Published in Global Networks 5, issue 2, 191-208, 2005
which should be used for any reference to this work
(The definitive version is available at www.blackwell-synergy.com)

Contesting transnationalism? Lessons from the study of Albanian migration networks from former Yugoslavia

JANINE DAHINDEN

Abstract *Recent studies have questioned the concept of transnationalism, showing that transnational ties do not always have the weight attributed to them in the first studies conducted on the topic. Using a case study of social networks of Albanian migrants from former Yugoslavia, in this article I discuss the significance of transnational ties in the context of: the decision to migrate; social support networks of Albanians in Switzerland; and reintegration on return. The results raise questions about the factors that determine the existence and form of transnational social spaces as well as the social relevance of transnational ties. While the transnational perspective brings interesting insights to the study of migration processes, it is argued that transnational ties and social relations must not be presumed but rather carefully analysed, and that structural as well as cultural aspects must be introduced in this analysis.*

More than a decade has passed since social anthropologists such as Glick Schiller et al. (1992, 1995) introduced the notion of transmigration to academic discourse. No doubt, they did not anticipate that they would spawn one of the most popular concepts in current migration research. Most social scientists working today on transnationalism would agree that migration is often circular in nature rather than irreversible. Social relations are not bound to fixed places and migration decisions are not separated from processes of adaptation to a new environment. During the migration process there is the possibility that new interdependencies are built up (Portes 2003; Pries 1999; Smith 2001; Tarrius 2002 among others). Hand in hand with studies on transnationalism, we have witnessed a growing interest in the analysis of migration networks. Since the 1960s, researchers have been emphasizing that, by studying the links between migrants and non-migrants as a complex web of social roles and interpersonal relationships, personal networks can be understood as conduits of information as well as social and financial assistance, thereby shaping and sustaining migration (Boyd 1989; Massey et al. 1993). The central idea underlying the popularity of migration networks in recent studies (implicitly or explicitly) is that they constitute a pool for different kinds of resources. I would even argue that there exists something like scientific *mot d'ordre* whereby migration networks constitute a form

of social capital (Bourdieu 1980, 1986: 248; see also Portes 1998) that enhances and facilitates migration by decreasing costs and risks. This perception of migration networks as a form of social capital also underlies assumptions about the existence of transnational social spaces. Generally speaking, the idea of transnationalism emerged from the realization that immigrants maintain ties with their countries of origin, making home and host society a single arena for social action by moving back and forth across international borders and between different cultures and social systems, and by exploiting transnational relations as a form of social capital for their living strategies (Brettell 2000).

Much empirical research on transnationalism has helped to clarify some conceptual and theoretical issues. These studies have put ideas about transnationalism into perspective, sometimes even questioning the concept as a whole, and the initial euphoria has been replaced by a certain sobriety. The most important result of current research has been the demonstration that only a minority of migrants are involved in transnational activities. In other words, transnational ties do not have the weight that might have been expected from the early studies (for instance Al-Ali and Koser 2002; Guarnizo et al. 2003; Portes 2003; Wimmer 2004).

These results raise several questions: have we already reached the end of a 'new' concept and does transnationalism lack the importance that has been attributed to it? And even more interesting, which factors determine the existence and form of transnational social spaces when and where they do exist? In this article, I look for answers to these questions using empirical material from a study of the social networks of Albanian migrants from former Yugoslavia. The first section gives an overview of the history of Albanian migration from former Yugoslavia. It is followed by a presentation of the research design employed to establish the basis for understanding the significance of transnationalism. The third section describes the social networks of Albanian migrants from former Yugoslavia and discusses the importance of transnational ties within these networks. Finally, some general conclusions plead for a more differentiated analysis of social networks and the functioning of social capital in order to grasp the mechanisms and conditions of transnationalism.

Albanian migration from former Yugoslavia

Albanians from former Yugoslavia are in this article defined as people speaking Albanian, whether they originally came from Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia or Montenegro.[1] The underlying reason for this definition is that studies show that language is the most important criterion for the construction of ethnicity in the case of Albanians (Draper 1997). Albanian-speaking migrants are now one of the most important immigrant groups in Switzerland in terms of both numbers and public debate. Lacking exact statistics, estimates show between 95,000 and 200,000 Albanian-speaking migrants from former Yugoslavia currently live in Switzerland. Three-quarters of them are Albanians from Kosovo, and the rest are from Macedonia, Montenegro or Serbia (Federal Office for Statistics 2002; Maillard and Leuenberger 1999). Albanians from former Yugoslavia have been working in Switzerland since the late 1960s, as Yugoslavia has been a traditional recruitment region for Switzerland's so-called guest

workers. Until the 1980s Albanian guest workers were mostly young men without families. They arrived from rural and poor regions; they worked mainly in unqualified jobs and often lived in barracks with other foreign workers. Their objective was mainly to earn enough money to overcome economic hardship at home and to return after a few years (Von Aarburg 2002).

From the 1980s on, the political and economic situation in former Yugoslavia in general, and specifically in Kosovo, deteriorated drastically. In the aftermath of Tito's death in 1981 and the abolition of Kosovo's autonomous status in 1989, there was political unrest and emigration pressure increased. However, with a shift in immigration policies in Switzerland, and specifically with the implementation of the 'three-circles' model in 1991, the recruitment of workers from former Yugoslavia was no longer possible: these immigrants were now categorized as members of the third circle and had no rights to obtain a work permit (Swiss Federal Council 1991). As of that moment, immigration into Switzerland from former Yugoslavia was only possible by seeking asylum or through family reunification. Confronted not only with economic hardship, but also with increasing political unrest at home, the guest workers slowly abandoned their plans to return and decided instead, whenever possible, to bring their families to Switzerland. As a consequence there was a steady increase in the Albanian population from former Yugoslavia in Switzerland through chain migration. At the same time, politically motivated immigration started. Members of the nationalist elite among Albanian students were increasingly persecuted and forced to leave Kosovo (Malcolm 1999). Europe and above all Switzerland, with its already established Albanian diaspora, witnessed the first asylum seekers from former Yugoslavia. The civil wars within the different republics of ex-Yugoslavia and the outbreak of the war in Kosovo in 1998 led to a phase of mass emigration and immigration. Of all the asylum seekers in Switzerland between 1992 and 1999, 42 per cent were from former Yugoslavia, many Kosovars among them (Efionayi-Mäder et al. 2001). It should be noted that after the war and in the context of return programmes, a significant number of asylum seekers did return. The group under examination in this article is therefore a mixture of people from very different contexts. Some of them left to escape poverty and political instability, and some of them were forced out by nationalism and open ethnic conflict.

Analysis of Albanian personal migration networks: research design

Although network analysis has a long tradition in urban anthropology (Bott [1957] 1971; Mitchell 1969; Rogers and Vertovec 1995), few studies attempt to grasp in detail the forms that migrant social networks take. In addition, despite the potential variability in the form and composition of migrant networks, scholars tend to treat networks exclusively as sets of kin (and sometimes friends), excluding all other forms of social relations (Gurak and Caces 1992). To overcome these weaknesses, the present research used a methodological procedure specifically designed to address the detailed questions of form and function of migrant networks.

Network studies generally distinguish between personal or egocentric networks and the complete or total networks of a whole group or society. If we select one or

more key persons within the total network and try to understand the social entourage of this person, we speak of a personal or egocentric network. Thus, the network of an actor consists of all persons with whom he or she has a direct relation. Of course, network analysis focuses not only on the attributes of the people in the network, but also on the characteristics of their linkages as means of explaining the behaviour of people involved in them (Burt 1982: 12–13; Granovetter 1973; Schweizer 1996). These considerations guided the elaboration of the research design. I identified 'key persons' who were considered as interview partners, their 'reference persons', and the kind and quality of relationships between the two sets.

I concentrated on three moments of the migration process: the decision to migrate; the social support networks of Albanians in Switzerland; and the role of social relations for reintegration after return. The intention was not only to grasp the form and composition of these Albanian migration networks, but also to study which persons in these networks give what kind of support, or which persons take on what roles. Interviews were conducted with 40 Albanian-speaking migrants from former Yugoslavia in Switzerland, and 11 returned Albanians in Kosovo, in line with a 'multi-sited' ethnography (Marcus 1995).

The key persons interviewed were heterogeneous in terms of gender, origin, time of arrival, type of residence permit and working situation (Table 1). The sample in Switzerland consists of 24 men and 16 women, most of them from Kosovo,[2] but some from Macedonia and Serbia. Among the interviewees there were asylum seekers as well as guest workers; some lived in precarious situations with uncertain legal status or inadequate employment. Among the interviewed returnees were six single men, three single women and two male/female couples. Eight of this group returned from Switzerland, three from Germany and one family from the Netherlands. All returnees spent between two-and-a-half and 14 years in the foreign country.

The network data were gathered according to a procedure developed in traditional network analyses, an adaptation of the single-question instrument previously developed and tested in network analysis (Diaz-Bone 1997; McCallister and Fischer 1978). It is characteristic of the analysis of egocentric networks that the reference persons of the network will be generated with a specific set of questions (the so-called 'generators of names'), representing a choice of typical situations and interactions. The concepts of migration decision and social support were operationalized using different questions. The decision-making process was divided into ten aspects, including questions about the person responsible for the decision to migrate as well as for the choice of a specific country of destination. Further questions were designed to identify the persons who were contacted during the journey or who gave the migrants some kind of support while migrating. The concept of social support was operationalized using five dimensions: emotional, economic and instrumental support, counselling and social activities. Again, for each dimension, a specific set of questions was formulated with the aim of gathering the names of persons who offered support in each specific situation of interaction. For instance, to ascertain who was involved in providing instrumental support, I asked for persons who helped in finding a job or an apartment, or for persons who provided some help for integration in Switzerland.

Table 1: Profile of the key persons interviewed in Switzerland

	men		women		all	
Origin						
Kosovo	21	87%	13	81%	34	86%
Macedonia	1	5%	2	12%	3	12%
Serbia	2	8%	1	7%	3	12%
Total	***24***	***100%***	***16***	***100%***	***40***	***100%***
Year of arrival						
After 1997	9	37%	5	31%	14	35%
Between 1990 and 1997	4	17%	9	56%	13	33%
Between 1980 and 1989	7	29%	2	13%	9	22%
Before 1980	4	17%			4	10%
Total	***24***	***100%***	***16***	***100%***	***40***	***100%***
Type of Permit						
Asylum seekers or temporarily admitted persons	10	42%	6	37%	16	40%
Annual residence permit	2	8%	4	25%	6	15%
Permanent residence permit	9	37%	6	38%	15	37%
Swiss passport	3	13%			3	8%
Total	***24***	***100%***	***16***	***100%***	***40***	***100%***
Work situation						
Is working	13	54%	8	50%	21	53%
Is without work	11	46%	8	50%	19	47%
Total	***24***	***100%***	***16***	***100%***	***40***	***100%***
Age (average)		33		30		32

In a second stage, background information about the mentioned reference persons was collected. I asked for place of residence, age, gender, profession, educational level, nationality and country of origin. Assessing the quality of the relationship between the persons mentioned and key persons was also of interest: thus, I asked questions about the length of the relation as well as the intensity and frequency of contact (for critical methodological reflections see Marsden 1990). At the same time as gathering network data, semi-structured interviews were conducted in order to understand the migration history of the key persons. All the data were gathered through intensive fieldwork and face-to-face-interviews done by myself.[3]

The role of transnational ties in decision-making processes

What significances do transnational ties have in the decision-making processes of Albanian migrants? Three main moments involving transnational ties can be identified. First, transnational ties appear in the selection process among potential migrants and have an impact on who leaves the household and who does not. Second, the migrants exploit transnational relations to realize their migration projects, especially in requests for financial support. Finally, it can be observed that transnational relations direct migrants to destination countries where acquaintances or family members are living. On the question of why they chose Switzerland as a destination, 34 of the 40 respondents mentioned at least one person already established there. These elements – selection, realization and channelization of the migration movement – can be described in terms of chain migration as described for different parts of the world (among others see Massey et al. 1987). The Albanian case presented here is therefore in line with studies elsewhere and, on first view, does not present any great surprises. It is, however, worth examining in more detail to find the nuances and reveal new insights.

Some factors may enhance or decrease the social relevance of transnational ties for the migration decision. Having (or not having) a transnational relation to another person tells us nothing about the social relevance of this relation. It might be useful to illustrate this point with some examples collected during the fieldwork. This will allow us to revisit our analysis of the role of transnational ties in migration decision-making. My first example shows the importance of cultural values with regard to transnational relations. Mrs Berisha lives in Kosovo in the patrilocal joint household of her husband who lives and works in Switzerland. She lives with three of her husband's brothers and her mother-in-law. As her husband's three brothers are all single, she is the only woman in the household apart from her mother-in-law. The idea that a young woman is needed in the household for reproductive and other 'female' tasks is widespread among the members of the household. For this reason, Mrs Berisha did not follow her husband to Switzerland, although she would have liked to, but stayed at home. But when one of her brothers-in-law got married and his wife moved to the common household, Mrs Berisha joined her husband in Switzerland, as the young wife of her brother-in-law could now fulfil the household tasks. In this example, the selection process – in other words, who among the available household members leaves the household and when – was highly influenced by representations and values in relation to gender roles. These representations were dominant insofar as Mrs Berisha did not go to Switzerland with her husband and, moreover, it was not one of Mr Berisha's brothers but his wife who left the household next. The patterns of meaning underlying the transnational relations between the husband in Switzerland and the members of the household in Kosovo clearly had an impact on the social relevance of these relations. Social networks are always 'networks of meaning' (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994; White 1992: 65). Specific cultural values and cognitive patterns will appear in the structure of transnational networks and have an impact on the outcome, for instance, of migration decision processes.

My next example tempers somewhat this generalized view of the importance of transnational ties in the choice of a destination country. Clearly, not every contact appearing in the social network of potential migrants and located in a different place than the migrant has the potential to channel a particular migrant to a given destination country. This 'non-channelling effect' was found in particular among asylum seekers from Kosovo who came to Switzerland during the 1990s. Although the asylum seekers had a certain destination country in mind, because acquaintances or relatives lived there, they often disembarked in another country because of unexpected events during the journey, restrictive admission policies or the unpredictability of smugglers. Even when these potentially channelling transnational relations are of a strong and intensive character (mainly family members), external forces ruled the 'channelling capital' out. To maintain a transnational relation does therefore not automatically mean that the reference person in question can successfully channel the migrant in the country where he or she is living.

Some migrants actively and strategically exploit the social capital inherent in transnational relations whereas others do not. This seems to be the case with Albanian migrants confronted with the outbreak of economic and political crises in their region of origin and with restrictive immigration policies. Metaphorically speaking, we could say that Albanian asylum seekers have awoken 'sleeping' social capital. They contacted relatives or acquaintances living in a foreign country during their journey. The main objective of the contacts was to discuss the migration project and to ask for financial support. This behaviour was not observed among guest workers, although transnational ties also appeared in their networks. They left former Yugoslavia earlier and it was easy to enter Switzerland and to find work. In other words, it was only under certain circumstances that transnational ties acquired a social significance as a form of social capital.

The last example also shows the need for differentiation in this debate. There is another set of transnational ties in social networks that have not been discussed until now. Some 15 interviewees – 14 of them asylum seekers – said that during their journey it was mainly people they did not know who had given them support. This support took different forms: people gave financial help, let them sleep in their houses, provided them with important information or just let them use their telephone to contact another person. The migrants received this specific help almost exclusively from other Albanian-speakers they had only got to know during the journey. In the literature, the term 'bounded solidarity' has been advanced to describe this kind of phenomenon, and it appears to be an important source of social capital (Jansen 2000; Portes 1998). This kind of solidarity is based on the mobilization of collective representations and on a process of 'we-group' formation and therefore a result of social inclusion and exclusion (Weber 1995: 140–4; Wicker 1997). In cases of political crisis and growing nationalism, a kind of 'bounded solidarity' has emerged that is directly linked to the criterion of 'being or speaking Albanian' and to the (temporary)[4] idea of an Albanian community. Within such boundaries, ideas about mutual solidarity and reciprocity have been activated, and have direct consequences for social action. These Albanians (mostly strangers) who supported the migrants during their journey in Albania, in Montenegro, in Italy or at the Swiss border

represent dynamic and fugitive elements within the networks, as they appear only once during the migration process. Nevertheless, they are very important as they sometimes determine the success or failure of the migration project. In investigating transnationalism it can therefore be valuable to look for fleeting and dynamic network elements as well as strong or family ties.

Transnationalism in Switzerland?

While the role of transnational ties in decision networks at least partially corresponded to expectations arising from the available literature, the support networks of Albanian migrants in Switzerland reveal some unusual features: transnational relations have very little importance within social support networks and transnational social spaces are almost non-existent. The total social support network of the 40 key people interviewed in Switzerland consisted of a total of 317 reference persons. In other words, 317 people gave some kind of support to the Albanian immigrants (see Table 2).

Table 2: General features of the social support network of Albanian migrants in Switzerland

	Number of cases	Percentage
Place of residence of the reference person		
Switzerland	276	87%
Of which in the canton of Zurich	*227*	*82%*
Former Yugoslavia	27	9%
Germany	8	3%
Austria	1	0.3%
Other place	5	2%
Total	***317***	***100%***
Duration of the relation		
Knew this person before migration	180	57%
Got to know this person in Switzerland	137	43%
Total	***317***	***100%***
Nationality of the reference person		
Albanian*	228	72%
Serb	1	0.3%
Swiss**	74	23%
Italian	4	1%
Others	10	3%
Total	***317***	***100%***

n (ego) = 40, the key persons interviewed mentioned at least 4 and a maximum 14 reference persons, on average, 7.93.
* Being of Albanian nationality means here 'Albanian'-speaking; nationality is therefore ascribed.
**The category 'Swiss' does not include the naturalized Albanians; they appear in the category 'Albanian'.

But what significance do transnational relationships have in this total social support network? First, data suggest that on the level of everyday life and daily interaction, Albanian migrants developed a strong local orientation. Over three-quarters of the 317 reference persons lived in Switzerland. Moreover, they often lived in the same canton as the interviewees. Only a minority of the reference group lived outside Switzerland at the time of the interviews, and even fewer (9 per cent, 27 cases) were in former Yugoslavia. In short, social support comes from the same canton of residence. Even though the questions asked theoretically allowed for identifying spatially dispersed persons, we discovered highly localized networks.

Table 3: Functions and characteristics of the reference persons

	Dimension of social support[1, 2]				
	Advisor	Emotional support	Economic support	Instrumental support	Social activities
Functions and characteristics of the reference persons					
Relatives	-.018	**.31** *(-.97 to .95)*	**.27** *(-.38 to .41)*	**-.42** *(-.68 to .74)*	**.22** *(-.82 to .75)*
Acquaintances/friends	-.016	**-.11** *(-.80 to .78)*	**-.18** *(-.31 to .50)*	**.15** *(-.56 to .90)*	.055
Male reference persons	-.045	**-.19** *(-.90 to .92)*	**.16** *(-.43 to .36)*	.095 *(-.78 to .65)*	.002
Female reference persons	.045	**.19** *(-.92 to .90)*	**-.16** *(-.36 to .43)*	-.095	-.002
Albanian reference persons	.025	**.39** *(-.61 to .63)*	**.17** *(-.64 to .25)*	**-.46** *(-.87 to .44)*	**.34** *(-.49 to .79)*
Swiss reference persons	.014	**-.34** *(-.56 to .55)*	**-.13** *(-.22 to .72)*	**.47** *(-.39 to .78)*	**-.37** *(-.70 to .44)*
Reference persons living in former Yugoslavia	**-.21** *(-.25 to .37)*	**.26** *(-.31 to .30)*	-.023	**-.19** *(-.22 to .43)*	**-.39** *(-.39 to .24)*
Reference persons living in Switzerland	**.24** *(-.46 to .31)*	**-.22** *(-.38 to .39)*	-.071	**.23** *(-.54 to .27)*	**.41** *(-.30 to .49)*

The table shows the correlation between certain characteristics of reference persons and the different dimensions of social support by examining the relation between roles (kin, friends) and the attributed variables (sex, nationality, place of residence), on the one hand, and the dimension of support, on the other hand.

1. Assuming a representative sample, values above 0.11 are significant at the 5 per cent level in Chi square tests. This limit supports the choice of a minimal level for correlation of 0.11 for interpretation, instances of which are printed in **bold** in the table**.**

2. The array of possible values for the calculated marginal distribution appear in brackets. These are maximal values for the case of the given structure of the sample. With another sample more extreme values might be reached (from –1 to +1).

It is interesting to see whether transnational ties have different degrees of importance depending on the specific dimension of support. Data suggest that Albanian migrants mobilize their transnational relationships mainly and almost exclusively for emotional support (see Table 3). For this dimension, a negative correlation between reference persons living in Switzerland is observed as well as a positive correlation for reference persons living in former Yugoslavia. In most cases emotional support is an affair between kin. Female relatives are mobilized first for affective and emotional support and they are contacted in transnational spaces for such affective affairs. Albanian migrants address themselves to their mothers, fathers and siblings who are dispersed spatially when they are looking for emotional support.

Furthermore, the study suggests that Albanian migrants form part of their actual social relations only when they are in Switzerland (see Table 2). The 40 interview partners formed relations with almost half of the reference persons only after their arrival in Switzerland. Immigrant social networks are neither 'imported' nor determined through transnational relations. It seems that social relations belonging to social networks before emigration are not automatically maintained in transnational space.

There is another interesting characteristic of these support networks, namely a strong ethnic homogeneity. Most Albanian migrants turn to other Albanians for social support. Almost three-quarters of reference people appearing in such social support networks are Albanians (see Table 2), whereas less than a quarter is of Swiss origin. We assume that these relationships to Swiss people are new, given that half the total relations entered into after immigration are established with people from the same ethnic and linguistic background. A more detailed analysis reveals that Swiss people are important exclusively for the dimension of instrumental support (Table 3). There is a strong positive correlation between Swiss origin and giving instrumental support, whereas all other forms of support show positive correlations only with Albanians and negative correlations with people of Swiss origin. Albanian immigrants rely on other Albanians when they need general advice about professional or familial affairs, or economic and emotional support and for leisure activities. Further, Albanian migrants turn to other Albanians to find a job or an apartment. Swiss reference people are mobilized mostly for questions of integration. This means that they are mobilized when migrants require information about administrative affairs, translation opportunities, information about schools and the like.

The phenomenon of ethnic homogeneity in social networks is well known (McPherson et al. 2001). Migration research tells us that the first generation of immigrants often remains dependent on relationships with persons of the same background, mainly because of language difficulties. Moreover, mutual aid among people sharing similar migration experiences remains important for adjusting in a foreign environment. Hence, preferring partners of the same ethnic or linguistic background may result from everyday practices of adaptation rather than from a conscious or 'natural' strategy of ethnic closure – a hypothesis that multicultural programmes have proposed but that constructivist perspectives and empirical evidence have challenged (Baumann 1996). In this context, length of stay in a foreign country as well as sequencing of generations are apparently important factors for the

dissolution of ethnic and linguistic communities, an argument that early assimilation theorists had already brought up (Gordon 1964) and that recent research has contested. In general, studies show that the second generation has fewer reference people of the same ethnic or linguistic background than the first generation (Nauck et al. 1997; Wimmer 2004). The relatively 'forced' nature of the Albanian migration flow from Kosovo in particular might partly explain the condition of isolation. If going abroad involves escaping repression from another national or ethnic group and being 'more Albanian', it seems logical that capitalizing on ethnic connection would be common behaviour.

In any case, it seems that the Albanian community in the region of Zurich has reached a critical mass. In fact, it is possible for Albanian immigrants from former Yugoslavia to rely on people of the same origin not only for social activities but also for different kinds of support, as well as for information about the availability of jobs or apartments. Furthermore, the results give the impression that an 'Albanian community' had been built up. To conclude that this is a 'transnational community' would, however, be entirely wrong. Rather, the picture of an 'Albanian community' emerges that is closed hermetically and disconnected from the Swiss society as well as from the society of origin.[5]

Transnational connections are almost completely missing not only in social networks, but also in the economic realm. This does not alter the fact that Albanian migrants support their relatives in the country of origin whenever they have the financial means. Of the 40 interview partners, 17 sent remittances back home on a regular basis and most of them were men (14 of the 17). Nonetheless, there are no specific transnational and ethnic businesses, neither in the national nor in the transnational context.

What are the reasons for the limited transnational participation and the almost non-existence of transnational relations within social networks of Albanian immigrants in Switzerland? Scholars argued that certain conditions have to be fulfilled to allow for the creation of transnationalism. These conditions are dependent on legal, social, political and economic factors in the context of immigration, as well as emigration, countries. Transnational practices are not free from constraints and opportunities imposed by the context (Al-Ali and Koser 2002; Guarnizo and Smith 1998). Following this argument, two main factors influence the development of transnationalism among Albanian migrants. On the one hand, social capital within the social networks of Albanian migrants is missing, and on the other hand, the limited duration of this migration movement implies insecure residence rights. Both aspects are heavily interwoven with power relations and structural features of Swiss and former Yugoslav, in particular Kosovo, society.

The 'missing' transnationalism could – at least partially – be explained by the disadvantaged and underprivileged position of the Albanian migrants and by their limited personal resources, particularly in terms of cultural capital. It is well known that many Albanian immigrants in Switzerland face serious marginalization and pauperization. They sometimes live in precarious circumstances and are often unemployed. In general, we might say that the socio-economic and professional status of members of this group is very low and mechanisms of exclusion based on

discrimination can be observed (Piguet 2004; Wanner 2004). On the other hand, the situation in postwar Yugoslavia, and above all in Kosovo, is also unfavourable for transnational practices because economic and political stability are far from being a reality. For all these reasons, we assume that the social capital that Albanian migrants can mobilize through their networks is very low. Further, if a migrant's personal network mainly includes people with limited resources, the volume of social capital that this migrant is able to mobilize is quite limited. This could be a factor in explaining why Albanian migrants cannot manage to build up transnational social fields: they are mainly in contact with other Albanians, most of whom have limited personal resources. But this argument goes even further: as social capital is mainly a local asset, it is very hard to transfer it from one country to another (Faist 1999: 42). We can therefore assume that immediately after immigration – at least if we defend the idea that a person is not migrating with all the people in his or her personal network – part of the social capital of the migration network has to be built up under the conditions of the new environment. If these conditions are of an underprivileged character – for instance lacking social, political or economic prospects or rights – opportunities to express transnationalism will be very limited. Therefore, the hypothesis is that transferability of social capital increases in parallel with the emergence of transnational social space. Conversely, low levels of transnationalism can be – at least partially – equated with low levels of social capital in networks.

In Switzerland, the duration of stay is linked to access to certain rights embodied in different residence permits. Different types of permit always implicate a set of specific social, economic or political rights (or the exclusion from such rights). A temporarily admitted person, an asylum seeker or a person with another type of temporary residence permit will not have these possibilities. Even people in a more stable situation but with a Yugoslav passport will encounter difficulties in maintaining economic relations. Hence, another hypothesis is that transnational practices are part of the lives of well-established immigrants whereas the recently immigrated population lacks 'transcultural capital'. Of all the persons interviewed, only one had established a business that connected different enterprises outside Switzerland. This man became Swiss and had been living for 20 years in Switzerland. He requested Swiss citizenship mainly to pursue transnational business.

Transnationalism after return?

Transnational linkages are often perceived from one perspective only. The starting point for analysis is usually immigrants and their relations to their home countries. However, they may also be analysed from a different perspective. The question then becomes, to what extent are social relations maintained in geographic space after return and what roles do they play?

Within the social support networks of the 11 Albanian returnees interviewed in Kosovo, transnational relations do appear. Most are relations either with relatives who live abroad (in the same place as the migrant or in another place) or with friends and acquaintances the migrant got to know during his or her stay in the host country. Such transnational ties are fundamental in material terms because

remittances and non-monetary goods (consumer goods, electronic equipment, telephones) flow through them. Most of the returnees spend their remittances on daily necessities. A minority invest them in new productive enterprises.[6] It is interesting to note, however, that material and financial remittances are not only of great importance for people who stay behind, a well-known phenomenon in migration literature, but also for the returnees. In the context of a postwar order in Kosovo, returnees with transnational ties through which remittances flow are better off than the ones without them. They have an even better chance to reintegrate, for these remittances guarantee temporary financial support and help overcome financial shortfalls.

On second glance, however, the issue is more complicated. The case studies reveal that certain ideas about reciprocity have an impact on transnational practices. Perceptions about the limits of solidarity underlie the practice of transnational economic support. If, for instance, within an extended family household, collective reciprocity is experienced on an everyday basis and the (male) members of the household contribute to this common economy, it is highly probable that returnees can count on support from abroad (if members are living abroad). This kind of Albanian household has been described in detail in ethnographic (Kaser 1994; Reineck 1991) and travel literature (Durham 2000), but it should be considered as an ideal type, as there are other cases. If during their stay in a host country emigrants decide not to contribute anymore to the common household economy, limiting the economic community of reciprocity to their own nuclear family, they will most likely not send remittances to Kosovo. In such a situation, when these migrants return to Kosovo they cannot count on the financial help of relatives.

The important point here is that migration processes have an impact on the formation of family households and that kin solidarity is not something that can be assumed as present and unchangeable, not even among Albanians. Among the main characteristics that have been brought up in historical–anthropological studies about Albanian society in Kosovo are its large family size and joint family households that work as corporate groups, holding property in common (Backer 1976). During the migration process the obligations of solidarity within extended and joint families are negotiated, reinforced or dissolved. The following case illustrates this point. Having returned home to Kosovo, an Albanian family lived in a temporary hut in the husband's brother's garden, as they did not own their own house. In the same garden there was a big house that had recently been renovated, and where two floors were empty, as two brothers of the returnees were living abroad. The brothers allowed the returnees to live in the garden but did not allow them to move into the newly renovated house. This indicates that the returnees could not profit from joint family household solidarity and the family has been fragmented due to migration. As the returnees had not financially supported their brothers while they were abroad, they had only limited rights to reciprocal solidarity back in Kosovo. This example shows that cultural representations associated with social relations and networks have a fundamental impact on we-group formation and define who belongs to a certain group and who is excluded. Such cultural patterns are of great relevance to understanding the functioning of transnationalism.

There is one more point to be discussed. In this article I have referred almost exclusively to male Albanians involved in transnational practices. This might be an accurate representation of social life, especially in terms of financial issues. It is widely thought that Albanian men are better suited to this kind of support than women and Albanian society has been described as strictly patriarchal, patrilocal and patrilinear (Denich 1974). Notwithstanding this observation, in the realm of a 'transnational culture', which is less concerned with everyday life than with flows of global ideas, Albanian women are in fact more involved. This is especially true in the realm of cultural production and reproduction of gender roles. One issue that always came up during interviews with returned women was their active negotiation of gender roles. I observed that women who returned home had enlarged their cultural resources for constructing gender identities. By distancing themselves from the stereotype of 'the traditional Albanian woman' they actively created a 'new' gender identity on the basis of global cultural symbols. Hence, the Albanian female returnees dichotomized gender representations between 'European emancipation' and 'Albanian traditions'. They viewed themselves and their gender roles as being transformed from one pole – 'tradition' – to the other – 'modernity', the former pole being connoted negatively, the latter positively. It is well known that cognitive ideas and strategies concerning gender roles are shaped through socio-cultural contexts and structure as well as in interaction with other men and women, and that they are constantly evolving (Schlehe 2002). What is interesting here, however, is that ideas about being male or female are less and less determined through local social structures. Cultural resources and representations that are the basis for the construction of gender identities are enlarged in the case of migration (Pessar and Mahler 2003). Confronted with other contexts through migration, the Albanian return migrants enlarged their socio-cultural repertoires concerning gender roles. Such efforts at 'distinction' had very concrete social effects. For instance, the returned women wore different clothes than the local (not migrated) women, underlining their difference by using the body as signifier. These effects are reflected in the composition of the social networks of returned women. They did not generally find a way to access local women's networks, rendering reintegration difficult, as local secondary networks are very important for gaining access to information and other resources.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this article I asked if we were already facing the end of the transnationalist paradigm because current research questions some of the concept's main premises. On the basis of an analysis of social networks of Albanian migrants, however, it seems as if we are far from reaching the limits of the transnationalist perspective and may still be at the point of departure. The transnational perspective provides interesting insights into migration processes. Like all new paradigms, however, it must be refined and used in a more nuanced manner that allows for the careful analysis of the precise content and function of transnational ties and their associated social fields.

It has been shown that transnational ties cannot be narrowly reduced to a

dichotomous view in which someone has a transnational relation to another person or not, for this view fails to reveal whether or not this relation has social relevance. Cultural, socio-economic or political constraints block out certain possibilities for action and these are carried along within relations between people and affect the social impact of transnational ties. These factors have the power to undermine the social capital inherent in social ties, or, on the contrary, to activate it strategically. A major assumption within migration studies is that immigrants are able to rely indiscriminately on kin and ethnic solidarity and that these relations are a kind of 'natural' social capital. This premise is, however, questionable from a social scientific point of view, as is the assumption of any form of a priori solidarity among ethnic and kin groups in transnationalism. Within migration studies, kinship or ethnicity is often treated as social capital *per se*. The Albanian example shows that solidarities and ideas about reciprocity are dynamic and historically variable, so must, therefore, be subjected to empirical analysis.

A more serious consideration of differentiated views on the functioning of social capital and an increased attention to the underlying mechanisms for building and maintaining social capital could also give useful insights into the functioning of transnationalism. To understand the appearance of transnational social spaces and their conditions of solidarity and reciprocity, we have to go back to the field and carefully look at how social capital is empirically composed (or not composed), and how transnational social spaces are connected to different forms of social capital. Cultural values are carried within social relations and networks, and underlie not only the specific composition of social network, but also the pattern of transnationalism. For instance, as mentioned above, gender representation influences the development and form of transnational activities as well as the obligations carried through transnational ties. This means that in our fieldwork we have to grasp how cultural values are transported within social networks and how these same networks give expression to structural conditions.

Janine Dahinden
Institute of Ethnology
University of Neuchâtel
Rue St-Honoré 2
CH-2000 Neuchâtel
Switzerland

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to the persons I interviewed for their willingness to spend hours sharing their migration experiences with me and explaining their social networks. My special thanks go to Christin Achermann, Chantal Delli and Ellen Hertz for their useful comments and ideas on how to present the material. Further I would like to thank *Global Networks* editors and two anonymous referees for valuable suggestions.

Notes

1. I exclude Albanians from the Republic of Albania however, as they are only of minor importance in the Swiss context: statistics show that in 2003 only 1107 Albanians from the Republic of Albania were living in Switzerland.
2. It is well known that in the 1990s Albanians from Albania sometimes passed as Kosovar Albanians in order to get asylum. The sample presented here contains no Albanians from the Republic of Albania among the Kosovars.
3. For details and for methodological considerations see Dahinden (2005).
4. It is, however, important to note that this 'bounded solidarity' based on 'being or speaking Albanian' was a temporary phenomenon. Analysis of the social networks of returnees revealed that criteria of 'being or speaking Albanian' were insufficient to gain access to important resources. In the context of the postwar order it was the criterion of having fought for 'liberation' that lay beneath the new 'bounded solidarity'. The idea of a 'we-group' was not valuable for all Albanians, but only for this specific group of 'nationalist liberation fighters'.
5. The network data do not allow us to judge if the Albanian migrants are 'forced' to turn to other Albanians for support because of missing alternatives and mechanisms of social exclusion, or if they mainly address Albanians because they regard them as adapted to give the required support.
6. A debate on the positive or negative impacts of remittances and return migration on the development of the country of origin has been going on for several decades. I do not have enough space to discuss this so-called migration–development nexus, but for details see Ghosh (1992).

References

Al-Ali, N, and K. Koser (2002) 'Transnationalism, international migration and home', in N. Al-Ali and K. Koser (eds) *New approaches to migration? Transnational communities and the transformation of home*, London and New York: Routledge, 1–14.

Backer, B. (1976) *Behind the stone walls: changing household organization among the Albanians of Kosovo*, Oslo: PRIO-Publications.

Baumann, G. (1996) *Contesting culture: discourses of identity in multi-ethnic London*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bott, E. (1971) *Family and social network.* London: Tavistock, first published 1957.

Bourdieu, P. (1980) 'Le capital social: notes provisoires', *Actes de la recherche en sciences socials*, 31, 2–3.

Bourdieu, P. (1986) 'The forms of capital', in J. G. Richardson (ed.) *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education*, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Inc., 241–58.

Boyd, M. (1989) 'Family and personal networks in international migration: recent developments and new agendas', *International Migration Review*, 23, 638–70.

Brettell, C. B. (2000) 'Theorizing migration in anthropology', in C. B. Brettell and J. F. Hollifield (eds) *Migration theory: talking across disciplines*, New York: Routledge, 97–136.

Burt, R. S. (1982) *Toward a structural theory of action: network models of social structure, perception and action*, New York: Academic Press.

Dahinden, J. (2005, forthcoming) *Prishtina – Schlieren: Albanische Migrationsnetzwerke im transnationalen Raum*, Zurich: Seismo.

Denich, B. S. (1974) 'Sex and power in the Balkans', in M. Z. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere (eds) *Women, culture and society*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 243–62.

Diaz-Bone, R. (1997) *Ego-zentrierte Netzwerkanalyse und familiale Beziehungssysteme*, Wiesbaden: Deutscher Universitätsverlag.

Draper, S. (1997) 'The conceptualization of an Albanian nation', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 20, 123–44.

Durham, M. E. (2000) *High Albania: a Victorian traveller's Balkan Odyssey*, London: Phoenix Press, first published 1909.

Efionayi-Mäder, D., M. Chimienti, J. Dahinden and E. Piguet (2001) *Asyldestination Europa: eine Geographie der Asylbewegungen*, Zurich: Seismo.

Emirbayer, M. and J. Goodwin (1994) 'Network analysis, culture, and the problem of agency', *American Journal of Sociology*, 99, 1411–51.

Faist, T. (1999) 'Developing transnational social spaces: the Turkish–German example', in L. Pries (ed.) *Migration and transnational social spaces,* Ashgate: Aldershot, 36–72.

Federal Office for Statistics (2002) 'Pressemitteilung vom 19: Dezember 2002', *Eidgenössische Volkszählung 2000: Stärkung des Französischen – Bessere Integration der AusländerInnen und Ausländer*.

Ghosh, B. (1992) 'Migration-development linkages: some specific issues and practical policy measures', *International Migration*, 30, 423–52.

Glick Schiller, N., L. Basch and C. Szanton Blanc (1992) 'Transnationalism: a new analytic framework for understanding migration', in N. Glick Schiller, L. Basch and C. Szanton Blanc (eds) *Towards a transnational perspective on migration: race, class, ethnicity and nationalism reconsidered*, New York: New York Academy of Science, 1–24.

Glick Schiller, N., L. Basch and C. Szanton Blanc (1995) 'From immigrant to transmigrant: theorizing transnational migration', *Anthropological Quarterly*, 68, 48–63.

Gordon, M. (1964) *Assimilation in American life*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Granovetter, M. S. (1973) 'The strength of weak ties', *American Journal of Sociology*, 78, 1360–80.

Guarnizo, L. E. and M. P. Smith (1998) 'The locations of transnationalism', in M. P. Smith and L. E. Guarnizo (eds) *Transnationalism from below*, New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 3–34.

Guarnizo, L. E., A. Portes and W. Haller (2003) 'Assimilation and transnationalism: determinants of transnational political action among contemporary migrants', *American Journal of Sociology*, 108, 1211–48.

Gurak, D. T. and F. Caces (1992) 'Migration networks and the shaping of migration systems', in M. M. Kritz, L. L. Lean and H. Zlotnik (eds) *International migration system: a global approach*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 150–76.

Jansen, D. (2000) 'Netzwerke und soziales Kapital: Methoden zur Analyse struktureller Einbettung', in J. Weyer (ed.) *Soziale Netzwerke: Konzepte und Methoden der sozialwissenschaftlichen Netzwerkforschung*, München: Oldenbourg, 35–62.

Kaser, K. (1994) 'The Balkan joint family', *Social Science History*, 18, 243–69.

McCallister, L. and C. Fischer (1978) 'A procedure for surveying personal networks', *Sociological Methods and Research*, 7, 131–41.

McPherson, M., L. Smith-Lovin and J. M. Cook (2001) 'Birds of a feather: homophily in social networks', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 27, 415–44.

Maillard, A. and U. Leuenberger (1999) *Les damnés du troisième cercle: les Albanais de la Kosove en Suisse, 1965–1999*, Genève: Les éditions Metropolis.

Malcolm, N. (1999) *Kosovo: a short history*, New York: Harper.

Marcus, G. (1995) 'Ethnography in/of the world system: the emergence of multi-sited ethnography', in G. Marcus (ed.) *Ethnography through thick and thin*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 9–104.

Marsden, P. V. (1990) 'Network data and measurement', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 16, 435–63.

Massey, D. S., R. Alarcon, J. Durand and H. Gonzalez (1987) *Return to Aztlan: the social process of international migration from western Mexico*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Massey, D. S., J. Arango, G. Hugo, A. Kouaouci, A. Pellegrino and E. L. Talyor (1993) 'Theories of international migration: a review and appraisal', *Population and Development Review*, 19, 431–66.

Mitchell, J. C. (1969) *Social networks in urban situations: analysis of personal relationships in central African towns*, Manchester: University of Manchester Press.

Nauck, B., A. Kohlmann and H. Diefenbach (1997) 'Familäre Netzwerke, intergenerative Transmission und Assimiliationsprozesse bei türkischen Migrantenfamilien', *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, 49, 477–99.

Pessar, P. and S. J. Mahler (2003) 'Transnational migration: bringing gender in', *International Migration Review*, 37, 812–46.

Piguet, E. (2004) *L'immigration en Suisse depuis 1948: une analyse des flux migratoires vers la Suisse*, Zurich: Seismo.

Portes, A. (1998) 'Social capital: its origins and applications in modern sociology', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24, 1–24.

Portes, A. (2003) 'Conclusion: theoretical convergencies and empirical evidence in the study of immigrant transnationalism', *International Migration Review*, 37, 874–92.

Pries, L. (ed.) (1999) *Migration and transnational social spaces*, Aldershot: Ashgate.

Reineck, J. S. (1991) *The past as refuge: gender, migration and ideology among the Kosova Albanians*, dissertation, Berkeley: University of California at Berkeley.

Rogers, A. and S. Vertovec (1995) 'Introduction', in A. Rogers and S. Vertovec (eds) *The urban context: ethnicity, social networks and situational analysis*, Oxford: Berg, 1–33.

Schlehe, J. (2002) 'Handeln und Aushandeln in transkulturellen Geschlechterbeziehungen', in B. Hauser-Schäublin and U. Braunkämper (eds) *Ethnologie der Globalisierung: Perspektiven kultureller Verflechtungen*, Berlin: Reimer, 205–222.

Schweizer, T. (1996) *Muster sozialer Ordnung. Netzwerkanalyse als Fundament der Sozialethnologie*, Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag.

Smith, M. P. (2001) *Transnational urbanism: locating globalization*, Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Swiss Federal Council (1991) *Bericht des Bundesrates zur Ausländer- und Flüchtlingspolitik vom 15 Mai 1991*, Bern: EDMZ.

Tarrius, A. (2002) *La mondialisation par le bas: les nouveaux nomades de l'économie souterraine*, Paris: Balland.

Von Aarburg, H-P. (2002) 'L'émigration albanaise du Kosovo vers la Suisse: l'imprévisible évolution des projets migratoires', *Ethnologie française*, 32, 271–82.

Wanner, P. (2004) *Migration et intégation: population étrangères en Suisse: recensement fédéral de la population 2000*, Neuchâtel: Office fédérale de la statistique.

Weber, M. (1995) 'Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft', in M. Sukale (ed.) *Schriften zur Soziologie*, Stuttgart: Reclam, 79–311, first published 1914.

White, H. C. (1992) *Identity and control*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Wicker, H-R. (1997) 'Introduction: theorizing ethnicity and nationalism', in H-R. Wicker (ed.) *Rethinking nationalism and ethnicity: the struggle for meaning and order in Europe*, Oxford: Berg, 1–42.

Wimmer, A. (2004) 'Does ethnicity matter? Everyday group formation in three Swiss immigrant neighbourhoods', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 27, 1–36.