



## **Uneven Temporalities in Kosovo and Beyond: Waiting, Moving, and Future-Making at Europe's Semi-Periphery -Workshop-**

at Viadrina Center B/ORDERS IN MOTION, European University Viadrina  
in cooperation with Southeast Europe Association (SOG)

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The uncertainties of our time are manifold: wars and geopolitical shifts disrupt existing orders; digital transformation and artificial intelligence reshape labour markets and knowledge regimes; changing border and migration regimes create unequal mobilities and decide who is left to die; the ageing of European societies and the shrinking of welfare regimes pose insecurities to our livelihoods; and environmental crises threaten the present and future of our planet. These dynamics not only transform political and economic structures but also profoundly impact on temporal regimes – meaning the way time is perceived and measured. After the age of modernity based on the imagination of progress and a better future, the future now is often seen as scary, and possibly even as a movement backwards. The rapid transformations and uncertainties impact on how people relate to the past, experience the present, and imagine possible future. Based on their individual positions in relation to certain societal contexts, people may experience their own life as moving forward, standing still, or even breaking apart. This workshop takes temporality at the center of analysis and asks how uneven temporal regimes shape political imaginaries, institutional arrangements, and everyday life trajectories in Kosovo and beyond. This is especially relevant in contexts where political, institutional, or historical contingencies produce prolonged waiting, suspension, stuckedness, uncertainty, and delayed or conditional access to futures as socially and politically recognisable horizons of possibility.

Looking at Kosovo as central empirical focus - and more generally the region of South-Eastern Europe - enables us to make these uneven and often externally structured temporal regimes become particularly visible, as that region has been often perceived as a semi-periphery of Europe, as a region which is "lagging behind" or "catching up". Processes such as the slow progress in EU accession, the enduring post-war image of countries such as Kosovo or Bosnia-Herzegovina, in which the violent past still dominates the present, the EU migration governance according to which the young and able bodied strata of the population of the countries of South-Eastern Europe often leave to the EU, while these countries become at the same time transit and immigration countries, the ageing of these societies which is not only based on shrinking fertility rates but also fostered by outmigration, and environmental transformation. On the other hand, Kosovo is increasingly branded like a place with a young, dynamic and mobile population, a place in becoming, with a bright future. These often juxtaposed dynamics are based on distinct temporal imaginaries and narratives, as well as political-institutional temporal regimes such as time frames offered by administrations and policy institutions, including border regimes. Individuals, families, and communities navigate these temporalities and live them, e.g. through experiences of acceleration and delay or stagnation, movement and waiting, progress and future-making or lingering in the past.

We invite contributions that are empirically grounded and theoretically reflective and explicitly engage with temporality as an analytical lens, examining how relations between past, present, and future are imagined, negotiated, and contested. We are particularly interested in contributions that analyse the entanglement of (1) temporal imaginaries and narratives, (2) political-institutional temporal regimes, (3) lived and embodied temporal experiences, and (4) those that link temporal imaginaries and narratives, and/or macro-level temporal regimes with everyday life trajectories. Contributions may explore these dynamics across different empirical fields, including but not limited to Kosovo or the Western Balkans, focussing on the geopolitical positioning within an increasingly multipolar world; migration processes in countries that are simultaneously sites of emigration, transit, and immigration; coming to terms with violent pasts in post-war societies; environmental sustainability; responsibility towards elderly and future generations; and individual future-making in relation to family trajectories, generational relations, and working lives which shape both collective transformations and individual life paths.

## Abstracts

### Challenges of Temporal Coordination in the European Semiperiphery (Keynote)

*Stef Jansen, University of Sarajevo*

This presentation takes as its starting point that the diversity of people's dealing with, and understanding of time must be understood in light of their positions within an unequal global political-economic configuration. Leaving aside presumably cultural differences, it explores how the mere fact of living in a particular place at a particular historical conjuncture may foster particular engagements with time. Working through examples from ethnographic research in contemporary Bosnia and Herzegovina, I will argue that life in this semiperipheral European configuration – in this here *and* now – tends to confront people with specific contradictions in this respect. This often involves a mismatch between the temporal structures and logics associated with different scales, which requires navigational efforts of coordination that may alleviate but do not resolve these contradictions.

**BIO:** Social anthropologist Stef Jansen is professor at the University of Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and honorary professor at the University of Manchester (UK). His ethnographic studies in the post-Yugoslav states have focused, amongst other things, on questions of home, hope, the state, borders, political subjectivity, social transformations and everyday geopolitics. For more information, see <https://stefjansenweb.wordpress.com/>

### No Time to Wait: Time-Space Compression and Tourism Gentrification on the Turkish Riviera

*Kira Kosnick, European University Viadrina*

Türkiye has become a sought-after destination for foreign real estate investment and associated affluent migration over the last decade, in addition to its hosting of a large population of forced migrants. It is particularly in areas attractive to tourism that foreign investment in real estate has driven up the cost of housing and begun to displace locals, including migrants that are unable to financially compete. Through an exploration of displacement dynamics and tourism gentrification in the Turkish tourism town of Alanya, this talk examines the state-capital nexus as a driving force in shaping border temporalities for different groups of residents. Taking up David Harvey's notion of time-space compression, I suggest that the dynamics of capitalism constitute a crucial factor in this process.

**Waiting for Justice, Remembering the Massacred Dead, Making the Future:  
Uneven Temporalities in Post-War Kosova**

*Arsim Canolli, Department of Anthropology, University of Prishtina*

This presentation discusses how survivors of 1998-1999 war atrocities navigate overlapping temporalities of justice, memory, and future-making in postwar Kosova. Drawing on ethnographic research and oral history project (Krushë e Madhe 2020-2024), it explores how the enduring absence or delay of justice shapes everyday life, intergenerational relations, and moral expectations. Remembering the massacred dead emerges not only as an act of mourning, but as a form of ethical and political engagement that sustains claims for recognition and accountability. At the same time, individuals and communities actively orient themselves toward the future. The presentation argues that these uneven temporalities coexist, intersect, and structure postwar social worlds in Kosova.

**Archives in Suspension:  
Illegality, Imprisonment, and Uneven Temporalities in Kosovo**

*Eli Krasniqi, University of Graz*

This paper examines the archive of the underground movement in Kosovo during socialism and the 1990s, commonly known as *Ilegalja* (Illegality), which consisted of small groups and organisations with broadly shared political aims that operated across different periods. They shared a common engagement in political resistance against Yugoslav, and later Serbian, oppression of Albanians in Yugoslavia, particularly in Kosovo. The paper highlights the challenges of reconstructing the movement's activities, political positions, and lived temporal realities, with particular attention to women's experiences, through textual and visual sources, given the absence of a consolidated archive. Following critical approaches that treat archives as historically and temporally produced formations, the paper approaches the fragmentary archive of *Ilegalja* as evidence of uneven temporalities shaped by illegality, imprisonment, and delayed recognition.

**Memory and Future-Making in Post-War Kosova through Externally Funded  
Projects**

*Bleona Kurteshi, Department of Sociology, University of Prishtina*

Since the 1998–1999 war in Kosova, externally funded memory projects played a significant role in framing how the past is addressed and how the future of Kosova is imagined. The main question here is: How do externally funded memory projects in post-war Kosova steer understandings of the past and redirect them towards visions of the future, such as European integration? These projects operate within complex networks involving international and transnational donors, civil society organizations, cultural institutions, and policy frameworks. Each of these entities brings its own priorities and assumptions, a dynamic that gives rise to complex power relations and influences the networks among them and the redirection of

memory work. The research adopts a qualitative, comparative case study approach, focusing on two externally funded initiatives. This research project argues that memory practices function as key sites where uneven temporal regimes are produced and contested.

Bleona Kurteshi is a first-year PhD researcher in Social Anthropology at the University of Regensburg. She currently serves as an adjunct teaching assistant in the Department of Sociology at the University of Prishtina.

### **Narrating War: The Temporal Politics of War Memory and Everyday War Life in Kosovo**

*Gëzim Selaci, Department of Sociology, University of Prishtina*

There are three dominant narratives about the 1998–1999 Kosovo War. First, the Kosovo Albanian narrative constructs a heroic and militant account of the war, portraying it as a just and glorious liberation struggle against occupation and an oppressive regime. Second, the Serbian narrative advances a defensive interpretation, framing the war as a heroic effort to protect territorial integrity and state sovereignty from a separatist guerrilla movement. Third, the narrative promoted by international and Western actors involved in the NATO bombing campaign presents the war as a humanitarian intervention, emphasizing military action as a necessary response to widespread human rights violations.

Each of these narratives evoke a specific temporal conception of the war and its consequences, whether a struggling past culminating in liberation, a continuation of historical fight over sovereignty, or an inevitable intervention motivated by a duty to prevent serious human rights violations and a responsibility protect vulnerable population subject to state brute force. These narratives can be understood as embedded within broader post-war temporal regimes of memory, which periodise and interpret the past, connecting it to present political orders.

For a more nuanced understanding of life during the war, moving beyond these dominant frameworks is necessary. This study compares the dominant war narratives present in the official or quasi-official narratives of Kosovo war with civilians' memories of everyday life experiences in the wartime, based on recollections by the ordinary civilian population. It emphasises the uneven representation of war life experiences in the dominant narratives, showing how certain experiences, such as heroism, sacrifice, and military moments, are brought to the fore, while the ambiguities, routines, and vulnerabilities of civilian life are marginalised or rendered invisible.

The study aims to analyse how dominant war narratives shaped collective memory, by privileging certain experiences and silencing others. It identifies the dominant narratives about the 1998-99 war in Kosovo and their formation, and asks how wartime experiences are represented, excluded or suppressed within them, while examining the social and political frameworks that govern such selections. Crucially, it also examines the relationship between

past, present, and future, revealing that these narratives not only structure how the war is remembered, but shape contemporary identities, political claims, and expectations about the future.

**The Diverse Temporalities of Diaspora Entrepreneurship:  
Between the Conjunctions of Life Course, Generation and Historical Time in Post-  
War Kosovo**

*Carolin Leutloff-Grandits, European University Viadrina*

Timing is crucial to entrepreneurial success, a fact that is particularly relevant for diaspora entrepreneurs returning to post-conflict contexts such as post-war Kosovo. While migration and entrepreneurship studies increasingly address transnational practices, the temporalities shaping diaspora and return entrepreneurship remain under-theorised. This article asks which temporalities matter for diaspora entrepreneurship in post-war Kosovo, and how historical time, life course and generation intersect to shape entrepreneurial trajectories and motivations, sectoral choices and transnational engagements.

Building on Tamara Hareven's (1994) distinction between historical time and life course, the article conceptualises diaspora entrepreneurship as embedded in overlapping temporal conjunctions. Historical time refers to changing socio-political and economic conditions, from the immediate post-war period to the more stable phase following independence. Life-course temporality captures the biographical timing of return and business formation, including age, family responsibilities and career stage. In addition, the article foregrounds generational temporality, showing how different migrant generations relate differently to Kosovo as a site of return, investment and future-making.

Empirically, the article draws on an in-depth qualitative study of 25 Kosovo Albanian diaspora entrepreneurs who established businesses in Kosovo after the 1998–99 war and who belong to different migrant generations. They either left Kosovo as adults or emigrated as children or were born abroad. The findings show that the first-generation migrants who returned in the immediate post-war period were driven by moral obligations, post-war solidarity and locally oriented investments. Younger, second-generation entrepreneurs still want to contribute to Kosovo, but tend to pursue internationally oriented ventures, particularly in transnational tech and service sectors, shaped by different expectations of return, mobility and future orientation.

**Return Migration, Temporality, and (Non-)Agency among Rural Women in Kosovo**

*Lumnije Kadriu, Institute of Albanology in Prishtina and Department of Anthropology,  
Faculty of Philosophy, University of Prishtina*

During the 1990s, Kosovo Albanian women, including those from rural areas, began increasingly to join their husbands in different host countries where they were already

working, or went there jointly, due to extremely tensioned political situation and overall socio-economic insecurity. The level of education and skills, especially of women from rural areas, was usually low, and coupled with their social position related to traditional norms, the change of place and regime posed opportunities for new experiences and a certain degree of independence. However, after 1999, there are increasingly evident cases of return migration in Kosovo, including rural areas, involving women.

In this paper I will explore cases of returned migrant women in rural areas with a focus on their expectations and experiences before, during and after return migration. Why have they migrated, what was the impact of migration, what futures have they imagined across the time, especially when deciding to return, what has changed and what not in their social role and values within the family and community, to what extent their (non-agency) has impacted their actual present? The answer to these questions will be researched by in-depth conversations in returned women home or business settings as well as by participant observation.

The findings will indicate the impact of temporality and place change on the (non) agency of rural women return migrants in Kosovo. Moreover, temporality in these cases could be determined as permanent, temporary, and flexible or transnational return showing how they interchanged and evolved as the agency of these women in practice and experience.

### **Migration without Movement:**

#### **Virtual Emigration and the Reconfiguration of Future-Making in Kosovo**

*Besnik Krasniqi, Faculty of Economy, University of Prishtina*

Kosovo is experiencing significant labour market and demographic changes, marked by continued emigration, particularly for work abroad, and a shrinking demographic dividend, which threaten human capital accumulation and long-term economic sustainability. At the same time, the rapid expansion of the ICT and outsourcing sectors has enabled virtual migration, allowing skilled workers to access international labour markets without physical relocation.

This paper examines whether virtual emigration, manifested through remote work and digital entrepreneurship, can alter the developmental consequences traditionally associated with physical emigration. Drawing on the migration and human capital literature, the analysis compares the human-capital-related and broader social externalities of physical and virtual emigration. The findings indicate that whilst virtual emigration reproduces many human-capital externalities of physical emigration, it differs in its implications for demographic and fiscal outcomes, institutional capacity, and aggregate demand. The paper concludes with policy recommendations aimed at leveraging virtual emigration to anchor human-capital returns domestically.

Keywords: virtual migration, skilled migration, remote work, brain drain, ICT, demographic dividend

## Temporalities of German-Language Competence in Kosovo's BPO Sector

*Lea Hensch, European University Viadrina*

Kosovo is marked by emigration, a tight labour market, and fragile systems of social protection. In this context, work in German-language customer-service outsourcing (BPO) has gained importance because it enables people with the required language skills to enter comparatively well-paid employment quickly—an opportunity that until recently was more often associated with longer professional and qualification pathways or with migration to Western Europe.

This paper argues that German-language competence can thus create a time window of acceleration within which, especially, young people gain relatively rapid access to financial autonomy and greater scope to imagine, plan and pursue future possibilities. German language is mobilised here as an economic resource not only to organise everyday life in the present but also to shape longer-term life projects—whether through staying in Kosovo, keeping migration options open, or imagining return to Kosovo as a realistic and attractive possibility.

At the same time, work in the BPO sector is often shaped by repetitive routines, limited opportunities for advancement, and dependence on international clients. Many employees therefore understand their position as a temporary (entry-level) job or transitional phase within which they try to generate as much income as possible in the short term. Formal education and longer-term professional trajectories may be postponed or partly devalued in relation to language-based earning capacity. The institutional temporalities of outsourcing, labour-market competition, and mobility regimes further intensify the sense of temporal limitation. The growing role of AI in customer service, dependence on external markets, and the previous experience of international influence on the local labour market heighten time pressure and uncertainty about how long German will remain valuable to the same extent on the local labour market.

Based on ethnographic fieldwork in a BPO company in Prishtina, I examine how young workers negotiate these different temporalities—acceleration and delay, investment and waiting. I ask how German is understood and deployed as a temporal resource, and how its significance changes over time. How do workers imagine and make futures—through staying, migration, or return—under conditions in which German as a labour-market resource is perceived as valuable, yet not indefinitely so?

In doing so, I place German-language competence at the centre not simply as linguistic skill, but as a temporally structured resource: one that becomes effective within specific temporal horizons, can intensify inequalities in access to the future, and serves as a means of navigating possible futures.

**A1 or B2: Learning the German Language as a Project for the Future in Kosova -  
An Anthropological Analysis of Temporality**

*Zanita Halimi, Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Prishtina*

I would like to present the importance of learning the German language in Kosovo in recent years, highlighting the temporal dimensions of students' experiences. My presentation would include interviews from a German language course, exploring how students perceive and engage with German as part of their future plans. I aim to examine why they chose to learn German, whether for call center jobs in Kosovo, family reunification, migration, or employment in German-speaking countries and how these decisions are shaped by their past experiences and current realities. Additionally, I would share the life stories of the interviewees, focusing on their past, present, and future trajectories: their current work or family situations, aspirations, and the timeframe in which they plan to stay in German-speaking countries. By linking temporalities what brought them to this point, their present experiences, and their future plan.

**The Multidimensionality of Waiting:**

**The Western Balkans Agreement of 2016 from the Perspective of Labor Migrants of  
Kosovo in Germany**

*Qendrim Matoshi, MES-Student, European University Viadrina*

The presentation, based on Master's thesis explains how Kosovar labour migrants experience waiting and liminality under the 2016 Western Balkans Agreement between Germany and Kosovo. While existing researches have mainly approached the regulation from an institutional perspective, the human costs remain neglected. Based on this, the aim of this presentation is to provide an empirical, human-centered analysis of the Agreement drawing on narrative interviews with Kosovar labour migrants, as well as theoretical perspectives on waiting and liminality. Findings from narrative interviews indicate that imposed bureaucratic waiting creates suspension, emotional exhaustion, and uncertainty. Their binding produces a state of liminality where Kosovar labour migrants find themselves "betwixt and between" neither fully in Germany nor fully in Kosovo. The presentation argues that waiting and liminality thus emerge as mutually constitutive rather than discrete phenomena for Kosovar labour migrants. The findings enrich the discourse on the Agreement and open new horizons for policy analysis that move beyond purely economic approaches.

**Waiting, Mobility, and Care: Filipina Migrant Women in Kosovo**

*Artan Krasniqi, Department of Sociology, University of Prishtina*

This presentation examines the lived experiences of Filipina migrant women in Kosovo's domestic and care sectors. Based on eight in-depth interviews, it shows how these women navigate "dual discrimination" as migrants and as women, facing long working hours, blurred boundaries between private and professional life, and forms of gendered invisibility.

Focusing on dynamics of waiting, mobility, and future-making, the analysis highlights how migration trajectories are shaped within a semi-peripheral European context marked by uncertainty and uneven opportunities.

The research will be further developed through legal analysis, an examination of migrant networks from the Philippines, and an exploration of local perceptions in Prishtina, shedding light on the interplay between the valuation of care work and forms of social distance.

### **Caring in Transition:**

#### **Temporality of Moral Expectations vs. Lived Realities in post-war Kosovo**

*Tahir Latifi, Department of Anthropology, University of Prishtina*

This paper explores the transformation of elder care in post-war Kosovo as a temporal issue. Caregiving has traditionally been understood as a moral obligation within the family, while reliance on institutional care is often perceived as a sign of weakened family ties rather than insufficient state support. However, increasing out-migration and demographic shifts are undermining this traditional care structure, leaving many elderly individuals without nearby family support. As informal care declines and institutional alternatives remain underdeveloped, care needs are increasingly unmet.

Consequently, a gap has emerged between what families are expected to provide and what they can realistically deliver. This gap reflects a growing tension between enduring moral expectations of care, rooted in continuity and co-presence, and the lived realities of absence, delay, and fragmentation. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with elderly individuals and institutional caregivers, the paper argues that these emerging care gaps stem from this mismatch between expectations and lived conditions shaped by migration and limited welfare provision. This tension highlights broader challenges in the relationship between family, migration, and welfare in post-war contexts.

### **„We are still doing fine here“.**

#### **The Relatively Good Present and Agency in an Uncertain Future in Rural Germany**

*Judith Althaus, European University Viadrina Frankfurt (Oder)*

While local development is viewed positively on a global scale, there is a pervasive sense of global pessimism. In light of the ongoing debate surrounding the inner-German border and the pervasive influence of the division between East and West Germany on contemporary society, this article explores the translation of this sense of hopelessness at a broader level into the everyday lives of individuals residing in rural areas in Germany at the former German-German border. The discussion draws on an analysis of narratives about the future and future-oriented practices to examine how this worldview affects the villagers' self-perception as active participants. The present is understood in terms of 'so far', whilst the future is viewed as uncertain and therefore generally perceived as worse.

## **Films as Temporal Journey - Narratives of Wartime Sexual Violence in Kosova**

*Linda Gusia, University of Prishtina – Department of Sociology*

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Films produced in Kosova over the past decade have offered heterogeneous interpretations of war narratives, as well as attained the imaginaries and narratives of the lived and embodied experiences of war. Reading the films as sites of ruptures and transgressions, documentation, and ‘archives-in-the-making’ allows not only for critical encounters with issues of remembrance and silencing, but also recognition and everyday practices and temporalities.

Focusing in particular on temporal imaginaries and narratives, we specifically look at films that represent the complex narratives of survivors of wartime sexual violence in Kosova. These five films enable us to analyze interweaving layers of experience, stigma, and plurality of imaginaries of experiences of survivors of wartime sexual violence, and mark the shifts in temporality of remembrance, moving away from linear remembrance.

## **“The times they are a-changin’”:**

### **From *kurbet* to Holiday Returns. Changing Notions of Home among Albanian Migrants from North Macedonia**

*Robert Pichler, Austrian Academy of Sciences*

Return practices and notions of home among Albanian migrants from North Macedonia have undergone profound transformations since the 1960s. While the first generation of labor migrants largely adhered to the idea of temporary absence followed by permanent return, these orientations shifted significantly with family reunification in the 1980s and 1990s. As migrants’ lives became increasingly rooted in the destination countries, ties to the place of origin persisted but assumed new forms.

The repeatedly postponed intention to return evolved into the “myth of the final return,” sustained by outdated visions of the future. At the same time, a shift toward “holiday return” emerged, in which the homeland becomes a space of celebration, leisure, and social reaffirmation.

This contribution traces these developments across three temporal phases: the *kurbet* era up to the 1980s within the framework of socialist Yugoslavia; the period of dissolution, political instability, and war in the 1990s; and the post-2001 phase of sociopolitical stabilization, during which migrants increasingly cantered their lives abroad. The analysis also considers changing economic and political conditions in the destination countries, as well as intra-family dynamics—particularly across generations and genders—that have shaped evolving return practices.