



HUMBOLDT-UNIVERSITÄT ZU BERLIN  
Lehrstuhl für Südosteuropäische Geschichte

## International Workshop

### Back to the future? Understanding the turbulences of Albanian transitions from contemporary and historical perspectives

22-23 September 2011

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin  
Friedrichstrasse 191-93  
Raum 5008  
(at U-Bahn-Station: "Stadtmitte")

Organized by:

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The international workshop on Albanian transitions is organized in cooperation between the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the Humboldt-University in Berlin. The goal of the workshop is to discuss a number of important topics intimately linked to the processes of Albanian transition. We aim to look at these topics from a multidisciplinary perspective in order to get a better understanding of the complex developments in the Albanian inhabited areas.

Looking at the macro structures of transition in Albania one can see a number of extreme phenomena. The turbulences of Albanian transition are marked by the collapse of the economy, the decay of the monopoly of power, the break-up of the most rigid border regime, the impact of a belated demographic transition and an ongoing power struggle between two extremely antagonistic political camps. With the demise of communism and the end of isolationism Albanians were exposed to the forces of globalisation and market economy. No other country in the region experienced such tremendous migration flows as Albania. Strong emigration towards Greece and Italy and enormous internal migration were accompanied by immigration from Albanian inhabited areas in Kosova and Macedonia. The improvement of the infrastructure brought about new economic, social and political links between the formerly segregated 'Albanian lands'. These reciprocal influences have far-reaching geopolitical, cultural and economic effects within the area and for the European integration process.

The rapid transformation of the political, social and economic order has radically shifted the parameters within which actors pursue their daily routines and practices. Although we are fairly well informed about the political development, structural reforms of the economy, the administration and the legal system we know comparatively little about the people's responses to the uncertainties of transition. These everyday realities are often seen simply as expressions of macro-structures, policies, and ideologies that govern the post-communist (dis)order. But a closer look might reveal that many of the ways people try to make a living in the context of transition produce new and unexpected realities.

In this workshop we would like to get a clearer picture of various ways Albanians handle the difficulties of transition by focusing at both, the macro and the micro contexts. In doing so, we would also like to discover continuities in an environment that is marked by discontinuity. Since many transitional studies lack a deeper diachronic perspective, we regard it paramount to introduce historical theories into the discussion. This might open the space for a broader perspective on long-term structural 'features' of Albanian politics, society, and culture. Can we figure out legacies from the Ottoman period that are still relevant for contemporary developments? And what's about the communist legacies? What were the particularities of Albanian communism and how are they linked to visions of modernity, national unity, and autonomy? What cultural imprints can we identify in Albanian communism? The long traditions of regional self-rule, of strong patriarchal power structures and a segmented social fabric, how are they reflected in communist ideology and practice? And are there remnants of these components detectable in the period of transition?

Historical approaches which are important but far from exhaustive in explaining transitional processes shall be complemented with ethnographic, sociological and political expertise. In order to avoid the deterministic trap which is to attribute the shortcomings of the transition process to historical legacies only (often the 'socialist legacy' is the depository for the failures of the transition) we want to focus on 'the effects of the contemporary'. These are, among others: the power of the neo-liberal order, the effects of the weakness of the state, the institutional and legal failures and the consequences of globalisation and transterritorial relationship. We are primarily interested in the way people - ranging from farmers to factory workers, from migrants to businessmen, from bureaucrats to the unemployed - respond to the social insecurities. Here it is also interesting to look at generational and gender differences and the different modes of adaptation to post-communist constraints.

Due to the weak social security system of the state private entrepreneurship based on family and kinship networks became increasingly important in the period of transition. Family and kinship act as social welfare safety nets that provide trust in a socially and economically precarious environment. We therefore want to take a closer look at these 'traditional' institutions. The Balkan family household, often depicted and mythologized as a stable column of the Albanian society, has undergone a protracted process of transformation. Nevertheless, family and kinship relations are still powerful agents and provide reciprocal assistance, loyalty and emotional affinity. Close familial ties are also important in the context of migration where family networks span across borders and provide reciprocal assistance. The impact of kinship is also relevant when it comes to the domain of the public. Clientilism and nepotism represent one endemic form of family-first behaviour. In view of this, we want to concentrate our attention on the role of the family and kinship in the period of transition.

It is obvious that migration is of paramount importance in the 'Albanian lands'. Whereas migration strategies in former Yugoslavia were very much affected by (temporary) labour migration to Central Europe, migration in Albania is marked by the rapid breakdown of the political system and the concomitant chaotic escape from the miserable conditions of life. It therefore would make sense to look comparatively at strategies of migrants, on the way translocal and transterritorial relationships are established, on the motifs of migrants, on remittances in terms of social and economic assistance and on divergent effects of the ethnopolitical environment on the desire to invest, to organise and to return in the different destination countries of Albanian transmigrants. In doing so, it is also important to stress gender issues and to focus on the changing position of women in Albanian transition. Women's loss of social support, their decline in labour force participation and changes in employment and political representation seem to indicate increasing social inferiority. But do these indications reflect all the social reality of Albanian women? Aren't there also other arenas that provide opportunities for agency and emancipation?

17.30-18.15 Afternoon snack (at the location of the workshop)

**Change of location!** 19.00: Two Documentary films "**Kosovo in 8 Days (Premiere)**" and "**Naklar hab ich getanzt**" and panel discussion with the directors and protagonists of the films (Wissmannstr. 32, 12049 Berlin) (<http://www.werkstatt-der-kulturen.de/de/spielplan/?datum=2011-09-01&filter=Komplett&detail=321&mode=spielplan>)

21.00 Dinner in the restaurant Maison Blanche (Körte Straße 15, U-Bahnhof Südstern)

#### Friday, 23 September

9.00-10.30 **Panel 4: The transformation of the family in the postcommunist 'Albanian space'**

Chair: Karl Kaser (Karl-Franzens University of Graz)

Ermira Danaj (University of Neuchatel and the Romand Doctoral School on Gender Studies), **The role of the post-communist family in Albania as the main solidarity network**

Carolin Leutloff-Grandits (Karl-Franzens University of Graz), **Wedding festivals as events of cultural transformation: The case of a migrant wedding in a Kosovar village**

Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers (Roehampton University, London), **On familism and individual rights in Albania: the return situation of trafficked women to Albania from a social-anthropological perspective**

10.30-11.00 Coffee Break

11.00-12.30 **Panel 5: Identifying the historical legacies in times of transition**

Chair: Artan Puto (Marin Barleti University, Tirana)

Jens Oliver Schmitt (University of Vienna), **Transitions in Albanian history: continuity and discontinuity at the beginning and at the end of Ottoman rule.**

James Pettifer (Oxford University), **Problems of periodisation and ideology in Albanian historiography after World War II**

Karl Kaser (Karl-Franzens University of Graz), **Family and Kinship in Albania: Continuities and Discontinuities in Turbulent Times.**

12.30-13.30 Final Discussion

## Programme

#### Wednesday, 21 September

20.00 Gathering in the lobby of "Novotel Berlin Potsdamer Platz" and walk to a joint dinner in the restaurant Hotel Ibis (Anhalter Straße 4)

#### Thursday, 22 September

9.00 **Opening of the Workshop and welcome address**

9.15-9.30 **Introductory remarks**

9.30-12.00 **Panel 1: Identifying the effects of transition in Albania: The political and the legal dimension**

Chair: Michael Weichert (Friedrich Ebert Foundation)

Ometa Barballushi (European University of Tirana), **International norms and local practices: the dualistic logic of Albanian transition and the limits of EU as normative power**

Përparim Kabo (Luarasi University Tirana), **An Anthropologic-Institutional Outlook on Communism and Political Pluralism in Albania**

10.30-11.00 Coffee Break

Edvin Zhllima (Agriculture University of Tirana), **Farmers land security under fuzzy titles, overlapping rights and conflict in some regions of rural Albania**

12.00-14.00 Lunch Break, Restaurant Sarah Wiener DAS KAFFEEHAUS (Museum für Kommunikation, Leipziger Straße 16)

14.00-15.30 **Panel 2: Identifying the challenges of doing gender in transition**

Chair: Wibke Straube (Linköping University)

Delina Fico (Home Office Director for USAID-funded Project), **Is there a women's movement in Albania?**

Eglantina Gjermeni (Member of the Albanian Parliament), **Gender quota and its implementation in Albania**

Delina Binaj (Humboldt University of Berlin), **Gender normativity and the representation of trans people indigenous to Albanian society**

15.30-16.00 Coffee Break

16.00-17.30 **Panel 3: Identifying the effects of migration in post-communist Albania (with reference to Kosovo and Macedonia)**

Chair: Hannes Grandits (Humboldt University of Berlin)

Robert Pichler (Humboldt University of Berlin), **Some comparative remarks on causes and consequences of Albanian (mass) migration in Macedonia and Albania**

Kosta Barjaba (Mediterranean University of Albania in Tirana), **Albanian migration as a new type of international migration**

Daniel Göler (University of Bamberg), **Remigration and development in Albania**