanian nation. Therefore, homosexuality is perceived from these men as “unnatural” phenomenon” which might disturb what they consider “natural”.

According to the most cited source of homophobia throughout the world is religion (Mole, 2010). Even though, Albania is a majority Muslim country, religion doesn't play any influential role in contesting the sexual minorities. Albanians are mostly atheist (Hiorth, 1990) as I previously stated that the government has supported the LGBT rights<sup>16</sup>. For example the homophobic attitudes of Catholic Church in Latvia are related to the fear of procreation as the homosexual act is considered sinful and out of natural order (Mole, 2010). Similar to Latvia's case, in Albania nationalist perspective on the relationship between nationality and sexuality focuses on the biological reproduction of the nation. It is interesting to note as well the gender related position of the nationalist discourse on the issue. The nationalist rhetoric relies on a hegemonic and patriarchal gender roles of men and women in society and when this order is reversed i.e gay men as weak and lesbians as strong confuses the patriarchal gender order. In a similar way the inability to produce and gave birth to children represent for the Latvin's case a threat to the existence of the nation (Mole, 2010).

## **6. Membership in the nation**

While acknowledging that intolerance towards sexual minorities cannot be explained by a single factor, the paper argues that homosexuality has become particularly despised in Albania because it has been generally discursively constructed as a threat to the continued existence of Albanian nation. Yuval - Davis points out that a condition of membership in the nation, presuppose that you are born in it. Thus, all those who do not share the common origin, are definitely excluded from it (Yuval-Davis 1998, 30). In contrast to this version, Albanian membership in the nation does not necessarily require you are born in it. In order to be a member of the Albanian nation, you have to behave in accordance with the “rules” set by the heteronormative structure. Thus, it

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<sup>16</sup> During his first visit in Albania the Pope appreciated the climate of peaceful coexistence between Catholic, Orthodox and Muslim as a sign of respect and mutual trust (Squires 2014).

seems that sexual orientation is another important factor that determines who is and who is not member of one's nation. In relation to this, the anti-gay speech in the protests follows:

He can be from whatever city but he cannot be Albanian; He is neither Lezhian nor Albanian; Outside Big brother, outside Albania. Our moral is high<sup>17</sup>.

These men are claiming the non-existence of those that “deviate” from the normal order. If we follow Boellstroff arguments, gendered self and nation are articulated through the institution of heterosexuality, and those men that do not make the right choice, threatened the «gendered and sexualized logic of national belonging» (Boellstroff 2004, 470). The same way same sex partnership policy debates in Croatia and Slovenia are framed in terms of the nationalist rhetoric of such legislation as a threat to the family and nation. While for some others, symbolic values such as flag, ethnicity and religion construct what Anderson called «imagined boundaries of the nation» (Anderson 1983, 6), for Albanians there still exists another important element for becoming a member of the nation- this is of course compulsory heterosexuality. Anyone that dares to break this condition will be rejected from the right to have Albanian citizenship<sup>18</sup>.

Gender and sexuality are important to national identity and membership. Butler, for example notes that «gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original» (1991, 21) whereas Foucault further assert that sexuality is a social construct and gender and sexual identities are also in constant change and do not have clear boundaries (1997, 168). Further, another form of citizenship “sexual citizenship”<sup>19</sup> is crucial to for obtaining the rights that form the basis of citizenship, such as civil, social, and cultural rights. Thus, those people i.e sexual minorities that do not comply with the norm of heterosexuality are therefore, not eligible to have an equal citizenship status as the majority i.e heterosexuals (Kahlina 2013a).

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<sup>17</sup> Retrieved November 12, 2010, 5:15 pm - <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Kundra-Klodit-te-big-brother/106652416024987>.

<sup>18</sup> Homosexuals will be rejected from the right to have Albanian citizenship in this case according to Albanian protestors against Klodi.

<sup>19</sup> This term is borrowed by Kahlina 2013a.

## 7. Shame of homosexuals and pride of the “nationalists”

While discussing about homophobia of Indonesian men, Boellstorff (2004, 471) points out that homophobia is not only related with the threatening of the society, but it is also linked to the shamed self. However, in contrast to the individual shame of Indonesian men, Albanian men are concerned with the collective shame. So, it is not the person that is shamed but all Albanian men and the whole nation. This is made clear from one Facebook page against Klodi:

He has made us shameful in the whole world ...Shame for Albania<sup>20</sup>; We will not bear this mark on our shoulders; We will keep our nation proud, where homosexuality is never known nor inherited<sup>21</sup>.

Thus, the shame that Klodi has provoked is too much to be held on the shoulders of Albanian “heroic” men. Klodi has provoked in the eyes of the world not only shame for the town, but shame for the whole Albanian nation. So, these men are worried that the world, will bully them. They don’t dare to rise up their heads, because they now feel ashamed, dishonoured and or stained. So, what others might think of them would be a good source of embarrassment and humiliation. The “world” in this way, serves as a juridical system of moral norms and values, a notion of Freudian superego that will immediately punish them with guilty feelings<sup>22</sup>. From the above claims it seems that the honour of Albania is preserved by the heterosexual men, and those that break this order, dishonour the nation. In the article of Greenberg (2006), the honour of the state is represented by the figure of Dindic: heteronormative masculinity, morality, productive masculinity. The same way, the honour of the Albanian nation is represented through the figure of the heroic, heterosexual and virile men. At this point, as Zarkov writes «Throughout human history, hegemony and domination, have been justified by the

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<sup>20</sup> Retrieved November 12, 2010 ,5:07 pm from <http://www.facebook.com/pages/te-behemi-111111-mi-veta-qe-jemi-kunder-klodit-te-BB-3/107944479235343?v=wall&filter=1>.

<sup>21</sup> Retrieved November 12, 2010 , 5:20 pm - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S4tv-ytm7a8&feature=related>.

<sup>22</sup> Freud used the concept of superego as a parts of the psychic mind, that represent the society normal values and norms. If these demands are not meet, superego punish the individual by guilt. Please refer to S. Freud (1996), “On Femininity”, pp. 215-235.

judgment as to who are and who are not, the proper men» (2001, 77). Therefore, we can assume that “ideology of masculinity” of the nation rewards always those men that are considered as preserving the honour of the nation and punish those that try to threaten this honour.

It is also interesting to compare how masculinity is interchanged with ethnicity, class, gender and nationalism, among homosexual and heterosexual relationships of Macedonians and ethnic Albanians in the article of Lambevski, 1999 and Dimova, 1999<sup>23</sup>. Even though ethnic Albanian in Macedonia were involved in a same sex relationship with Macedonian men, they identified themselves as heterosexuals given their active role in the sexual act. Their position was considered as masculine, heterosexual, inserter or active in contrast to the feminine, homosexual, insertee or passive position, held by Christian working-and middle-class Macedonians. Albanian guys were are stereotyped as «rich in gender and sexual capital», breathtakingly handsome, strong fuckers, dominant and highly attracted by Macedonians in sexual relationships in contrast to Macedonians, portrayed as feminine and less attractive (Lambevski 1999, 409; Dimova 1999). Thus, the sexual potent men are more easily identified with characteristics of maleness and virility. This point helps us understand how masculinity is experienced by Albanians men and how it shapes the conception of a masculine nation. Masculinity was defined at some point as a distinguished trait of ethnic Albanians, even though they might be involved in direct homosexual relationship. In this framework, it seems that national identities are quite masculinist requiring men to conform to the heterosexual, misogynist national values and to fulfil the nation requirements for upholding the ethnic purity.

## **8. Purity of Albanian blood and nation**

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<sup>23</sup> Even though ethnicity and gender is quite interchanged and play an important role for the ethnic Albanians living in Macedonia , in Albania it is difficult to intertwine it as the majority of population is Albanian and ethnicity doesn't count when we refer to the above mentioned case.

Albanian males who publicly exhibit gender nonconforming behaviours not only threaten patterns of traditional masculinity, but also threaten the purity of the Albanian blood and nation. In one of the Facebook pages against Klodi, one man wrote:

The number of admirers of pure Albania will increase every day, that don't want arse givers because they are the garbage of Albania<sup>24</sup>; Our men have pure Albanian blood; We are clean – we have no homosexuals<sup>25</sup>.

Thus, it is clear that pure Albania, means heterosexual men and there are particularly “arse-givers”, those that threaten this order. So, the pure Albanians are the opposite of garbage, they are precious and worthwhile since they are the representative of the purity. Dimova points out that, for Albanians, purity of the nation is maintained through the purity and chastity of the women (Dimova 2006, 308). Instead, we see that, it is not only the purity of the women that matters for keeping «purity of the nation», or as protesters claim, «purity of the blood», but also the right kind of men. Obviously, these are heterosexual and quite virile and heroic men. Those that fall apart of this category, the non-normative men, are excluded and rejected, because they pose a real threat to the purity of the nation.

## **9. Anxiety of threatened masculinity: A call for protest as a call for war**

In discussing about the Albanian nation, Lambevski continues: «The public sphere, the citizen, and the state are constructed as (a heterosexual, misogynist, homophobic) *man*. Defending the state means defending its masculinity and homosexuality is a threat per definition» (Lambevski 1999, 412). Thus, it seems that for Albanian men, the only way to put the honour in place, is to protest. In a Facebook page against Klodi was written:

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<sup>24</sup> Retrieved November 12, 2010, 5:20 pm - <http://www.facebook.com/pages/LEZHA-PA-BYTHOIRA/10150113188970562>

<sup>25</sup> Retrieved November 12, 2010, 5:20 pm- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S4tv-ytm7a8&feature=related>.



We will fight till the end, to keep the dignity of our nation as always; Let us make 10.000 persons to finance the execution of Klodi; Everyone is welcomed in the protests, nothing will stop us; Are you ready or no, the big day is waiting; Hey guys, will we fight for our good name; Where are the real Lezhian guys?<sup>26</sup>.

These are calls as a result of anxiety of threatened masculinity. The message that these calls imply is clear: only normative men have the rights to live, the others are just not eligible, they should not even exist. If they become visible, than it is the duty of normative men to protect the purity of nationhood, at any cost. So, from a call to collective action for protest, it became a call for a collective charity in order to finance in the name of honour. Only through the execution of the «black sheep of the family/nationhood», the nation's honour will be put in place. The call of Albanian men for a protest is similar to a call for a war. Thus, in similar way to the call for war, the call for protest is seen again as the only solution to preserve the hegemonic masculinity. This idea is reinforced even more if we consider that no women were present during the protests. Therefore, we can assume that the threatening of the “heterosexuality” of these men made them compelled to protest. An officer of Yugoslavia People's Army, at the beginning of the war in Croatia, claimed: «“Let anyone who is a man come with us”» (Colovic 2002, 48). These arguments imply the general idea mentioned before that a “real man” is always heterosexual and therefore homosexuals are deemed to be feminine (Skeete 2010)

In Bracewell's article, militarism was the way of bringing back both “individual manliness and national dignity” (Bracewell 2000, 567). In a similar way, Colovic shows that, the invitation for the war is seen not only as an act of patriotism but also as a proof of masculinity (Colovic 2002, 48). It is therefore quite understandable to make a connection between a call for protest as a call for war. At least they have a common thing: when manhood and nationhood is threatened; it is the duty of the heteronormative men, to restore the damaged masculine honour and national dignity. It is homosexuality that enhances anxieties that have to do with hegemonic masculinity of the nation. So,

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<sup>26</sup> Retrieved November 12, 2010, 5:30 pm - <http://www.facebook.com/pages/le-te-mblidhemi-10000-fansa-per-te-financuar-ekzekutimin-e-klodit/105704446146531?v=wall>.

following this logic, protests and wars are seen as ways to challenge the idea of homosexual and manliness nation. In this way nation's heterosexuality will not be put in question and nationhood retains its dignity.

## **10. Conclusion**

This paper critically reflects on the discourses of protesters, regarding homophobia and nationalism; homosexuals as modernized “others” and “west”, anxiety of non-heteronormative and non-hegemonic masculinity, homophobia and heterosexism, threatening of national belonging and identity, shame of homosexuals and pride of the “nationalists”, homosexuals as threatening the purity of the Albanian nation, a call for protest, as a call for war. From all the above arguments, we can assume that discourses of the Albanian men towards homosexuals are based on misogynistic, homophobic and heterosexist national values that place heterosexual and heteronormative men, as the only dominant norm of the society. So, we can assume that there is always a normative and hegemonic kind of masculinity, that sets certain standards and rules on how men should behave, think and act and if they do not fulfil these standards, they are excluded and marginalized. It is obvious that homosexuality is represented as a foreign phenomenon, related with “west” and “modernized others”, particularly if masculine men are seen as under threats. Thus, Albanians would rather retain their tradition that defines them as prideful, than becoming modern and civilized. Homosexuality does not fit well with the narratives of traditional, heroic, Albanian men. Therefore, male homosexuality is framed as sinful, deviant, something that needs to be punished and never become visible. This idea was reinforced even more with anxieties for future reproduction and procreation of the Albanian nation. Masculinity is considered as a symbol of national identity for Albanians and therefore, any threat that could affect their masculinity, can therefore be considered a potential threat, for nationhood and national belonging.

An important concern for Albanian men was that homosexuality was very problematic for the young generation. So, as they say «we don't want this phenomenon

to turn in epidemic and affect our children»<sup>27</sup>. It is clearly understandable the negative connotation that this phenomenon has according to the views of these men. It is almost as the stigma of AIDS epidemic, and the problem is always the new generation, because it might affect and corrupt them. Thus the nation's future is almost endangered, and it is the duty of these men, to protect the nation from the possible threats. This is very important point to be considered since it leads us to think that normative masculinity requires that men refigure their roles as protectors of masculine nation and fight when their masculinity is in crises. So, these protesters are seen as those men that love the nation, those that care for it, and who are willing to fight till the end for keeping its dignity. Albanians homophobic reaction displayed with anxieties and hate against homosexuals, confirms predominantly the paranoia about effeminate nation, bringing to light the anxieties on non-hegemonic and non-heteronormative men. Heteronormative discourses of Albanian men are thus the underpinnings of the society's prejudicial views against non-heterosexuals. In general public perception Lezhian guys are considered as preserving their masculine identity taking in consideration the historical context and vitality of the city years before.

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<sup>27</sup> Retrieved November 12, 2010, 5:20 pm - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S4tv-ytm7a8&feature=related>.

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