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Narrating the 'Liberation of Kosovo' in Switzerland. Transnational Strategies of Boundary-Making

Abstract. Albanian-speaking migrants in Switzerland mobilized massively on behalf of the national cause in Kosovo in the 1990s. Despite this strong engagement with their homeland, however, some have felt forgotten and have been offended by negative stereotypes in Kosovo itself since the war ended in 1999. Taking a boundary-making approach, the author analyses the ways in which Albanian-speaking former activists in Switzerland have responded to their unfavourable standing, and how they have sought to improve their transnational position. She shows how former activists tend to choose between one of two narratives to describe their place in their societies of origin and settlement: either they yearn to be a part of the 'Albanian nation' as imagined in Kosovo; or they adopt a new model of what it is to be 'Albanian' in Switzerland.

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Introduction

In the 1990s, Albanian-speaking migrants in Europe, especially Switzerland and Germany, mobilized on a huge scale to advance the national cause in 'Kosovo',¹ and to support the 'Albanian'² population in Yugoslavia.³ They

¹ Quotation marks indicate that the term 'Kosovo' is contested and defined differently by social actors who seek to define it according to their preferred meaning. Although most people understand 'Kosovo' as the former Yugoslav province of Kosovo—now a self-declared independent state—in the 1980s and 1990s some activists thought that parts of southern Serbia and Macedonia belonged to 'Kosovo'. I do not use quotation marks when the term refers to the former province of Yugoslavia, or the new state of Kosovo.

² I use the quotation marks here for the same reason as above. Social actors might use different terms like 'Kosovan', 'Kosovo-Albanian', or 'Albanian'. I do not use quotation marks when the term refers to citizens of the state of Albania.

³ Paul Hockenos, *Homeland Calling. Exile Patriotism and the Balkan Wars*, Ithaca/NY 2010.

played a key role in homeland politics—particularly in the events that led Serbian forces to withdraw from Kosovo at the end of the 1998-1999 conflict.⁴ But Albanian-speaking migrants from Switzerland who have since returned to Kosovo have expressed some disappointment about their reception there and their relationship to their homeland. Some feel ‘abandon[ed]’,⁵ and those who have returned for short stays have been the target of derogatory comments and stereotyping.⁶

Recently, researchers have begun to analyse the responses of migrants and other minority groups to stigmatization and other forms of exclusion or disrespect.⁷ This is usually done within the framework of boundary-making theory, which enables researchers to scrutinize the processes by which individuals and groups construct the categories that divide people into ‘them’ and ‘us’.⁸ By examining boundary-creation and transformation, researchers can understand how social actors produce classifications and define their social world.⁹

The scholarship on migrants’ responses to stigmatization has mainly focused on the position in which they find themselves in their country of settlement;¹⁰ but some authors have also noted that migrants can encounter derogatory stereotypes and have tense relations with co-nationals even in their homeland.¹¹ Few researchers have studied the transnational responses of migrants to the

⁴ Rey Koslowski, International Migration and the Globalization of Domestic Politics. A Conceptual Framework, in: Rey Koslowski, eds, International Migration and the Globalization of Domestic Politics, London 2005, 5-32.

⁵ Amir Haxhikadrija, Diaspora As a Driving Force for Development in Kosovo. Myth or Reality, Gjakovë 2009, 11.

⁶ Dafina Paca, ‘Schatzi’. Making Meaning of Diaspora, *JOMEC Journal* 7 (2015), 1-17, DOI: 10.18573/j.2015.10005; Haxhikadrija, Diaspora As a Driving Force, 11.

⁷ Michèle Lamont / Nissim Mizrahi, Ordinary People Doing Extraordinary Things. Responses to Stigmatization in Comparative Perspective, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 35, no. 3 (2012), 365-381, DOI: 10.1080/01419870.2011.589528; Nils Witte, Responses to Stigmatisation and Boundary Making. Destigmatisation Strategies of Turks in Germany, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44, no. 9 (2018), 1425-1443, DOI: 10.1080/1369183X.2017.1398077.

⁸ Andreas Wimmer, The Making and Unmaking of Ethnic Boundaries. A Multilevel Process Theory, *American Journal of Sociology* 113, no. 4 (2008), 970-1022, DOI: 10.1086/522803, passim, esp. 975.

⁹ Michèle Lamont / Virág Molnár, The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences, *Annual Review of Sociology* 28 (2002), 179-195, DOI: 10.1146/annurev.soc.28.110601.141107.

¹⁰ Cf. Laura Morosanu / Jon E. Fox, ‘No Smoke Without Fire.’ Strategies of Coping with Stigmatised Migrant Identities, *Ethnicities* 13, no. 4 (2013), 438-456, DOI: 10.1177/1468796813483730; Janine Dahinden / Tania Zittoun, Religion in Meaning Making and Boundary Work. Theoretical Explorations, *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science* 47, no. 2 (2013), 185-206, DOI: 10.1007/s12124-013-9233-3.

¹¹ Cf. Laura Morosanu, Between Fragmented Ties and ‘Soul Friendships’. The Cross-Border Social Connections of Young Romanians in London, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 39, no. 3 (2012), 353-372, DOI: 10.1080/1369183X.2013.733858.

discourses and acts of symbolic exclusion they experience there—in their homeland itself.¹²

I aim to fill this knowledge gap by analysing the transnational responses of Albanian-speaking migrants in Switzerland who have met with deprecatory discourses and neglect in their country of origin. In particular, I examine the ways in which former activists construct their memories of engagement with their homeland, and how they use those memories to expand national boundaries, make them more inclusive, and thereby improve their transnational position. In this examination of memories crafted by migrants, I follow the distinction between 'exilic memory', which underlines a sense of belonging linked to the homeland, and 'diasporic memory', which emphasizes the creation of new forms of collective identification in the settlement country.¹³

First, I lay out the theoretical background to my study. I continue with a methodological note on my research and some historical insights into the mobilization of Albanian-speaking migrants in Switzerland made on behalf of 'Kosovo'. Then, I characterize the ways in which Albanian-speaking former activists describe their representation and experiences in Kosovo and other Albanian-speaking territories in the Balkans. I identify the boundary-making strategies they have adopted in order to respond to their situation, as expressed in their recollections of homeland mobilization. Finally, I explain two alternative strategies former activists have adopted to cope with their 'abandonment' at 'home' and the negative stereotypes put on them in their homeland: they have either adjusted their stories to conform to the normative narrative prevalent in Kosovo, or they have developed new narratives tailored to their needs as migrants in Switzerland.

Responses to Stigmatization. Theoretical Background

Stigmatization encompasses 'a wide range of subjective experiences, namely, incidents in which respondents experience disrespect and their dignity, hon-

¹² Elena Genova underlines this 'double-sided othering' of migrants in their homeland and in their country of establishment, which forces them to negotiate their position between both settings, cf. Elena Genova, 'Between a Rock and a Hard Place.' Bulgarian Highly Skilled Migrants' Experiences of External and Internal Stereotypes in the Context of the European Crisis, *National Identities* 19, no. 1 (2017), 33-51, DOI: 10.1080/14608944.2015.1136609. As Dafina Paca's PhD research on the construction of Kosovo Albanian diaspora identity in both the United Kingdom and Kosovo shows, similar patterns are evident among migrants from Kosovo, too. Cf. Dafina Paca, *The Discursive Construction of Identity by Kosovo Albanians*, PhD thesis, Cardiff University 2015.

¹³ Thomas Lacroix / Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, Refugee and Diaspora Memories. The Politics of Remembering and Forgetting, *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 34, no. 6 (2013), 684-696, DOI: 10.1080/07256868.2013.846893, 687.

our, relative status, or sense of self [is] challenged'.¹⁴ People feel stigmatized, for example, when they believe they have been underestimated, or feel offended by negative stereotypes, or feel ignored or neglected.¹⁵ Scholars have recently begun to study the responses of migrants and those perceived as ethnic or racial minorities to the various forms of stigmatization and exclusion.¹⁶ This relatively new body of literature has largely focused on the discursive strategies of individuals and groups facing stigmatization, describing how people counter acts or discourses of exclusion and disrespect by self-repositioning towards symbolic categories they find easier to live with.¹⁷

The boundary-making perspective assumes that ethnicity and nationhood are not attributes fixed at birth, but rather the result of struggles and contests over the definition and classification of the social world.¹⁸ Notions like 'nation' or 'ethnicity' are 'not primarily conceived as a matter of *relations* between pre-defined, fixed groups [...] but rather as a process of *constituting* and *re-configuring* groups by defining the boundaries between them'.¹⁹ This perspective is in line with Rogers Brubaker's approach, which considers ethnicity and nationhood to be discursive categories, political projects or claims rather than fixed entities with their own interests.²⁰ Expressed in more general terms, social actors thus create 'symbolic boundaries' in order to categorize people, objects, and practices.²¹ Distinctions are constructed on 'cultural stuff'²² such as 'language, ritual, kinship, lifestyle, religion or gender representations'.²³ Narratives of the past are often a constitutive part of the 'cultural stuff' that defines ethnic and national boundaries.²⁴ In the field of migration studies, such narratives can take two main forms: 'exilic' or 'diasporic'. 'Exilic memory' refers to a shared

¹⁴ Michèle Lamont et al., *Getting Respect. Responding to Stigma and Discrimination in the United States, Brazil and Israel*, Princeton/NJ 2016, 6.

¹⁵ Lamont et al., *Getting Respect. Responding to Stigma and Discrimination*, 6.

¹⁶ Cf. Morosanu / Fox, 'No Smoke Without Fire'; Dahinden / Zittoun, *Religion in Meaning Making and Boundary Work*; Lamont / Mizrahi, *Ordinary People Doing Extraordinary Things*.

¹⁷ Witte, *Responses to Stigmatisation and Boundary Making*.

¹⁸ Andreas Wimmer, *Elementary Strategies of Ethnic Boundary Making*, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31, no. 6 (2008), 1025-1055, DOI: 10.1080/01419870801905612; Andreas Wimmer, *The Making and Unmaking of Ethnic Boundaries. A Multilevel Process Theory*, *American Journal of Sociology* 113, no. 4 (2008), DOI: 10.1086/522803.

¹⁹ Andreas Wimmer, *Elementary Strategies of Ethnic Boundary Making*, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31, no. 6 (2008), 1025-1055, 1027, DOI: 10.1080/01419870801905612.

²⁰ Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups*, Cambridge 2006.

²¹ Lamont / Molnár, *The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences*.

²² Fredrik Barth, *Introduction*, in: Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, Bergen 1969, 9-38, 15.

²³ Dahinden / Zittoun, *Religion in Meaning Making and Boundary Work*, 194.

²⁴ Cf. Pal Kolstø, ed, *Myths and Boundaries in South-Eastern Europe*, London 2005.

representation that places the emphasis on forced emigration from the homeland, while 'diasporic memory' is a collective representation of the past that

'is not structured by a narration of the point of origin per se but, rather, is the outcome of a collective migratory trajectory, with the diaspora's sense of distinctiveness, and of forming a minority, having thus appeared throughout the course of their emigration'.²⁵

Symbolic boundary-creation is characterized by the dual dynamic of internal definition and external categorization. Individuals identify themselves and recognize each other as members of a collective and, at the same time, they are categorized and defined as members of that collective by others, outside.²⁶ Power relationships shape these processes. For example, people might be designated as members of undesirable categories with which they do not identify; and some self-identified collectives may not be recognized as such by outsiders. This raises the question: how do excluded, stigmatized or low-status groups and individuals react to adverse categorization and cope with it?

Wimmer has highlighted five possible boundary-making strategies, which he characterizes as 'different ways in which individual and collective actors can relate to an existing, established mode of classification and closure, and how they can attempt to enforce their vision of the legitimate divisions of society'. He defines these strategies as: (1) the *expansion* of the boundary to incorporate more members; (2) the *contraction* of the boundary to reduce membership; (3) *transvaluation*, which implies a normative change; (4) individual or collective *boundary crossing*; and (5) *blurring* boundaries by emphasizing other attributes of belonging.²⁷

When other scholars have used boundary-making approaches to analyse migrant responses to stigmatization, they have usually focused on the migrants' situation in their settlement countries.²⁸ Migrants might, for example, embrace other forms of ethnic identification or disengage from forms of ethnic attachment.²⁹ They might opt for transnational responses, such as a strengthening of their links with their homeland, improving their position there.³⁰ Scholars have also underlined tensions, divisions and misunderstandings between

²⁵ Lacroix / Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, *Refugee and Diaspora Memories*, 687.

²⁶ Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity*, London 2008.

²⁷ Wimmer, *Ethnic Boundary Making*, 44.

²⁸ Cf. Morosanu / Fox, 'No Smoke Without Fire'; Louise Ryan, *Becoming Polish in London. Negotiating Ethnicity through Migration*, *Social Identities* 16, no. 3 (2010), 359-376, DOI: 10.1080/13504630.2010.482425.

²⁹ Cf. Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers, *Albanians, Albanianism and the Strategic Subversion of Stereotypes*, *Anthropological Notebooks* 14, no. 2 (2008), 47-64, DOI: 10.1080/00905992.2013.767792; Morosanu / Fox, 'No Smoke Without Fire'.

³⁰ Cf. Alejandro Portes, *Conclusion. Towards a New World – the Origins and Effects of Transnational Activities*, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22, no. 2 (1999), 463-477, DOI: 10.1080/0141

co-nationals who live abroad and those who live in the home country, but they have generally overlooked transnational responses to negative forms of categorization arising in the migrants' own homelands.³¹ Misunderstanding and stigmatization can take place in countries of origin too, and scholars have likewise paid little attention to the responses migrants give to this.³² I have begun to fill this knowledge gap in a study of Albanian-speaking men and women in Switzerland, analysing the strategies they have used to respond to adverse symbolic categorization in their homeland. In the account that follows, I use boundary-making theory to identify how Albanian-speaking former activists handled being disregarded and faced with negative stereotypes in Kosovo and other Albanian-speaking regions. In particular, I examine how they use their narratives to transform the symbolic boundaries in order to improve their transnational position.

Methodology

This article is mainly based on oral history interviews conducted with first-generation Albanian-speaking people from former Yugoslavia who were activists in Switzerland in the 1980s and 1990s. In addition, I draw on notes I took as a participant observer, mainly at commemorations and party meetings. I conducted additional documentary research that helped me interpret the interview data.

Between 2009 and 2012, I interviewed fifty former activists. Ten of these were interviewed more than once. Usually I conducted the interviews in German or French at the respondents' homes or offices, or in a café. As most of the former

98799329567; Erik Snel, Reactive Transnationalism. Homeland Involvement in the Face of Discrimination, *Global Networks* 16, no. 4 (2016), 511-530, DOI: 10.1111/glob.12125.

³¹ Cf. Morosanu, Between Fragmented Ties and 'Soul Friendships'; Susanne Wessendorf, 'Roots Migrants.' Transnationalism and 'Return' among Second-Generation Italians in Switzerland, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 33, no. 7 (2007), 1083-1102, DOI: 10.1080/13691830701541614; Daphne Winland, Ten Years Later. The Changing Nature of Transnational Ties in Post-Independence Croatia, *Ethnopolitics* 5, no. 3 (2006), 295-307, DOI: 10.1080/17449050600911109.

³² In the Kosovan case, authors such as Dafina Paca, Bashkim Iseni and Rifat Haxhijaj have explored how migrants negotiate the tension between a host country in which they do not always feel accepted and a homeland in which they no longer fully belong. While they focus on the role of discourses in both home and host country, they do not apply boundary-making theory to their analyses of transnational responses to stigmatization. Cf. Paca, The Discursive Construction of Identity by Kosovo Albanians; Bashkim Iseni, Albanian-Speaking Transnational Populations in Switzerland. Continuities and Shifts, *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 13, no. 2 (2013), 227-243, DOI: 10.1080/14683857.2013.802174; Rifat Haxhijaj, *Les jeunes d'origine kosovare à Genève*, Paris 2005.

activists still resided fully or most of the time in Switzerland, I conducted all the interviews there, except for seven that took place in Kosovo.

The interviews generally followed a three- or four-step process. I started with a broad question, asking interviewees to tell me the story of their engagement on behalf of 'Kosovo'. Next, I asked them questions to clarify specific expressions and explanations. As a third step, I broached more specific topics that had not yet come up in their accounts but which were of specific interest to me. As a fourth, I sometimes shared alternative interpretations and explanations that had been made in other interviews or sources.³³

I interviewed activists from a wide variety of migration backgrounds who had pursued different forms of engagement with their homeland. Some had fled their country to avoid long jail sentences or because they feared for their lives. Many had left Yugoslavia for economic reasons—though political and security factors may also have played a role. I also interviewed the wives and children of male political refugees and *Gastarbeiter* who had come to Switzerland through family reunification and who had also been activists in the 1980s and 1990s. My sample included participants of different political orientations and modes of engagement, including those representing parties, humanitarian associations, and cultural groups. I interviewed leaders and organization members, as well as activists who did not belong to any particular organization.

After transcribing the interviews, I conducted a thematic analysis, analysing each interview as a whole to preserve the shape of the narrative.³⁴ First, I identified the sequences that constituted the personal narrative, and this enabled me to see recurrent patterns of story-telling. Second, I identified the main themes and stories in each interview. For example, most respondents elaborated on the 'Albanian people in history', 'Kosovo', the 'Albanians in Switzerland', and various political parties or significant 'Albanian' figures. Third, I noted particular values, beliefs, and attitudes shown towards the 'Kosovo Albanian nation' in areas like the memorialization of the 'liberation' (in Kosovo and abroad), the interviewees' relationship with the Albanian-speaking population in Kosovo and other regions of the former Yugoslavia, and their connections with the Kosovan state.³⁵ I then reflected on my findings for each area within each interview, and identified interactions between the main categories revealed by the three kinds of codes. Fourth, I compared my findings across cases, to identify the different strategies former activists were adopting to enhance their symbolic transna-

³³ Alexander von Plato, *Zeitzeugen und die historische Zunft. Erinnerung, kommunikative Tradierung und kollektives Gedächtnis in der qualitativen Geschichtswissenschaft – ein Problemaufriss*, *Bios* 13, no. 1 (2000), 5-29.

³⁴ Catherine Kohler Riessman, *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*, Los Angeles/CA 2008.

³⁵ Johnny Saldana, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, London 2009.

tional position. Throughout the interviews, and in my analysis, I maintained a transnational perspective, being careful to avoid the trap of methodological nationalism.³⁶ This made it easier to identify the specific discourses and forms of belonging that transcend national borders.

Homeland Engagement on Behalf of 'Kosovo' in Switzerland. A Brief Background

In the 1980s, Albanian-speaking migrants from communist Yugoslavia who had settled in Switzerland began to establish 'Albanian' clubs and associations across the country with the help of *Gastarbeiter*. Inspired by Enver Hoxha, the head of state in communist Albania, they also founded transnational organizations based on Albanian nationalist and Marxist-Leninist ideologies.³⁷ At the time, the activists looked on Albania as their 'motherland'.³⁸ Many of my interviewees confirmed that they began to distance themselves from Albania in the postcommunist era, as that country started to open up and they discovered the grave economic and human rights situation prevailing there. But a few interview participants said that they still considered Albania to be their 'motherland' even now.

In the 1990s, the decade of the wars of dissolution in what had been Yugoslavia, Albanian-speaking migrants from different backgrounds and with different political orientations mobilized for their homeland in a big way. They carried out humanitarian and cultural projects, made financial transfers, undertook political lobbying, ran information campaigns, and supported plans for armed resistance in 'Kosovo'.³⁹ Their financial help, for example, contributed towards financing the parallel education system and other 'Albanian' institutions in Kosovo. This extensive engagement started when the province of Kosovo entered a period of grave crisis after losing its autonomy within the Serbian Republic in 1989.⁴⁰ The Serbs now ruled Kosovo directly, and the Albanian-speak-

³⁶ Andreas Wimmer / Nina Glick Schiller, Methodological Nationalism, the Social Sciences, and the Study of Migration. An Essay in Historical Epistemology, *Migration Review* 37, no. 3 (2003), 576-610.

³⁷ Barbara Burri Sharani et al., *La population kosovare en Suisse*, Berne 2010.

³⁸ Paulin Kola, *The Search for Greater Albania*, London 2003.

³⁹ Janine Dahinden, The Dynamics of Migrants' Transnational Formations. Between Mobility and Locality, in: Rainer Bauböck / Thomas Faist, eds, *Diaspora and Transnationalism. Concepts, Theories and Methods*, Amsterdam 2010, 51-71; Cerwyn Moore, *Contemporary Violence. Post-Modern War in Kosovo and Chechnya*, Manchester 2010.

⁴⁰ Janine Dahinden / Joëlle Moret, Les activités transnationales des associations de migrants serbes et kosovars en Suisse, *Annuaire suisse de politique de développement* 27, no. 2 (2008), 227-238.

ing population saw their situation deteriorate drastically as Belgrade adopted discriminatory laws against 'Albanians' and stepped up police repression.⁴¹

These events spurred the formation of many organizations and branches of political parties across Switzerland. These new groups were often connected to partner entities in Yugoslavia or other countries in Europe and North America.⁴² A new branch of the Democratic League of Kosovo (*Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës*, LDK) was founded in Switzerland in 1990.⁴³ The LDK itself had emerged in Kosovo at the end of 1989 as the main organization of resistance on the Albanian-speaking side.⁴⁴ The main objective of the party was to secure Kosovo's independence. It promoted nonviolent resistance and internationalization of the Kosovo issue.⁴⁵ Under the leadership of a university professor, Ibrahim Rugova, the LDK gained the support of most of the Albanian-speaking population in Kosovo and abroad and continued to hold it until about 1997-1998.⁴⁶ By contrast, the Popular Movement for Kosovo (*Lëvizja Popullore e Kosovës*, LPK), an organization that had been part of the nationalist and Marxist-Leninist movement in the 1980s, decided to pursue its efforts covertly and opted for a more violent solution in order to achieve independence.⁴⁷ Members of the LPK in Switzerland and Germany are usually credited with a major role in creating and politically representing the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), an armed organization that waged a guerrilla war against Yugoslav troops in the war of 1998-1999.⁴⁸ When the conflict ended, mass activity on behalf of 'Kosovo' greatly diminished. The number of migrants' organizations decreased, and the migrants' attention generally shifted from concern about the situation in their homeland to the furthering of their 'integration' in Switzerland.⁴⁹

⁴¹ Miranda Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian. A History of Kosovo*, London 1998.

⁴² Burri Sharani et al. *La population kosovare en Suisse*.

⁴³ Shaip Latifi, *Monografia e Degës së lidhjes demokratike të Kosovës në Zvicër*, Zurich 2008.

⁴⁴ Howard Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, London 2000.

⁴⁵ Shkëlzen Maliqi, *After Yugoslavia. Why the Peaceful Movement in Kosovo Failed*, in: Robert Hudson / Glenn Bowman, eds, *After Yugoslavia. Identities and Politics Within the Successor States*, Basingstoke 2012, 43-76.

⁴⁶ Maliqi, *After Yugoslavia*; Denisa Kostovicova, *Kosovo. The Politics of Identity and Space*, London 2005.

⁴⁷ Kola, *The Search for Greater Albania*.

⁴⁸ Maria Koinova, *Diasporas and Secessionist Conflicts. The Mobilization of the Armenian, Albanian and Chechen Diasporas*, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34, no. 2 (2010), 333-356, DOI: 10.1080/01419870.2010.489646; Tim Judah, *The Growing Pains of the Kosovo Liberation Army*, in: Michael Waller / Kyril Drezov / Bülent Gökay, eds, *Kosovo. The Politics of Delusion*, London 2001, 20-24.

⁴⁹ Dahinden / Moret, *Les activités transnationales des associations de migrants*; Burri Sharani et al., *La population kosovare en Suisse*.

Albanian-Speaking Migrants Facing Disillusion in Their Homeland

Though most former activists are still keenly engaged in various transnational activities in economic, political, cultural, and social arenas, they report that they suffer from a lack of recognition and that, generally, they receive an adverse symbolic representation in their homeland. They often feel that the homeland does not accept them as full members of the 'Albanian nation'. In the following paragraphs I summarize the main arguments and complaints expressed by those who participated in my interviews.⁵⁰

Several grievances were summed up by one interviewee who was answering a question about the achievements of the 'diaspora'⁵¹ in Switzerland:

Interviewee: Very good question. The diaspora in Switzerland is currently rather disappointed by its treatment in Kosovo. If we go there, for example for a birth certificate, we have to wait for days at the counter. Yes, somehow, people expected a bit more, because they gave everything. They gave everything; they spared nothing; everything went for the liberation of Kosovo and for its freedom from the communists. And then they thought: yes, at least there, the people will be grateful. [But] when they go there, some of them are laughed at.

Interviewer: Laughed at?

Interviewee: A trench has been dug. Like a *Röstigraben*.⁵² A trench between Kosovo and the diaspora. For the most part, as I've said, the people in the diaspora have a lower level of education than the population there. Yet they generously gave a lot more than they had for Kosovo and they've come off badly. With clothes, for example, very badly. When you go there you feel like ... Well? "The proles are coming here." And since the war we've been sending less money, because we've started to take care of ourselves. You look at your family and you try to educate your children and offer them a better life. But this is not welcomed [over there]: "Hey! You used to send more money before. What's going on?" And I have to say, the people there are ... A lot of people here are complaining that some of the people there have become parasites. They just expect money from here and they are very lazy at working. And that's created a rift, and bad communication as well.'

Interviewees sometimes reported resentment and felt their treatment was unjust because they were never thanked for the huge sacrifices they had made and for their engagement with their homeland. Many former activists also

⁵⁰ Some of these grievances are echoed in Paca, 'Schatzi'; Haxhikadrija, Diaspora as a Driving Force; Iseni, Albanian-Speaking Transnational Populations in Switzerland.

⁵¹ 'Diaspora' is understood here as a 'category of practice', a term used by the research participants themselves, rather than as a 'category of analysis', cf. Rogers Brubaker, Categories of Analysis and Categories of Practice. A Note on the Study of Muslims in European Countries of Immigration, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36, no. 1 (2013), 1-8, DOI: 10.1080/01419870.2012.729674.

⁵² *Röstigraben* is a Swiss-German expression for the perceived cultural and sometimes political boundary between French and German-speaking regions of Switzerland. It literally means 'fried potatoes ditch'.

expressed disappointment that accounts of the 'liberation struggle' in Kosovo do not include their names or acknowledge the activities they undertook. For example, during or after the interviews, many respondents showed me monographs and academic studies on the national struggle written by authors from Kosovo or Albania. These works usually outlined the path to war and the evolution of the conflict, and they might also praise national heroes. But, as several interviewees pointed out, these publications do not mention the roles of the organizations and individuals active in Switzerland. As one interviewee concluded: '[They've] forgotten us, the diaspora.'

Most Albanian-speaking activists in Switzerland said they felt abandoned by the new Kosovan state. In particular, the migrants described the obstacles posed by the administration in Kosovo. Many of them complained that it was difficult to obtain legal documents or to claim rights reserved for Kosovan citizens. At the time of the interviews, migrants were not permitted to vote from abroad in the Kosovan elections. They also had to overcome barriers to investment in Kosovo, partly because there was no facilitation for paying taxes. These obstacles often created a sense of exclusion from the new state. The migrants found it hard to accept this because they believed they had sacrificed an important part of their lives for the national cause.⁵³

Albanian-speaking migrants also complained of the poor image given to them in their homeland. They were simply 'cash cows' providing necessary financial help to their families back home and supporting the Kosovan economy.⁵⁴ Economic dependency on the 'diaspora' and the relative poverty of those living in the homeland are sources of tension. The migrants interviewed were aware that family members and, more generally, the Albanian-speaking population in the homeland viewed them as a source of financial support and they stressed how strong a moral obligation they felt was imposed on them to send back remittances.⁵⁵ They also complained about the tendency of homeland inhabitants to rely on money from the 'diaspora' without making much effort themselves. Some Albanian-speaking migrants also voiced disapproval at the ways the remittances were spent—for example, on luxury products and leisure pursuits they could not themselves afford in Switzerland.⁵⁶

There is another side to the picture. Balkans specialists have highlighted how, during their vacations in the homeland, migrants often display material wealth, and that this creates unease among the locals. This is especially the case

⁵³ Haxhikadrija, *Diaspora As a Driving Force*.

⁵⁴ Paca, *The Discursive Construction of Identity by Kosovo Albanians*, 152.

⁵⁵ Thomas Lacroix, *Le transnationalisme. Espace, temps, politique*, Mémoire d'habilitation, Université de Paris Est 2018; Jorgen Carling, *The Human Dynamics of Migrant Transnationalism*, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31, no. 8 (2008), 1452-1477, DOI: 10.1080/01419870701719097.

⁵⁶ Haxhikadrija, *Diaspora as a Driving Force*.

with the organization of prodigal weddings in the summer.⁵⁷ Some migrants build Western-style houses to demonstrate their 'modernity and progress'.⁵⁸ Investing in Kosovo and displaying their economic achievements may perhaps be the migrants' response to their often inferior status in their country of settlement.⁵⁹ So, while non-migrants may denounce the excessive consumption habits of those who have settled abroad, they nevertheless may apply moral pressure for financial support.⁶⁰

Finally, migrants from Switzerland bear the demeaning label of *Schatzi* in their homeland. *Schatzi* is a German diminutive term meaning 'treasure' or 'darling'. The term has a financial connotation but is also derogatory.⁶¹ An article in the Kosovo media recently criticized the use of this 'humiliating' term, explaining that the 'Albanian elite' resort to it to distinguish themselves—the 'progressive' and 'European' Albanians—from an allegedly more backward 'Albanian diaspora'. The 'elite' recycle demeaning stereotypes used in the countries of immigration to enhance their own status.⁶² Thus, members of the 'Albanian diaspora' are often portrayed as uneducated *Gastarbeiter* who conduct themselves 'in an uncultured and primitive fashion', share a poor clothing style, have a backward rural mentality, and are marginalized in their countries of settlement.⁶³ By 'find[ing] their own "others," whom they perceive as even lower', members of the Kosovan elites condemn migrants to a status inferior to their own on the 'Europeanness scale'.⁶⁴ Given the key financial role of migrants in supporting Kosovo, the country's inhabitants, with their lesser wealth, might also have adopted these degrading stereotypes to save face.⁶⁵

⁵⁷ Robert Pichler, Migration, Ritual and Ethnic Conflict. A Study of Wedding Ceremonies of Albanian Transmigrants from the Republic of Macedonia, *Ethnologia Balkanica* 13 (2009), 211-229.

⁵⁸ Carolin Leutloff-Grandits, New Pasts, Presents and Futures. Time and Space in Family Migrant Networks between Kosovo and Western Europe, in: Hastings Donnan / Madeleine Hurd / Carolin Leutloff-Grandits, eds, Migrating Borders and Moving Times. Temporality and the Crossing of Borders in Europe, Manchester 2017, 121-139; Pichler, Migration, Ritual and Ethnic Conflict, 133.

⁵⁹ Carolin Leutloff-Grandits / Robert Pichler, Areas Blurred. Albanian Migration and the Establishment of Translocal Spaces, in: Harald Heppner / Christian Promitzer, eds, Southeast European Studies in a Globalizing World, Münster 2014, 173-187.

⁶⁰ Lacroix, Le transnationalisme; Pichler, Migration, Ritual and Ethnic Conflict.

⁶¹ Paca, The Discursive Construction of Identity by Kosovo Albanians.

⁶² Adem Ferizaj, 'Shaci' as Another Product of Albanian Orientalism, *Prishtina Insight*, 30 October 2018, <https://prishtinainsight.com/shaci-as-another-product-of-albanian-orientalism/>. All internet sources were accessed on 14 April, 2020.

⁶³ Paca, The Discursive Construction of Identity by Kosovo Albanians; Leutloff-Grandits, New Pasts, Presents and Futures, 136.

⁶⁴ Milica Bakić-Hayden, Nesting Orientalisms. The Case of Former Yugoslavia, *Slavic Review* 54, no. 4 (1995), 917-931, 924, DOI: 10.2307/2501399.

⁶⁵ Pichler, Migration, Ritual and Ethnic Conflict.

Several activists I spoke to were conscious of the *Schatzi* label and the negative stereotypes implying backwardness. One woman related a brief encounter she had had with a friend in Prishtina while on vacation there:

'You know, I've lived longer in Switzerland than in Kosovo. I arrived when I was 16—now, I will be 37 in May. I go there once a year, for a holiday. I'd say there are too many changes in their mentality. It's not ... only when I see Prishtina. It's not Prishtina; it's nothing to do with Prishtina. I went to the dentist. Later I met a friend at the Grand Hotel. I couldn't recognize the streets. I said: "But what did you do?" [She replied,] "Nothing, it was always like that." I said, "No, it wasn't like that. There used to be a lot of space, greenery there. Now there are only cars, run-down streets, etc.". [...] [When the interviewee had lived in Kosovo] the houses were no higher than two floors. They all had a garden; it was magnificent, magnificent. When I saw this, you know, I wept. "Oh, you're too emotional, I can see that you're a — —," because they call us *Schatzi*. I said, "No, I'm not emotional, I'm not a *Schatzi*, but still ..."

In this encounter, the narrator is 'othered' as a *Schatzi*. She is considered 'too emotional' and backward-looking to understand the realities of present-day Kosovan society.

In this way, former activists often complained about the inferior symbolic position they were accorded in their homeland. They bemoaned being forgotten and neglected by the Kosovan state, despite the enormous 'sacrifices' they had made for the national cause. They also felt sore because they believed they were valued only for their wealth and because Kosovo residents often considered them retrograde.

Transnational Strategies to Improve the Activists' Position

Following on from such comments, I set out to understand how former activists in Switzerland responded to the perceived lack of recognition and the negative stereotypes they had in their homeland. I used Andreas Wimmer's model to analyse their narratives, taking these as a resource, or as 'cultural stuff', they were employing to redraw boundaries to improve their symbolic position.⁶⁶ Most of the memories shared were framed according to models of narratives produced in Kosovo. Some, however, opposed or departed from the Kosovo representations and were developing into new 'diasporic memories'.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Wimmer, *Ethnic Boundary Making*; Barth, *Introduction*.

⁶⁷ Lacroix / Fiddian-Qasimiyeh, *Refugee and Diaspora Memories*, 687.

*Expanding the 'Albanian Nation'.
Transnationalizing the Mobilization in Switzerland*

The first strategy that former activists pursued was to extend the boundaries of the 'Albanian nation' to include its members living abroad. They expanded the shared narratives of the 'liberation' related in Kosovo by adding whole chapters of their homeland's history set outside Yugoslavia. This strategy was evident both in my interviews and in several publications, promoted both in Switzerland and Kosovo, dealing with migrants' organizations and parties, also individual migrants, who were active on behalf of the national cause in the 1980s and 1990s in Switzerland.

For example, former LPK militants strove to expand the heroic narrative of the 'liberation struggle' told in Kosovo to include their own activism in Switzerland. In Kosovo, the postwar narrative of the liberation struggle developed among KLA followers created a new 'social hierarchy' which celebrated those who participated in the war and stigmatized those who did not.⁶⁸ Former LPK activists in Switzerland with links to the KLA felt doubly excluded from this dominant narrative of armed resistance. To start with, they felt that they should have been thanked for their engagement and were indignant that the memories shared in Kosovo ignored or downplayed the role of the Albanian-speaking population outside former Yugoslavia. Secondly, they chafed under the new hierarchy in which KLA soldiers were given higher status than the LPK members in Switzerland who had supported Kosovo during the war, for example, by collecting funds for the KLA or recruiting KLA fighters. To relieve this double burden and expand the boundaries of inclusion, LPK activists underlined the leading role played by their own organization. After all, it was their organization that had founded the KLA. They stressed the fact that most KLA founders and the early decision-makers were living in Switzerland. Concerning the foundation of the KLA, a former LPK activist remarked:

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

Former LPK activists sought to transnationalize the KLA to include its members and allies living outside the Balkans. They tended to describe their engagement during the war, performed from Switzerland, as a personal sacrifice, the

⁶⁸ Isabel Ströhle, Kosovo Liberation Army Veterans' Politics and Contentious Citizenship in Post-War Kosovo, in: Srđa Pavlovic / Marko Živković, eds, *Transcending Fratricide. Political Mythologies, Reconciliations, and the Uncertain Future in the Former Yugoslavia*, Baden-Baden 2013, 243-264, 250.

importance of which was comparable or even superior to direct participation in the fight. A former journalist of the *Voice of Kosovo*, an LPK-affiliated newspaper published in Switzerland but distributed internationally, explained his decision in 1997-1998 not to return to Kosovo to participate in the conflict:

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

This interviewee attempted to extend the category of 'liberation fighter' to include those who did not directly engage in combat but still, as he claims, 'sacrificed themselves for the nation'. He sought to prove his worth by aligning himself with one of the core values of postwar Kosovo: sacrifice.⁶⁹ This is characteristic of how former LPK activists contested their perceived exclusion from national memory in Kosovo: they were members of the 'diaspora' but also supporters of the armed resistance although they had no opportunity to engage directly in the conflict. They sought to enhance their status in Kosovo by extending national boundaries to include activists in Switzerland in the dominant heroic narrative of armed resistance. All former activists I interviewed adopted similar strategies. They emphasized the crucial importance of what they were doing abroad on behalf of their homeland, and they wanted to be accepted as leading members of the 'nation'.

*Crossing the Boundary. Integrating Oneself into
the 'Albanian Nation' in Kosovo*

Another narrative strategy some migrants adopted was to cross the boundary that excluded 'Albanians in the diaspora' by including themselves directly in the 'Albanian nation' of Kosovo. Unlike those who used the previous strategy, these interlocutors did not try to transnationalize the 'nation'. Their central strategy was to reintegrate themselves into the 'Albanian nation' in their homeland by declaring close relationships with celebrated heroes and organizations there.

Several activists from right across the political spectrum adopted this strategy. For example, some interviewees who had engaged in activism in Switzerland in the 1980s aimed to integrate into this particular period of the mainstream narrative conveyed in Kosovo: the pre-KLA years of the 1980s. In its rendering of these years of 'heroic resistance', praise is focused on the prewar

⁶⁹ Isabel Ströhle, *The Politics of Reintegration and War Commemoration. The Case of the Kosovo Liberation Army*, *Südosteuropa* 58, no. 4 (2010), 478-519.

generations of freedom fighters.⁷⁰ Interviewees active in the 1980s often consciously tried to integrate into the generation of the early ‘martyrs fallen for the nation’ by demonstrating their proximity to these heroes. Several interviewees had been close to these ‘martyrs’ and had known them as friends, relatives, neighbours or fellow prison inmates. One former activist who arrived in Switzerland in the mid-1980s explained:

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

This interviewee sought to benefit from his relationship with these ‘heroes’ of the 1980s. In his mind, official recognition of these martyrs also lent official recognition to his own engagement, as he too was a member of their group and shared their determination to make a personal sacrifice for the fight.

Several activists of the 1980s had recently promoted public events or issued publications in Switzerland (and sometimes Kosovo) to commemorate the struggle of the 1980s.⁷¹ They were also seeking to capitalize on their proximity to ‘heroes’ to gain respectability and esteem. They had the opportunity to improve their standing, associating with their comrades in arms of the 1980s who had achieved a privileged status in Kosovo.

Other interviewees demonstrated proximity to Adem Jashari, a farmer who died in his home along with his extended family while fighting off the Serbian forces in 1998. Jashari was much celebrated as a national hero in the postwar years.⁷² LDK members chose this association to parade the claim that their movement trained the first ‘Albanian men’ to fight in Kosovo. These men were a group of Kosovo Albanian former policemen and officers loyal to the LDK prime minister in exile Bujar Bukoshi. They were sent to train in Albania in 1990 and 1992 to prepare themselves for the eventual national struggle, years before the KLA emerged.⁷³ Despite their nonviolent discourses, the LDK interviewees in Switzerland sought to associate themselves with these acts of armed resistance, although they had played no direct role in them. They portrayed

⁷⁰ Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers, *The Bequest of Illegalja. Contested Memories and Moralities in Contemporary Kosovo*, *Nationalities Papers* 41, no. 6 (2013), 953-970, DOI: 10.1080/00905992.2013.767792.

⁷¹ For example: Ismet Rashiti, *Rrëfandë lirie*, Prishtina 2010.

⁷² Anna Di Lellio / Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers, *The Legendary Commander. The Construction of an Albanian Master-Narrative in Post-War Kosovo*, *Nations and Nationalism* 12, no. 3 (2006), 513-529, DOI: 10.1111/j.1469-8129.2006.00252.x: 513.

⁷³ Tim Judah, *Kosovo. What Everyone Needs to Know*, Oxford 2008, 78.

Adem Jashari as one of their own, contesting the widespread image of him as a KLA leader. As one LDK man explained:

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

By claiming that the national paragon Adem Jashari was an adherent of the LDK, these speakers placed their movement at the centre of the resistant 'Albanian nation'. Likewise, they increased the ranks of LDK members like themselves in the national pantheon.

When former activists used their proximity to postwar Kosovo heroes to improve their image, they were not trying to extend the boundary of national inclusion transnationally or to question boundaries produced in Kosovo. Rather, they were aspiring to include those who lived outside the homeland in the 'national we' acknowledged in Kosovo. This strategy was only available to former activists who had had contact with Kosovo's 'heroes'. In many other cases, the reconciliation of past activism with specific postwar discourses constituted a rather challenging task.

Inverting the Hierarchical Ordering. Elevating the 'Diaspora Albanians'

Some former activists had developed a strategy that specifically challenged the stereotypes of backwardness thrust on the emigré population by demonstrations that 'Albanians in the homeland' had lower standing than those in Switzerland. This strategy of 'normative inversion' sought to reverse the hierarchy of the two categories. Praise was given to the allegedly retrograde and traditional members of the 'diaspora' instead of to the 'modern Albanians' in the homeland.⁷⁴ One woman activist disparaged the recent improvement of the status of women in Kosovo:

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

⁷⁴ Wimmer, *Elementary Strategies of Ethnic Boundary Making*.

This respondent did not challenge the dichotomy between backwardness and modernity that, in 'Kosovo', separates 'Albanians' residing in the homeland from their counterparts in Switzerland. Instead, she added a new intersecting category of difference based on essentialized discourses of gender, distinguishing between two forms of feminine behaviour. She claimed that Albanian-speaking women in Kosovo have recently adopted modes of behaviour that display superficiality and lack of feminine morality. But she stuck to the traditional values she learnt as a child in the 1970s and 1980s, even though these are considered outmoded in Kosovo now. She emphasized the importance of the core Albanian national value of *besa*—keeping one's word—and attempted to invert the hierarchy by condemning the women in Kosovo nowadays for an immorality caused by their abandonment of the older Albanian traditions.⁷⁵ This criticism strengthened her claim to be a true 'Albanian'. Although I did not hear this kind of essentializing discourse of femininity often in my interviews, other researchers in Switzerland have noted similar arguments made in response to stigmatization. They have observed that young second-generation men from former Yugoslavia appear to praise more conventional feminine behaviour as part of an attempt to invert the hierarchical ordering that allocates them a subordinate role in Swiss society as mere 'Albanians'.⁷⁶

Other interviewees employed versions of this strategy to demonstrate the moral superiority of their group of activists in Switzerland over other categories of Albanian-speakers in Kosovo, particularly the new elite and the current political leaders. The criteria for this differentiation were the perceived values and virtues that accompanied their past engagement in 'the cause', such as solidarity, sacrifice, honesty and hard work. These they compared with the alleged selfishness, corruption, venality and opportunism of Kosovan rulers today. One long-time LDK leader explained how the monetary fund of the Kosovo government worked during the 1990s:

'The government was constituted after 1991 and went into exile in Germany, in Stuttgart. It controlled the Fund together with our compatriots in Switzerland, where the money had to go. With all the mechanisms that exist in a state today, there are problems—corruption—but, at the time, no one ever thought anything bad would be done with the money. Every activist, every Albanian, tried to help and didn't do anything bad. It was like that, ten years ago.'

⁷⁵ The concept of *besa* was a central component of the Kanun, the ancient Albanian customary law. It was a form of social contract based on honour. In the 19th century, the Albanian national movement addressed *besa* as a key value and principle of the Albanian nation. The term has been used and interpreted differently over time, in response to circumstances. Today, *besa* retains its connotation of national unity and 'honour', and is especially alive in rural Kosovo. Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers, Applying an Anthropological Perspective to Social Contracts in Albania, Geneva 2010.

⁷⁶ Kerstin Duemmler / Janine Dahinden / Joëlle Moret, Gender Equality as 'Cultural Stuff'. Ethnic Boundary Work in a Classroom in Switzerland, *Diversities* 12, no. 1 (2010), 19-37.

In this passage, the interviewee was constructing a commonly held hierarchy, ranking the current 'corrupt Kosovo leaders' who mismanage the new state well below the 'honest activists' of the 1990s in Switzerland, who 'only thought about supporting the national cause'. These efforts by former activists to improve their position by inverting the hierarchy both acknowledged and strengthened the boundaries perceived between the 'Albanians in Kosovo' and the 'diaspora'.

*Contracting the Boundaries.
Crafting the Narratives of the 'Albanians in Switzerland'*

Several interviewees appeared to be developing a narrative that singled out the Albanian-speaking population in Switzerland as a group quite distinct from the 'Albanians in Kosovo'. For example, interviewees sometimes adopted pronominal forms that differentiated between 'them in Kosovo' and 'us in Switzerland'. One former president of the Swiss branch of the LDK explained postwar relationships between 'Albanians' in Switzerland and those in the homeland in these terms:

'Now, it isn't like it was before. Now, they don't need much from us anymore. Our goals are to promote our culture—promote integration. A lot of associations and many sections have sports clubs that organize a range of activities, like football or other sports.'

In fact, numerous Albanian-speaking migrants in Switzerland have reoriented their engagement, taking it away from associations in their country of origin and giving it to Swiss-based organizations that promote cultural and sport activities for the Albanian-speaking population locally.

In the interviews, several former activists tried to make the story of migrant mobilization in Switzerland more inclusive. Turning away from arguments over competing historical narratives in Kosovo, they preferred to focus on how contributions to the cause from Switzerland worked together. One man, active in several organizations since the end of the 1980s, summarized:

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

Such narrators opted to praise 'the Albanians' in Switzerland for their initiative, proactivity and creativity. They preferred to celebrate commonalities and offer a story of the past that unified rather than divided migrants.

These migrants appeared to need an alternative narrative to replace those told in Kosovo—one that better suited the post-independence situation of 'Albanians in Switzerland'. It was not fully clear if this need to establish a boundary between themselves and their former fellows in the homeland always arose from disappointment at their position there or if it was a consequence of the ever-closer ties they had developed with Switzerland. Maybe both. Several interviewees did attribute their decreasing engagement and loss of interest in their homeland to disappointment at relationships with Kosovo. As a result, they said, they preferred to concentrate their attention on their lives in Switzerland. One former activist linked his retreat from Kosovan political life and his renewed focus on his family in Switzerland to his exclusion quite explicitly:

'I don't see, with the new parties, so much democracy, so much analysis, as was the case earlier [in the LPK in the 1980s and 1990s]. [...] But with [politicians] in Kosovo now? We [Kosovo Albanians abroad] are no longer interesting to them. And I said, "If we're no longer interesting and if we can't decide anything, then I won't be active. I'll see ... I'll try to make my children know me better." I was always travelling. We've got two sons. They're 17 and 19. M. [a daughter] was born after the war. I've spent more time with M. but not with my sons.'

Many of the former activists I interviewed recalled how they neglected their families, jobs, and education during the years of engagement. The national cause came first. Along with their resentment of the current situation in their country of origin, they conveyed a desire to refocus their priorities and end or reduce their involvement in transnational politics.

But others explained their reorientation towards Switzerland as the result of a decision not to return to their homeland to live. In the postwar years, many Albanian speakers in Switzerland realized that they could not reconstruct their life in Kosovo after the 'liberation'. Instead, they resolved to concentrate on improving their own and their family's lives in Switzerland. These new priorities may explain their use of a new definition and image of themselves as 'Albanians in Switzerland', one more attuned to their needs. A way of conceiving the 'Albanians' in Switzerland around a distinct narrative of the past appears to have gone hand in hand with the emergence of new 'Albanian' associations and organizations able to develop discourses that are critical of both the home and the settlement country.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Iseni, *Albanian-Speaking Transnational Populations in Switzerland*.

The creation of these separate narratives has tended to bring out some more or less developed forms of a 'diasporic memory'.⁷⁸ As the former activists experienced exclusion and derogatory images in both Kosovo and Switzerland, they began to construct a self-image that distinguished them from both their societies of origin and from that of their country of settlement. This type of narrative, however, was not widely shared among the interviewees. It was not imaginable for most men and women who had made immense 'sacrifices' for their homeland to accept rejection from the 'Albanian nation' in Kosovo. In most cases, they preferred to transnationalize current Kosovan memories or directly include themselves in the 'Albanian nation' in Kosovo if able to negotiate this second option.

Conclusion

This article has highlighted the sense of disappointment Albanian-speaking former activists in Switzerland feel about the symbolic categorization accorded them in their homeland in the postwar period. It has explored the boundary-making strategies they have adopted to improve their transnational situation. My analysis has focused on the way these migrants use their memories of intensive engagement in their nation's struggle and their past roles as activists and leaders within it to improve the transnational symbolic position they have in their homeland. A boundary-making approach to their construction of memory revealed ways that narratives of the past can be used to draw and negotiate symbolic boundaries in the present. These strategies include: (1) transnationalizing the 'Albanian nation' as it is imagined in Kosovo; (2) self-inclusion in the 'Albanian nation' in Kosovo itself; (3) inverting the hierarchical ordering between 'Albanians' in the homeland and those in Switzerland, deepening the gap between the two sides; and (4) envisaging the 'Albanians in Switzerland' as a separate, unified group.

These narratives illustrate two types of migrant memory—the 'exilic' and the 'diasporic'. When migrants transnationalize the 'Albanian nation' or include themselves in the 'Albanian nation' in Kosovo, it is a way of denying their symbolic rejection by the 'Albanian nation' in Kosovo and of dissolving the boundary created by the Kosovo narratives. When migrants invert the hierarchical order of 'Albanians' or imagine themselves as a separate, unified group, they recognize that there is a boundary between the groups and revise the history of the 'Albanians in Switzerland' to adapt to their situation there. With these competing visions, former activists manage to deal with their place in their societies of origin and of settlement, with their projects and hopes.

⁷⁸ Lacroix / Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, *Refugee and Diaspora Memories*, 687.

My analysis of interviews with migrant Albanian-speaking former activists within a boundary-making framework revealed that they countered symbolic exclusion in their homeland by crafting two different versions of national belonging: in one version, they yearned for the homeland and clung to the 'Albanian nation' as it is imagined in Kosovo; in the other, they invented a distinct form of 'Albanianness' for themselves in Switzerland.

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