



# Kosovo Albanian diaspora in the frame of diaspora definitions and transnationalism

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## ABSTRACT

The concept of diaspora as a notion nowadays is quite complex. In regard to this term's extensive usage and 'dispersion of the meanings of the term in semantic, conceptual and disciplinary space' also wrote Rogers Brubaker in his paper titled "The Diaspora "Diaspora"".

Due to the development and expansion of this concept, in present times, into this category, in a broad sense, are included members of many mobile people. So, development path extends from the classical diaspora conception that considered as such only the Jews, Armenians and Greeks, whose reason of migration was a violent displacement, to the contemporary conception of diaspora, in which included different groups or communities that move to other countries for various reasons and motives, such as migrants, refugees, guest workers, expelled communities, etc. In addition, in social sciences the need for a better understanding and analysis of social processes makes new approaches appear constantly. Such an approach is also the transnational approach that is focused on studying different ties or/and connections mobile people have in two or more countries.

Issues related to how the Albanian diaspora in general was conceived and how Kosovo Albanian diaspora can be conceived today and how transnational studies can help in recognizing and understanding this diasporic community are a matter of scrutiny in this paper.

## KEYWORDS:

diaspora, Kosovo Albanian, premodernity, modernity, postmodernity, transnationalism, holidays

## DEFINING NOTIONS OF DIASPORA

In present times, any scholar dealing with diaspora issues accentuates the ever-increasing number of studies on this topic. Brubaker emphasizes that — 'this has resulted in what one might call "The 'diaspora' diaspora" — dispersion of the meanings of the term in semantic, conceptual and disciplinary space.' (Brubaker, 2005) As a result there are numerous definitions and explanations which depend on the perspective of the scholars dealing with this issue and their respective disciplines, such as migration studies, transnational studies, social studies, ethnology etc.

What is common to all definitions is that diaspora has to do with a number of people, members of the same community, who move from one place that is called the place of origin, usually known as the homeland, *for different reasons* to live in some other place.

Initially only the experience of Jewish people dispersed around the world was implied by the term diaspora. For Safran this even represents an 'ideal type' of diaspora. (Safran 1991: 83–84; Clifford 1994: 305; see also Cohen 2008). Over time, into this category, in a broad sense, were included members of other peoples, conceptualised as members of any nation or ethnicity.



Classifications of different diasporas were made not only according to the reason of dispersion (which was usually violent and traumatic, contributing to the retention of memory, its idealization, loyalty etc.), but also according to the ties and relations that members of the diaspora kept with the place of origin, i.e. homeland. Thus, we come across terms such as: 'classic diaspora' (Jewish, Greek and Armenians) (p. 2), 'victim diaspora' (Palestine, Jewish) (p. 2), 'trade diaspora' (China, Libyan, Indian, Baltic Germans) (p. 2), etc.; some other groups of emigrants were classified as 'nationalist in distance' (Hindu, Irish, Albanians, Kurds, Tamils...) (p. 2) because of their continued political engagement with the homeland, including terrorist and ultranationalist support. As a result of further proliferation of the term diaspora as a category, a labour diaspora who kept emotional and social ties with the homeland (Filipinos, Turks, Greeks, Italians, Polish, and Vietnamese etc) (p. 2) was also included. So, a term that initially described dispersion of Jews, Greeks and Armenians, now has, as Brubaker and other authors agree, meanings from the broadest semantic domain which includes words such as immigrant, emigrant, refugee, visiting workers, expelled community, ethnic community, etc. (Brubaker 2005: 2-3)

In his definition of diaspora Safran lists six features that are characteristic for diaspora. According to him, diaspora constitutes:

'expatriate minority communities' (1) that are dispersed from an original 'centre' to at least two 'peripheral' places; (2) that maintain a 'memory, vision or myth about their original homeland'; (3) that 'believe they are not — and perhaps cannot be fully accepted by their host country'; (4) that see the ancestral home as a place of eventual return, when the time is right; (5) that are committed to the maintenance or restoration of this homeland; and (6) of which the group's consciousness and solidarity are 'importantly defined' by this continuing relationship with the homeland. (Safran 1991: 83; Brubaker 2005: 5; Cohen 2008: 6)

Clifford and other authors who deal with diaspora build their own proposals, mostly by referring critically to Safran's definition. (Safran 1991: 83; Clifford 1994: 304-5; Brubaker 2005; Cohen 2008; Povrzanović Frykman 2004a). The main criticisms of this definition were made because of its over emphasising the notion of a 'homeland', which leads to a more essentialist explanation of diaspora as belonging to a territorialised or bounded group of people, defined by their language, culture and sometimes religion. The most extreme attempts to get away from such interpretations were made by Social Constructionist Diasporists who, as Cohen claims, 'sought to deconstruct the two core building blocks of diaspora, home/homeland and ethnic/religious community. (Cohen 2008 :9)

At the present time Benedict Anderson's explanation of the concept of the nation as 'imagined community' is broadly accepted and the avoidance of or departure from the essentialist and naturalised interpretation of concepts such as nation and ethnicity, knowing the negative consequences of nationalism, are made by all serious scholars. Moreover, multiple interpretations are made with great ease because of increasing complexity in the world, permeating social, economic and political dimensions globally. Thus different identities, such as ethnic and national among others, are explained in the terms of de-territorialization, fluidity or flows, hybridity and mixing, etc.



Clifford ascertains that:

We should be wary of constructing our working definition of a term like diaspora by recourse to an 'ideal type', with the consequence that groups become identified as more or less diasporic, having only two, or three, or four of the basic six features [...] Moreover at different times in their history, societies may wax and wane in diasporism, depending on changing possibilities — obstacles, openings, antagonisms, and connections — in their host countries and transnationally. (Clifford 1994: 306)

Brubaker says that:

To overcome these problems of groupism, I want to argue that we should think of diaspora not in substantialist terms as a bounded entity, but rather as an idiom, stance, a claim. We should think of diaspora in the first instance as a category of practice [...]. As idiom, stance, and claim, diaspora is a way of formulating the identities and loyalties of a population. Those who do the formulating may themselves be part of the population in question; or they may be speaking in the name of the putative homeland state. (Brubaker 2005: 12)

However, in dealing with the problem of defining diaspora, scholars necessarily have to deal with certain features characterizing collective or group identification prescribed or ascribed as identity, which, nevertheless, is related to the notions of territory either as a locality, region or a nation-state.

According to Clifford, 'diasporas are caught up and defined against (1) the norms of nation-states and (2) indigenous, and especially autochthonous, claims by "tribal" peoples.' (Clifford 1994:307). Similarly, Brubaker determines that yet 'three core elements remain widely understood to be constitutive of diaspora. [...] the first is dispersion in space; the second, orientation to a 'homeland'; [...] and the third boundary maintenance.' (p 12) Further he adds that:

The metaphysics of the nation-state as a bounded territorial community may have been overcome; but the metaphysics of 'community' and 'identity' remain. Diaspora can be seen as an alternative to the essentialization of belonging; but it also represents a non-territorial form of essentialized belonging. Talk of the deterritorialization of identity is all well and good; but it still presupposes that there is 'an identity' that is reconfigured, stretched in space to cross state boundaries, but on some level fundamentally the same. (pp. 11–12)

Robin Cohen in his revised edition of the book *Global Diasporas* brings interesting perspectives on the concept of diaspora that encompass different theoretical and methodological perspectives regarding diaspora. He perceives that it is very important to try to define diaspora particularly because of its enormous proliferation, thus he proposes four tools to facilitate the categorization of diaspora. The first tool would be the 'emic/etic relationship', meaning how members of diaspora as a community

perceive themselves (emic) and how outsiders perceive them (etic) (p.15). The second tool would be 'the passage of time' since 'a strong or renewed tie to the past or a block to assimilation in the present and future must exist to permit a diasporic consciousness to emerge...' (p.16). The third tool is a list of 'common features' (p.16)<sup>1</sup>, consisting of Safran's revised features and Cohen's additions, and as the final tool Cohen uses Weberian 'ideal types' (p.16), according to which diasporas are typologized and classified into several groups, such as victim, labour, imperial, trade and deterritorialized diaspora. He explains that the Weberian 'ideal' actually means the structure which has to be contrasted with different 'real' examples, which are deviations from the ideal, formed from different combinations of 9 common features; thus each combination presents a particular type.<sup>2</sup> Thus, it is understandable that each community defined as a diaspora contains different combination of features from Safran, Weber



- 1 Cohen's 'Common features of diaspora' are: 1. Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions; 2. alternatively or additionally, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions; 3. a collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history, suffering and achievements; 4. an idealization of the real or imagined ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation; 5. the frequent development of a return movement to the homeland that gains collective approbation even if many in the group are satisfied with only a vicarious relationship or intermittent visits to the homeland; 6. a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history, the transmission of a common cultural and religious heritage and the belief in a common fate; 7. a troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group; 8. a sense of empathy and co-responsibility with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement even where home has become more vestigial; and 9. the possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism (p. 17).

2 *Ideal types of diaspora, examples and notes*

<i>Main types of diaspora</i>	<i>Main examples in this book</i>	<i>Also mentioned and notes</i>
VICTIM	Jews, Africans, Armenians	Also discussed: Irish and Palestinians. Many contemporary refugee groups are incipient victim diasporas but time has to pass to see whether they return to their homelands, assimilate in their hostlands, creolize or mobilize as a diaspora.
LABOUR	Indentured Indians	Also discussed: Chinese and Japanese; Turks, Italians, North Africans. Many others could be included. Another synonymous expression is 'proletarian diaspora'.
IMPERIAL	British	Also discussed: Russians, colonial powers other than Britain. Other synonymous expressions are 'settler' or 'colonial' diasporas.



and Cohen, presenting in this way a unique case, regardless of possible similarities with others.

Cohen argues that diaspora as a notion and phenomenon has undergone several development phases, beginning with so-called ‘Prototypical Diaspora’, ‘The Expanded Concept of Diaspora’, ‘Social Constructionist Critiques of Diaspora’ and the present time ‘Consolidation Phase’. (Cohen 2008)

Below I will elaborate more on these phases trying to explain the development and the position of Kosovo Albanian diaspora within these frames. In addition I will try to reframe or/and match his categorization within three main societal development phases, namely pre-modernity, modernity and postmodernity, while adding contemporary conditions. This way I believe the development of the term of diaspora and the context of Kosovo Albanian diaspora within it will be more comprehensively and clearly understood.

*Premodernity* — The ‘prototypical diaspora’ contains the Jewish and Armenian diaspora, which is also named ‘classical diaspora’ by some authors. (Brubaker 2005:2) These communities are peculiar because their homeland at the time their dispersion happened was not bounded as a nation-state territory in the modern sense. Both states, Israel as a state of Jews and Armenia of Armenians, were created in the twentieth century, while their community names are related to certain, correspondent/respective religious or ethnic communities or/and identities. Thus not only the Jewish and Armenian Diasporas but also other diasporas which have constructed their identity around religious or ethnic or racial belonging in a broader regional sense within kingdoms or empires or continents could be included in the concept of pre-modernity.

As for the Albanians they were recognized as an ethnic community since the pre-modern age. They called themselves Arbëresh and from this name derived different variations used in other languages, such as, for example: Albanians (Eng.), Albanese, (Italian), Alabanac, Albanec (Slavic), Arvanitas (Greek), Arnaut (Turkish) etc. At the present time they call themselves Shqiptar, their state Shqipëri and the language they use is called Shqip (Çabej 1975 (a): 62–67; 1975 (b) 68–70; Islami 2008: 418). They are descendents of Illyrians. The identity of the Albanians is mainly based on their language, which is an independent branch of Indo-European languages, and their

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TRADE	Lebanese, Chinese	Also discussed: Venetians, business and professional Indians, Chinese, Japanese. Note also the auxiliary elements discussed in Chapter 5.
DETERRITORIALIZED	Caribbean peoples, Sindhis, Parsis	Also discussed: Roma, Muslims and other religious diasporas. The expressions ‘hybrid’, ‘cultural’ and ‘post-colonial’ also are linked to the idea of deterritorialization without being synonymous. (Cohen, 2008:18)



culture. Although it is admitted that they are the most ancient inhabitants of the Balkans, their territoriality has been quite fluid historically, moreover since borders in the pre-modern age did not have the same meaning as in the modern age. The same could be said regarding their religion. At the present time most Albanians are of the Muslim religion, but there are also Christian (Catholic and Orthodox, and recently small number of Protestant) Albanians.

Thus as far as premodernity is concerned, Albanians then represented a particular ethnic group, with a particular language and culture on the Balkan Peninsula.

In the literature regarding Albanian migrations, movements of Arbëreshs to other places such as to Greece, Italy, Croatia, Hungary, that happened as a result of wars while the Ottoman Empire was permeating the Balkans, are described as Historic Diaspora (that seems to be in line with “prototypical diaspora”) in contrast to Contemporary Diaspora, in which migrations after the state of Albania in 1912 was established are included. (Çabej 1975; Islami 2008; Sulemani 2009: 5)<sup>3</sup>

*Modernity* — In Cohen’s ‘Expanded Concept of Diaspora’ are included most if not all kinds of diasporas, which are related in one way or another, not only to the concept of nation-state and nationality, but also to the concept of ethnic minorities. People, because of wars and conflicts, were not only dispersed, in certain cases forcefully and traumatically, but also divided by the newly established borders of national states. As a result of the fact that ethnic or/and national identities were built during a long process, and national state frontiers were assigned as a result of different political and power decisions, as Brubaker perceives, some groups were accidentally left outside their ethno-national ‘homeland’, and could be/are, according to him, counted as Accidental Diasporas. (Brubaker 2000; Brubaker 2005: 5). He defines this phenomenon not only as a dispersion of people but also as a dispersion of borders/frontiers.

Thus, modernity, if simplified, is characterised by the establishment of nation states and “fixed” borders that contributed to the complexity of diasporan phenomena. Over time, as a result of the differing political and economical development stages of nation-states, i.e. due to industrialisation, other categories of diaspora emerged, grounded in the activity in which the dispersed people were involved, such as the afore mentioned labour diaspora, trade diaspora, nationalist diaspora etc. It is important to note that in the period of modernity, although ties with the place of origin were maintained, the intensity of contacts with people there and with the place itself was considerably lower and much more difficult.

Modernity in the Balkans is often marked by the fall of the Ottoman Empire that was followed by several Balkan Wars and Two World Wars that at the same time represented not only wars between powers but also wars over lands and borders between the newly established nations, which represented new state borders. These borders were defined by ‘boundary commissions’ established by the Great Powers, who started their work after the fall of Ottoman Empire and finalized it in 1926, and since then “Albania’s borders have remained relatively the same”. (Sulemani 2009: 9) At that

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3 It should be noted that Kosovo Albanian diaspora was included in most books dealing with Albanian diaspora in general. See also (Schmitt 2012: 219–224).





time, a considerable number of Albanians remained outside these borders, within what was then the Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian Kingdom, and after the Second World War within Yugoslavia, respectively in Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and South Serbia. (Schmitt 2012: 177; Malcolm 2001) Nevertheless, their already established ethnic and national awareness remained and even strengthened, and the state of Albania was referred to as a motherland. So, at this time Brubaker's previously mentioned Accidental Diasporas have happened: Kosovo Albanians were also such a case.

Besides, as a result of a pre-war agreement between Yugoslavia and Turkey to move the Turkish population to Turkey, a great number of Albanians were treated as Turks and therefore forced to migrate. 'Arms action'<sup>4</sup> was just one way of making Albanians leave the country. It is estimated, as Schmitt puts it, that between 1953 and 1966, a total number of 100,000 Muslim Albanians migrated to Turkey. (Schmitt 2012: 177) So, as is obvious, in this short period Kosovo Albanians produced both an "accidental diaspora" and a "victim diaspora".

This only changed after 1966 with constitutional changes that awarded Kosovo more provincial rights. However, this political relaxation after 1966 produced a Kosovo Albanian labour diaspora that actually resulted from the contract between Western European countries and Yugoslavia for the employment of seasonal workers. (Mustafa et al. 2007: 27)<sup>5</sup> Later, in the late 1980s and 1990s, Kosovo produced a political and economic diaspora as a result of the deteriorating situation in Kosovo and its status. The escape of young boys from military service, the closure of the university, and the mass expelling of Albanians from workplaces resulted in increased migration and economic and political asylum seeking that produced and added a new wave of victim diaspora. To put it simply there was produced a combination of victim diaspora, due to political situation, and labour diaspora, due to economic situation.

The peak of diaspora production by Kosovo Albanians occurred with their mass expulsion in 1999.

*Postmodernity* — 'Social Constructionist Critiques of Diaspora' includes old and new diasporas interpreted in the frame of postmodernist theoretical explanations and conditions, which are, as mentioned above, characterized more by processes than forms, more by formations than forms, more by constructions than something pre-determined by territory, essence or nature, more by transborders than borders, more

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4 Arms action was called a state action to collect weapons from civilians. The insistence was so great that if people did not have weapons they were forced to buy them and pretend they are giving away those they had, otherwise in the cases when one would claim that they do not have they would be physically tortured to extreme. (Malcolm 2001: 334)

5 Most recent migration waves of Kosovo Albanians can be found in Mustafa et al. who were engaged in so called Forum 2015 working in 'Diaspora and Migration Politics', a project of Kosovo SOROS Foundation and RIINVEST Institute that offers expertise and advocates development issues in Kosovo. Forum 2015 through its activities stimulates the debate on different topics and promotes the development of an advanced political culture. In broader perspective, Forum 2015 aims to prepare Kosovo for Euro-Atlantic integration. In 2007 Forum has conducted above Survey published in 2007 that can be found in internet.



by mixing than purity, thus hybridity, etc. This was, on the one hand, a result of developments in technology, which made migration, i.e. mobility, increase significantly at a global level, resulting also in social, cultural, political and economical conditions for people. Thus, because of these new emerging phenomena, this age is also called 'post-national', alluding to the weakening of nation-states. (Appadurai 1996; Brubaker 2005; Cohen 2008: 174) So, seen chronologically, while during modernity nations were considered certain communities bounded by certain borders, by the end of the modern period nations were defined as 'imagined communities' beyond nation-state borders, whilst in postmodernity, nations, as Appadurai put it, are coming to an end, giving way to formation of 'diasporic public spheres' [...] in 'a post-national political order' (Appadurai 1996: 22) as a result of increased mobility of humans and goods around the world due to the development of technology and communication, enabling moving people and groups to maintain more consistent and frequent connections with their religious or ethnic communities across the borders.

*Contemporary conditions* — Cohen's 'The consolidation phase' following the postmodern one could be considered to be an age where contradictory tendencies are not only present and persistent but are also being acknowledged and studied. Different contradictory tendencies in societies have been acknowledged since Durkheim, however, in the modern age, i.e. modernity, there were schools like the Frankfurt School that assumed that evolution goes in unilinear pattern thus one (i.e tradition) would be replaced by another (modernity); so, it was assumed that modernity would result in ultimate uniformity.

However, in current times, it seems quite obvious that the replacement of one form with another is out of the question, and that complexity is increasing, and therefore the emergence of extraordinary new phenomena is going on, particularly due to the persistence of contrasting tendencies. For example, many scholars have foreseen the erosion of nation-states, evidencing the emergence of different supranational projects such as the European Union, the liberalization of movement and trade, and numerous transnational companies, etc. As a result of the postmodern condition in contemporary times, mixing, hybridity and imagination are prominently highlighted. As diaspora communication and maintenance of ties with the homeland have never been easier postmodern condition in contemporary times is very much reflected culturally but also economically and politically. As Cohen avers:

What nineteenth-century nationalists wanted was a space 'for each 'race', a territorializing of each social identity. What they have got instead is a chain of cosmopolitan cities and an increasing proliferation of sub-national and transnational identities that cannot easily be contained in the nation state system' p. 174

Nevertheless, again, as many scholars have presupposed erosion of nation states, they also note that migration has never been more controlled. (Brubaker 2005: 9)

Thus in this phase we have to deal with the persistence of nation states but also the persistence of people in their cultural identities even across borders. We have to deal also with the creation of supranational reorganization upon whose policies not





only national states depend but also the fates of increasingly mobile people interacting in different ways.

A contradictory tendency in regard to diasporas can be noticed for example when Cohen claims that ‘they want not only the security and opportunities available in their countries of settlement, but also a continuing relationship with their country of origin and co-ethnic members in other countries [...] Diasporas articulate their demands in terms of human rights or “group rights”’ (p. 173).

And in similar fashion studies on diaspora highlight new ways of maintaining the “changing same”, something endlessly hybridized and in process but persistently there — memories and practices of collective identity maintained over long stretches of time’ (Clifford 1994: 320). And this ‘changing same’ is considered by Clifford a ‘harmless ethnocentric survival tactic [...] not an absolute end in itself’ (p.322). Martin Sökefeld’s concept of ‘diaspora formation as a “special case of ethnicity”, as “imagined transnational communities which unite segments of people that live in territorially separated locations”’ (Sökefeld 2006: 2; see also in Cohen 2008:13) and Appadurai’s ethnoscaapes and production of localities (1996) could be understood in the same way, as *ways of maintaining the “changing same”*.

These contradictory tendencies are seen by Konrad Köstlin as two sides of the same coin i.e. modernisation. In his observations in ‘New Meanings of the Region and Culture’<sup>6</sup> he elaborates the influence of the globalization process and its effects on many meanings and contexts of region and culture as constructed by the elite, ordinary people and politicians, both during the era of nationalization and contemporarily. As he puts it:

Since globalization gained new vigor there is shown a direct emphasis and a new, somehow surprising, interest in regional culture. This interest, which can be called localism or regionalism, is obviously closely related to the phenomenon of globalization. Regionalism is the other side of the coin of globalization. It turned out that the old idea of growing nations by uniting their regions was a wrong initial assumption. All around the world today, the new state determines itself as ethnically different, trying to become independent in relation to the former big wholes and thus wanting to create new nations. Thereby they use selected symbols of popular culture as a symbol of their own difference. Some of the new states have names that we never heard before. Even in most remote places, today we can identify traces of transnational processes, in other words, globalization. We can see, for example, satellite dishes even on the poorest huts or Coca Cola cans thrown by the roadside. (Köstlin 2001: 33; 2011: 79–80).

Thus contradictory tendencies are present, are fluid, they flow and often intertwine. So, a post-national tendency grows as a tendency of self-ethnization leading to a sort

<sup>6</sup> Konrad Köstlin, ‘Nova shvaćanja regije i kulture’, in: *Narodna Umjetnost* 38/2 (Zagreb: 2001), pp 33–49, or Konrad Köstlin, ‘Kuptimet e reja të regjionit dhe të kulturës’ in *Gjurmime Albanologjike Folklor dhe Etnologji (GjAFE)* 40 (Prishtinë; Instituti Albanologjik i Prishtinës, 2011), pp. 79–98.

of new nationalization. People are mobile globally but cling to their local news, look for 'local' newspapers no matter what part of the globe they are in, and look at the last pages for 'death announcements' there.

This contemporary condition, even though much more dynamic, resembles to the condition I called 'pre-modern phase' when described by Clifford: 'For long periods and in many places people of distinct religions, races, cultures, and languages coexisted. Difference was articulated through connection, not separation.' (Clifford 1994: 325) The presence of diasporas all around the world contributes to the formation of cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism and supranationalism, not only in the places of settlement, but also in the places of origin. In the contemporary condition, due to the presence of multifold contrasts in the development of countries, the need to go (especially from poor countries to rich ones, troubled countries to secure ones, but also movements because of professional and business motives) is unquestionably highly similar to the need to nevertheless 'stay' behind; to use opportunities to cultivate the sense of staying back in the country of origin, with people there, and maintain cultural continuity. Roots and home continue to be imagined and used in the formation of collective memory, history and identity; however they are now related not to a nation state as such but more to a locality, region or Appadurai's neighbourhood. Most importantly, they are not perceived as something given, unchangeable and singular, but more as something cultivated, negotiable and plural regardless of their persistence.

## POSTMODERNITY AND CONTEMPORARINESS IN KOSOVO CONTEXT

It is certain that the boundaries between large periods of time defined as premodernity, modernity and postmodernity are never quite clear. Such a situation is especially unclear in the case of Kosovo. In Kosovar reality, these are very succinct and difficult to separate. Moreover, they come as simultaneously realized. Today, Kosovo is an independent sovereign state — it is not a part of Serbia, or of Albania, or of the European Union. Although it is internationally recognized by more than 108 states worldwide, Kosovo is highly involved in global economic, political and social processes. Kosovo still produces a diaspora, though at a slower pace. Owing to a number of internal and external factors, and due to the complexity of the overall situation, a number of trends and interests can be seen at work among Kosovo Albanians in how they identify with the new state. This is also reflected in Kosovo Albanian diaspora. How do they perceive themselves and how are they perceived by others? What is their relation to the homeland and what are their commitments to their homeland? What symbols are important to them? It is interesting to see how these identifications are reflected in the transnational practices of Kosovo Albanian diaspora. This is of particular interest considering that to "the Kosovo Albanian diasporic sphere" where are included Albanians of other territories of the former Yugoslavia, have joined since the 1990s Albanian migrants of Albania, for whom, during the time of communism, migration was impossible.

The creation of a new state imposes certain affiliations and identifications. The establishment of Kosovo as a new state in a postmodern age could be interpreted in





several ways. One of them could be interpretation in the sub-national context. The tendencies of highlighting sub-national and regional identities as a result of supra-national projects and the importance of the resolution of nation-states are obvious, regardless of the controversial realities of the process. The entire process is permeated with different elitist projects from above, different resistances from below, and other imposed negotiations. (Kadriu 2013).

However, in the case of Albanians it should be highlighted that Kosovo Albanians, and especially the Kosovo Albanian diaspora, for now feel and act simply as Albanians in terms of their ethnicity and nationality, even though in practice they also refer to themselves as Kosovo Albanians. Their national belonging is inhibited in their consciousness. Nevertheless, this national identification is not the only identification they are involved in. They are prone to add other identifications, whilst remaining relatively protective towards their Albanianism and this is apparent in their everyday culture. Even though, since the independence of Kosovo, considerable literature is being produced regarding the building of a new Kosovar Identity (see i.e. Andersen 2002), since this research is aimed at non-Albanian readers, I considered it important to give these explanations, especially because I am quite often asked the question: 'Are Kosovo Albanians really Albanians?' As a researcher and also an insider, I might say that Albanians everywhere are as much a *real* imagined community as any other constructed during modernity. Is there a place for further multiple identifications? Certainly there is more than one, and it depends on more than one agent, such as people, politics, and economy at both macro and micro level.

Another significant detail about Albanians as a 'diasporic community' resulted directly from one of my interviewees during a conversation about how they live in their host locality somewhere in Germany. He claimed that in the city where he lives they always jokingly say that the best people from Kosovo and Albania are living there. 'We all get along with each other very well. As if we were a big family. We respect each other greatly. It never happened till now to intermarry. Not that it is forbidden but they feel so close as if they were a family'.

## TRANSNATIONAL STUDIES APPROACH

In order to get better answers and research results regarding the condition and the processes within diasporic groups, for more than a decade, approach of transnational studies is increasingly being applied.

While in the period of modernity, diaspora studies focused more on the integration and assimilation of these groups in the host countries, not overlooking/neglecting their attitude and imagination towards the homeland, at the centre of diaspora studies in present times are the links and relations that these groups have not only with their home country, but also with the host country or/and with other countries with which they as a community can have interconnections. These links and communications, as mentioned above, are nowadays greatly facilitated and greatly intensive in cases of countries without war crises and with democratic developments.

Studies with this focus have been termed as *transnational studies* and along their development a number of concepts emerged.

Alejandro Portes in his essay 'Globalization from Below: The Rise of Transnational Communities' wrote:

As a contribution to this analysis, I attempt in this paper to give theoretical form to the concept of transnational communities, as a less noticed but potentially potent counter to the more visible forms of globalization described in the recent literature. (Portes 1997: 3)

The discourse about transnational migrants began during the 1990s. Nina Glick Schiller noticed that 'transmigrants are immigrants whose daily lives depend on multiple and constant interconnections across international borders and whose public identities are configured in relationship to more than one nation-state' (p.48), they thus also '...maintain, build and reinforce multiple linkages with their countries of origin... (p.52)', while 'transnational migration is the process by which immigrants forge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement.' (Glick Schiller and al. 1995:48)

Both globalization and transnationalism studies proved to be relatively fruitful, enabling further theorization and approaches by different disciplines including immigration studies, sociology, anthropology and ethnology, political sciences, which of course resulted not only in various common points of view but also debates accentuating differences (Faist 2004; Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004; Lazăr 2011). This makes them interdisciplinarily-elaborated, drawing from different approaches.

Having as its object a complex phenomenon comprising a large number of smaller categories, processes, and interlinkages, numerous distinctions as well as methodological and theoretic shifts or turns emerged in transnational studies. Since a transnational perspective is focused on ties with homeland, ties that are of a social, cultural, and economic character, and since those involved in a transnational community include not only those who are mobile (i. e. migrants), but also those who are affected in various ways by their practices (such as financial remittances, money and social remittances<sup>7</sup>, to those who remain behind, mutual cyber-communication), and moreover these ties circulate in various ways from the homeland into the everyday life of migrants in host countries, then the location of research ought not to be only the migrant host countries. As Maja Povrzanović Frykman puts it, 'if a description of the practices that create transnational social spaces as well as an analysis of their cultural and political implications is intended through ethnological research, original and actual homelands, local diasporic settings and cyberspace are all equally valid research locations'. (Povrzanović Frykman 2004a: 81)

The best method for doing this is thought to be multi-sited ethnography as proposed by George Marcus. He suggests that researchers should "follow the ...": *people*

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7 According to Peggy Levitt 'social remittances are the ideas, behaviors, identities, and social capital that migrants export to their home communities. They include ideas about democracy, health, and community organization.' (Levitt 2004:6).



(migrants/exiles), *thing* (commodities, gifts, money, work of art, and intellectual property), *metaphor* (signs, symbols and images), *plot, story or allegory* (narratives of everyday experience or memory), *life or biography* (of exemplary individuals), or *conflict* (issues contested in public space).<sup>8</sup> (as cited in Povrzanović Frykman 2004b: 92). However, the impact of transnational relations can be observed by asking individuals about the transnational aspects of their lives, and those they are connected to, in a single setting. (Levitt and Schiller 2004:14)

This method and theory were bases of the research titled 'Family affairs while on holiday: Practising holidays and keeping family ties in the Kosovo Albanian diaspora'.<sup>8</sup> In order to better comprehend diasporan holidays the main research question (How Albanian Diasporas keep their ties with the homeland and people that remained there?) was aided by getting the information on the main activities they are involved in during their holidays at home, which helped acquire quite holistic picture of diasporic holidays.

Firstly, they meet their family members and friends and carry on with the most important family rites, among which, of course, is the wedding party. Secondly, for diasporians summer time holidays are mainly time to visit home but a great number of them increasingly also go to the seaside that relates to the issues of tourism. Thirdly, all around Kosovo we see houses that are built during summer time, mostly financed with aid from diaspora.<sup>9</sup>

This shows that Kosovo Albanian diaspora holidays are fragmented and therefore the research had to be done in different places. So, besides in different places within Kosovo I have conducted research in two seaside locations, in Ulqin-Montenegro and in Velipoje, Albania, as quite popular destinations for diasporans to spend holidays. Conversations included 97 persons coming from different host countries, including Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Great Britain, France, Italy, Sweden, Switzerland, and the USA. In the focus of research were first generation migrants (because this was first ethnographic research on diaspora and because relation of this generation to homeland is stronger) that turned out to be migrants that migrated in different migration waves / phases / categories; such as: victim migrants forcefully displaced to Turkey; labour migrants during Ex- Yugoslav state from the 1960s to the 1980s; asylum seekers (victim migrants) during the 1990s, and refugees during 1999. Based on the number of the host countries they came from as well as the fact that members of the same family are dispersed in more than one host country, it is clear that Kosovo Albanian diaspora represents a complex transnational community. This fact together with the fragment of holidays spent to the seaside which again proves to be transnational adds quite a relevant component to the extent of practiced transnationality among Kosovo Albanian diaspora.

Because of its complexity many interpretation of holidays are possible, (Kadriu 2017) nevertheless here I would note that each of the practices which emerged in the

<sup>8</sup> Research was conducted from 2013 -2015 during my doctoral studies at the University of Vienna, Institute of European Ethnology.

<sup>9</sup> If houses are built for their own nuclear family, once they are finished, they remain closed during winter season, although cared for by members of family who stay behind.

holidays of diasporians could be interpreted and described as a form of resistance to homogeneity and hegemony produced by globalisation, namely by: 1. the choice of the homeland as a place of holidays; 2. the choice of certain beaches because of ideological motives (they were chosen because they are considered Albanian thus for patriotic motives to contribute economically to the motherland, and to reify inter-generational cultural experiences and identities from there); 3. the reinforcement of traditional, local, regional and national values while on holiday; 4. the creation of new relationships and social networks while on holidays, including new marriages with people from the homeland or originating from there; 5. the possession or investment in the building of second homes in the homeland while on holiday etc.

Each of these aspects in this transnational practice of holidays could be considered as contradictory tension between the old and the new, preserving the past as cultural identity and achieving the progression and integration to modernity, which motivated politically, culturally and economically, influence the emergence of holidays as 'bricolage'. This process, no matter how similar it is, if considered among various cultures, ethnicities and nations, will have particular nuances that will have a double effect of both adding to the colourfulness of the world and resisting the uniformity of the world. It is about preserving that "changing same", something endlessly hybridized and in process but persistently there'.

## CONCLUSION

At the beginning of the paper we saw that Albanians were classified in the diaspora group named "nationalists in the distance". While reading this information, being myself Kosovo Albanian, living the economic, political, social and cultural reality in Kosovo, and seeing how the migrant's relationship with the homeland is currently developing, it seemed reasonable to pose the hypothesis that as far as Kosovo Albanians are concerned, perhaps it can be proved that a change in their engagement towards their country of origin has occurred, and therefore a shift from this group classification to another, more appropriate one, would be more realistic. And this was proved by the conducted research on their holidaymaking. According to the text, Kosovo Albanians, could be considered to be 'nationalist in distance' (similar to Hindu, Irish, Kurds, Tamils, etc) because of their continuous political engagement with the homeland (Brubaker 2015:2). However, at the present time, when Kosovo has become independent, we see that family ties and the cultural celebration of the homeland are becoming more and more important and evident as a cultural technique. All three issues (political engagement with homeland, family ties and cultural values) were and remain emotionally important, but there is a shift from contributing to the homeland exclusively in a patriotic manner to contributing to maintaining social, cultural and, most importantly, family ties as a means of preserving identity in an extraterritorial manner.

Besides the research that was done from below, due to changes of the political situation in Kosovo, there are several arguments that support this hypothesis, among which most relevant are: 1. The political engagement of Kosovo Albanians does not







need to be organised outside Kosovo, and 2. diasporans are not yet involved in the existing Kosovo parliament. Even if this happens in the future, their involvement will have to do with political, economic and cultural issues that in general will be harmonised with legal acts, thus their influence mostly will not lead to hot nationalism or extreme actions such as support for war or fighting. Moreover, due to the 'proliferation of term Diaspora' in which are encompassed many other terms, including the term 'labour diaspora who kept/[keep] emotional and social ties with homeland' (Brubaker 2015:3) as a particular category, it seems that Kosovo Albanians would better fit in this category.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, it should be noted that we are not discussing something fixed. The identification of certain ethnic groups in certain categories is most probably always prone to change according to global and regional political situations and developments. As long as the political and economical situation, especially in Balkans, remains fragile, this tendency also remains uncertain and prone to change however, for now this shift to transnationally bound labour diaspora looks pretty evident, unless nationalistic feelings remain celebratory and acquire banal status as something not without a danger, but at least in a calm state.

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<sup>10</sup> Cohen notes that as another synonymous expression for labour diaspora is 'proletarian diaspora' (Cohen, 2008:18)

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