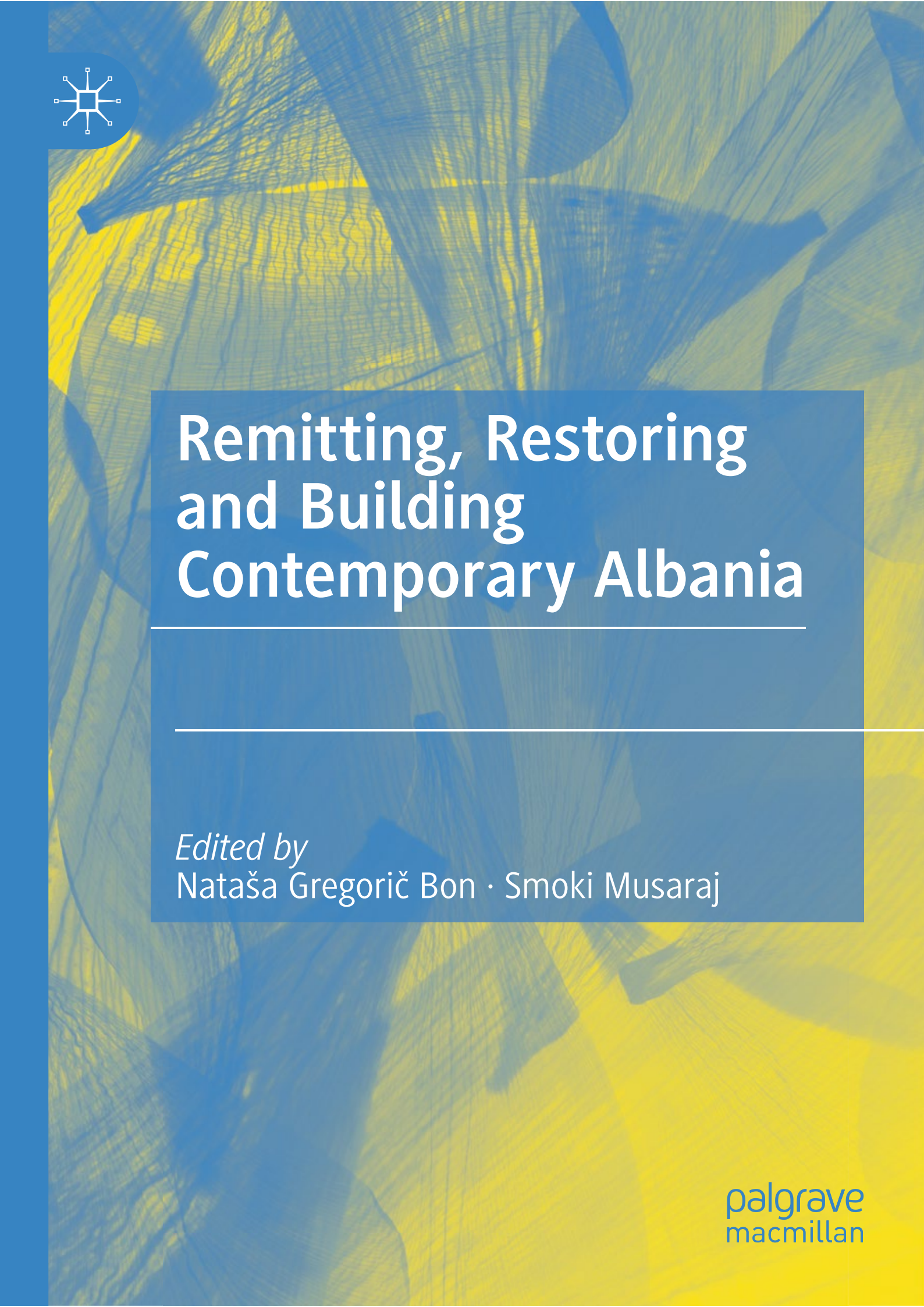

Remitting, Restoring and Building Contemporary Albania

Edited by
Nataša Gregorič Bon · Smoki Musaraj

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ISBN 978-3-030-84090-7 ISBN 978-3-030-84091-4 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-84091-4

Acknowledgments

This volume was conceived at and inspired by the international symposium, entitled "Practices, Materiality, Places and Temporality: New Approaches in Albanian Studies", held at the National Historical Museum in Tirana in October 2018, and organized by the Department of History of the University of Tirana; the Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Art Studies (IAKSA, Tirana); the Institute of Mediterranean, European and Comparative Ethnology (IDEMEC, Aix-en-Provence); and the Centre for Turkish, Ottoman, Balkans, and Central-Asia (CETOBAC, Paris). We are very thankful in particular to the members of the organizing committee, Nebi Bardhoshi, Nathalie Clayer, Gilles de Rapper, Gentiana Kera, Dorian Koçi, Olsi Lelaj, and Enriketa Pandelejmoni-Papa for convening this meeting and for bringing together an interdisciplinary group of Albanian Studies scholars based in Albania, Europe, North America, and the growing scientific diaspora. A number of the authors that are part of this volume, including ourselves, participated in the symposium. The conversations that took place there sparked our interest in putting together an edited volume that would highlight new research on Albanian history, culture, public debate, and art. As we began to plan this volume, we also realized that we could not do justice to all the different strands of research represented in the symposium, nor could we cover all the different Albanian communities, within and outside Albania. We made the decision to focus on communities living within the territory of the nation-state of Albania, including perspectives from anthropology, history, geography, and sociology. As the readers will notice, the specific historical periods of Albania's modern history—especially the communist and postcommunist

history—are a running thread through these chapters. In this sense, we hope that the volume captures local discussions and questions about how to approach these histories thirty years after the collapse of the communist regime in 1991.

We are thankful to a number of people and institutions that supported this project. We thank the three anonymous reviewers who provided very detailed and useful comments on our book proposal. Additionally, we thank the former editor at Palgrave, Mary Al-Sayed, for her interest in and enthusiasm for our project and for guiding us through the first steps of publication. At Palgrave, Elizabeth Graber and Anisha Rajavikraman saw to the successful completion of this project. We also thank Marie-Luise Kartunen for her meticulous copyediting and patience and Tina Krašovic for her enormous help in the final steps of submitting this volume.

The volume was made possible through the financial support of the Slovenian Research Agency [J6-1803, P6-0079].

The editing process of this volume took place during the difficult year of the Covid-19 global pandemic and entailed coordination with authors located in various countries and continents. We thank our authors for their patience and perseverance throughout this process. Last but not least, we thank our respective families in Slovenia and the USA, especially our children, Luka, Vid, and Simone, who were often at the background of our zoom meetings in multiple periods of lockdowns and quarantines.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Remitting, Restoring, and Building Contemporary Albania

Smoki Musaraj and Nataša Gregorič Bon

The year 2021, the year of this volume's publication, is significant for history in many ways, both at the global scale—coming to terms with a pandemic—and at the local. In Albania, these challenging and uncertain times are accompanied by another significant milestone. This year marks the thirtieth anniversary of the fall of the communist regime (1945–1991), described in both popular and academic accounts as one of the harshest and most draconian regimes in the world (de Waal 2005; Schrapel et al. 2016; Vickers 1999), with legacy to ambivalent feelings and memories that continue to divide contemporary Albanian society and politics in many ways. As described in some of the chapters of this volume, the communist regime is remembered in both traumatic and nostalgic ways, relating to past atrocities and more secure times, respectively. In contrast to

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N. Gregorič Bon, S. Musaraj (eds.), *Remitting, Restoring and Building Contemporary Albania*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-84091-4_1

past times when the communist present had a future (cf. Berdahl 2009, 2010; Strathern 2019), contemporary society is struggling with all kinds of unknowns and uncertainties.

Over the last three decades the country has faced numerous ruptures—the fall of the communist regime; concomitant social, political, and economic crises; massive migrations; the fall of the pyramid investment schemes; and near-outbreak of civil war in 1997. What are the presentisms that are lived and experienced in such times? Against this backdrop of continuous upheaval, this volume also points to underlying continuities that have endured, persisting across the centuries. As some of the chapters describe, on the one hand, people often perceive their environment and everyday life as laden with uncertainties and constant changes; on the other, many sense and narrate that despite the seeming "modernization" of the surrounding physical spaces, cultural mindsets and mentalities are continuously tugged "behind" and "backward" (see Bejko; Gregorič Bon; Kalo this volume; Gregorič Bon et al. 2018).

What is it like to live in an environment where the sediments, sentiments, and values of the past continue to (re)appear, to be remitted and (re)stored again? *Remitting, Restoring, and Building Contemporary Albania* delves into the daily lives of people who build their presents by restoring and remitting their pasts in order to plan their futures. The volume brings together contributions by researchers in the social sciences and humanities working on questions of temporality, migration, location, materiality, and art in a contemporary Albania—the so-called European periphery (cf. Green 2005)—that has been experiencing ongoing socio-economic precarity and change for the past thirty years.

One of the underlying themes of this volume is the continuous returning to the structural remnants of the past, here called the process of REMITTING. We depart from the phenomenon of financial remittances to the migrants' country of origin, which, as the scholarly literature on migration points out (Korovilas 1999; Vullnetari 2007; Vullnetari and King 2011a, b), has been an important motor as well as vehicle of the country's economy and individual wellbeing over the past three decades. Thus, for example, between 2004 and 2005, when the country's migration stabilized, remittances amounted to about 1.1 million US dollars and constituted around 14% of Albania's GDP (de Soto et al. 2002). Yet, as described by Vullnetari (2012; this volume) and Gregorič Bon (2017a, b), in addition to the fiscal value, Albanian remittances also entail social, moral, and emotional value. They subsume various objects, such as

clothing, food, and other materials, as well as ideas, emotions, relations, space and temporality, which are important generators of social change as well as constituting links between migrants and their stay-at-home families. Since they often travel and circulate in both directions, from the country of destination to the homeland and back, they have a capacity to transgress geographical distances, polity borders, and social boundaries, restore existing relationships, and create material wealth in the migrant's home-country. Remittances stand for the material and immaterial presences of absent migrants and their "migrant worlds" (cf. Basu and Coleman 2008), which have engendered important historical, political, economic, and social shifts in ideas and social realities throughout history. Thus, as the chapter by Matthew Rosen (this volume) explains, it was no coincidence that the national awakening of the nineteenth century was instigated by Albanian writers living and working abroad. The flow of their ideas and literary works, written in the Albanian language, had the capacity to remit the structural remnants of Albanian society and build the unity of its nation-state. Thus, the process of remitting, in line with its etymological Latin roots—*re* (back) and *mittere* (to send)—has the capacity to restore something that has the potential to bring a better present and future and assure wellbeing (Gregorič Bon in progress).

As noted above, Albanian history has featured recurring regime changes that have typically imagined presents as ruptures with pasts (cf. Strathern 2017, 2019). For instance, the communist regime sought to restart the national historical clock by cutting ties to its recent past, rejecting even those communities and initiatives that had been closely linked before and during World War II. Likewise, the first democratic regime of the 1990s vehemently rejected the communist past, looking to the West, capitalism, and Europe as the true home of the postcommunist Albanian nation. We argue that these repeated ruptures have eroded[1] the "structural terrains" of Albanian society, where fragments of the pasts—either as relations,

[1] Our reference to the process of erosion largely departs from the study by Gregorič Bon, Josipovič, and Kanjir (2018), which argues that the processes of erosion are embodied in social practices, and social practices are spatialized in the landscape. This cross-disciplinary study, which combines an anthropological approach with remote sensing analysis and geographical expertise, explains the interrelationship between geomorphological processes (such as erosion and land cover changes) and social changes (such as migrations). As scholars explain, centuries of migrations on the one hand and persistently high erosion rates on the other—both reaching the highest scales in Europe—have led to a deep interplay between the geophysical characteristics of the landscape and social processes in the Albanian environment.

things, ideas, sentiments, or mythology—seem to be remitted and struggle to be RESTORED in contemporary Albania.

Against the backdrop of continuously eroded pasts, we also document temporalities of the past that persist in the Albanian cultural imaginary, strive to BUILD the present, and open up to potentialities that may pave the way to a better future. In this light, we examine cultural myths, norms, materialities, and mobilities in the *longue durée*, noting ruptures and/or shifting framings or articulations. We also point to alternative contemporary restorations of the recent and distant past(s) in relation to the arts—in painting, photography, and literature, as well as among publishers and in civil society.

Remitting, Restoring, and Building Contemporary Albania explores the temporal, spatial, and material domains that are dragged out, restored, rebuilt, (re)seized, (re)imagined, sensed, or otherwise materialized and lived. By delving into different contexts—such as migration, displacement, urbanization, environmental issues, language theories, and art—the book explores how these different social contexts provide a space for emerging potentialities that might lead to a more secure future and assure peoples' wellbeing. To describe these and other issues, we identify three underlying and interrelated themes that we weave through most of the chapters: migrations—emplacements and displacements; myth and temporality; art, literature, and potentiality.

Migrations—Emplacements and Displacements

One of the images that often accompanied the beginning of the contemporary large-scale migrations of refugees from Syria, other parts of the Middle East, and the African region, in social media as well as in printed news, was that of a cargo ship anchored in port, overcrowded with people, many of whom were still struggling to get on board due to lack of space. The picture was taken on August 8, 1991, at the port of Durrës, when about 20,000 Albanians, mainly from Tirana and Durrës, boarded a cargo ship carrying sugar from Cuba to Albania, forcing the captain to sail to Italy.[2] Italy became a key destination for Albanian migrants at that time

[2] Overladen and with broken engines, the ship eventually reached Brindisi, where the city's deputy chief of police refused to let it dock. It continued to the port of Bari, 55 miles away, a trip of seven hours due to overcrowding. During this time, the Italian authorities had reportedly done little to prepare for the mass arrival. After thirty-six hours of exhausting

(second only to Greece), and was seen by many Albanians as a place of wellbeing and a better future. This phenomenal event, which made widespread media headlines and was later debated in EU political circles because of the non-humanitarian response by the Italian government and European politicians more broadly, marked the start of a decade of massive migrations that reached epic proportions (Vullnetari this volume).

The 1991 event was, however, only one of many clandestine migrations that have shaped Albanian history, its economy, and politics, and permeated the daily lives of Albanians. As Julie Vullnetari writes in her chapter, Albanian migrations are not solely phenomena of the postcommunist period. With the exception of the period of the communist regime (1945–1991)—when internal movement and resettlement were centrally controlled and directed, while leaving the country was strictly forbidden and heavily punished (with the exception of the political elite)—they have been present throughout the centuries.

The first recorded large-scale resettlements in Albanians' collective memory took place in the second half of the fifteenth century. During the period of the Ottoman Empire and after the death of the Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeg—today's national hero—in 1468 an estimated 200,000 people inhabiting what is nowadays Albanian territory moved to present-day Italy, the Dalmatian coast, and southern Greece (Vullnetari 2012, 59; this volume); the movement and migration of people from the region to other parts of the Ottoman Empire were also well-established patterns of social, economic, and cultural life at the time (Blumi 2011).[3] These kinds of movements were referred to as *kurbet* in both social memory and historical accounts. The term is etymologically derived from the Arabic word

travel, mostly without water and food, the migrants were left at the port for hours. Later they were driven to the Stadio Della Vittoria, where they were detained for a week. Due to the unpreparedness of the Italian authorities, the situation in the stadium got out of control, becoming a lawless zone controlled by powerful gangs. When the refugees learned of their imminent deportation, many tried to flee. Food and water were literally thrown over the wall by the authorities with a fire crane, most of it being seized by the gangs. After a week of this chaotic agony, the majority of Vlora's passengers were deported to Albania.

[3]Writing against essentializing categories of ethnic identity in the Balkan region more broadly, Isa Blumi (2011) documents how movement and migration within the Ottoman space and beyond was an integral part of Ottoman society, enabling Albanian merchants, intellectuals, and laborers to move within a multicultural space. Blumi claims that by taking into account these constant movements, migration, and the cultural exchanges that ensued, we gain a different narrative of the past that challenges nationalistic and ethnicized representations of Balkan people and identities.

ghurbeh, which means "a journey to or a sojourn in a foreign land," usually for work purposes (Gregorič Bon 2017a). On the one hand, it carries the idea of migrants' (*kurbetlli*) pain (*dhimbje*) and longing for home and family, as well as the related suffering of migrants missing their loved ones; on the other, it is seen as a heroic sacrifice made by migrants on behalf of their families (Pistrick 2010, see also Vullnetari this volume), which brings social capital such as civilization (*civilizim*), economic development (*zhvillim*), and general wellbeing to the migrants' homeland and the relatives they left behind. Tales of *kurbet* are, therefore, narrated in numerous Albanian folk songs, such as traditional polyphony and rhapsodies, and described in literary works (e.g., Çajupi 1990, 79). Despite centuries of social, political, economic, and cultural changes, *kurbet* continues to play an important role in Albania today and is often used as a synonym for migration in many contexts (Gregorič Bon 2017a; Papailias 2003, 1064; Pistrick 2009, 2010).

This explains why the international scholarly work that appeared after the collapse of the communist regime mainly dealt with the phenomenon of migration. Numerous studies by scholars from Albania and abroad examined the social and cultural meanings of Albanian migration from different perspectives: economic factors, the impact on the country's social life, politics, and economy (Gëdeshi 2010; Gëdeshi and de Zwager 2010; King 2005; Korovilas 1999; Tirta 1999; Vullnetari 2012); remittances (de Zwager et al. 2005; Korovilas 1999; Sjöberg 1992; Vullnetari and King 2011a, b); identity processes and belonging (Vathi 2011); Albanian diaspora (Bonifazi and Sabatino 2003; Dërhemi 2003; Kosic and Triandafyllidou 2003; Mai 2005); "brain" and "care drain" (Glytsos 2006; Vullnetari and King 2008); gender and generational relations (Çaro et al. 2018; Vullnetari 2004; Vullnetari and King 2011a, b); border dynamics and transnationalism (De Rapper and Sintès 2006; Mai and Schwandner-Sievers 2003; Pistrick 2010; Vullnetari 2019); integration processes in host countries, and return migrations and integration processes (Hatziprokopiou 2003; Vathi 2011), among others. While many of these studies have focused on migration as a linear process taking place in a particular time and location and marked by uni-directional moves (migrant moving in one direction, remittance in opposite), more recent anthropological and socio-historical work has sought to explore migrations as a relational, often cyclical passage that encompass multiple directions and relations, which generate displacements as well as emplacements (Dalipaj 2008, 2016; Dalakoglou 2010, 2012; Gregorič Bon 2016, 2017a, b; Musaraj 2017, 2020; Pistrick 2013, 2015; Vullnetari 2019).

In this vein, the chapter by Vullnetari sets Albanian migrations in historical context and highlights their social and cultural implications for processes of emplacement and displacement. She sheds light on important phenomena connected with remittances, both in terms of their economic impact and in the formation of broader emotional and social relationships with the migrants' family, homeland, and belonging. From a temporal perspective, remittances related to migration are significant because they bring back and replace something that has been displaced or taken away. As such, they have the capacity to remit and restore past intimate, emotional relationships between migrants and the families who have remained at home, and have the potential to assure the present and bring a better future. Spatially, these continuous and sporadic flows of remittances eradicate the geographical distances between the migrant's destination and his/her stay-at-home family, and reaffirm the meaning of home and location, and the migrant's emplacement and belonging.

While the topic of international migration since the 1990s has received considerable attention in Albanian studies scholarship, internal movement and displacement during the communist period and after are largely neglected. As discussed in various chapters of this volume, the country's isolation from Europe and the world during the communist regime has been a predominant theme in Albanian studies. Indeed, Albania's ban on travel abroad was one of the most draconian imposed anywhere by a communist regime, while the country was notorious for its policies of self-reliance and an increasing paranoia about the threat of foreign attack. Nevertheless, as Elidor Mëhilli (2017) emphasizes, these isolationist policies and mentalities belong to the late communist period, which was a dramatic change from the 1950s and '60s, a time of intensive economic, cultural, and intellectual exchange with the broader communist bloc. By contrast to the ban on movement abroad, Vullnetari (2012; this volume) and Sula-Raxhimi (this volume) remind us that internal movement and migration were constant and widespread during the communist regime. In her chapter, Vullnetari documents significant internal migration during the early post-war era, driven in part by government projects of urbanization and industrialization and partly a result of the connected and intensifying rural-urban migration that followed increasing collectivization. These movements decreased from the '70s onward, when, following the Cultural Revolution, stricter regulations controlling residence and mobility were implemented. Nevertheless, other forms of migration or displacement took place throughout the communist period, such as requiring

certain professions (teachers, doctors, army officers, engineers) to work in rural and remote areas or exiling the politically persecuted to remote labor camps (see also Sula-Raxhimi this volume).

Sula-Raxhimi's chapter takes up another set of internal displacements that have been an understudied topic in Albanian studies, namely, the displacement of the Roma and Egyptian communities throughout the communist regime and the postcommunist period. The chapter draws on Michel Foucault's notion of "heterotopia," defined as "real places that are outside of all places" (Foucault 2001, 1574), to think about how marginal spaces inhabited by the Roma and Egyptian communities were made possible in communist and postcommunist Albania. During the communist regime, writes Sula-Raxhimi, the Roma population in Albania was targeted and controlled through specific policies of sedentarization, education, and employment, as part of the main reforms for the urbanization and industrialization of the country. Nomadic and semi-nomadic communities were forced to reside in specific neighborhoods, located mainly on the outskirts of cities, such as Kinostudio and Selite in Tirana, and Rrapishta in Elbasan, where cheap apartments were built to house Roma families. In the postcommunist period, as the Roma communities once again found themselves economically marginalized due to neoliberal economic and development-induced urban policies, many lost their homes and ended up living in shacks and semi-legal dwellings on the new margins of cities. Sula-Raxhimi defines these encampments as "heterotopias of displacement and precariousness" driven and shaped by new urban development initiatives and neoliberal policies that for some produce abandonment and isolation. This account of the Roma displacements is valuable not just for broadening the study of a marginalized group in Albania; it also makes a contribution to the study of statecraft, during both the communist and postcommunist periods, as it is articulated and reproduced through the control of space and of population groups.

Migrations and concomitant processes of emplacements and displacements have also contributed to relocating Albania on the geopolitical map over the centuries (see Gregorič Bon 2017a). While, during the autocratic regime and its associated state apparatuses set Albania's location exactly in the center of the geopolitical map of Europe and the world, since the collapse of the regime due to political and economic crisis, its geopolitical location has shifted to Europe's very margins. In the last decade, as a result of Europeanization processes, the location of Albania has oscillated even more intensely between the center and the margins. In light of this, Smoki

Musaraj (this volume) describes how contemporary claims of residents and architects about the restoration and preservation of the coastal city Saranda, and the retention of its Mediterranean outlook and spirit, work toward setting Albania on the map of Mediterranean Europe. This appeal to positioning the Mediterranean as a new horizon of the future is also present in Julian Bejko's chapter. In a comparable way, as Cecilie Endresen (this volume) explains, though through different narratives, some Albanians seek to emplace the nation and its history on the world map through alternative myths about language primacy and its origins, which they portray as the cradle of civilization. This way of locating Albania on the wider geopolitical and social map generates a particular space-time that opens up an important and hitherto overlooked question of temporality.

Myth and Temporality

Although thirty years have passed since the fall of the communist regime, a large body of scholarly literature, as well as popular discourse, still refers to the present as the postcommunist period, which is characterized as an ongoing process of "building" (*ndërtimi*), of migration and mobility, and of being on the "road to" (*rruga për*) "transition," "modernization," "development," or "going towards Europe" (*të shkojmë drejt Europës*). Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers and Bernd J. Fischer (2002), in their seminal volume *Albanian Identities*, argue that mythohistories or "archetypal structures" (Schwandner-Sievers and Fischer 2002, 7) that are grounded in the past are embedded in the processes of building a postcommunist national identity. With this, the authors suggest the tendency of continuous return to the structural remnants of the past, which, as we argue, are important in understanding the present and building "individual and collective futures" (cf. Petrović-Šteger 2018, 2020a, b). We see the tendency to remit and restore the structural terrain as a "symptom" that has a *longue durée* in the Albanian historical imaginary of time-space.

How is the present lived and experienced by the people of Albania, who often express the feeling that their daily lives are beset by constant change and uncertainties? The experience of the present, according to historian Reinhardt Koselleck (2004), is structured by the space of experience and the horizon of expectations. The space of experience refers to the relationship with the past, while the horizon of expectations shapes the specific

orientation toward the future. Time and temporality are crucial aspects of the everyday experience and imaginaries of any society, but they are especially pertinent in cultural contexts undergoing deep social, political, and economic transformations, and those post-communism entailed tectonic shifts in the collective imagination of time and history. In Albania, as in other postcommunist contexts, the transformations reset the orientation toward past, present, and future, producing a period marked by specific rhythms and tempos of everyday life that are distinct from other times. A number of chapters in this volume engage with these themes, bringing to light multiple historical temporalities (the glorious past, the timeless temporality of tradition and folk culture, the communist past); multiple ways of restoring the past (as nostalgia, as postmemory, as a history of the present); articulations of the experience of time in post-communism; and multiple orientations toward the future (the future as a rupture from the present, as an enduring temporality, as a restoration of particular myths and moral values).

The subjects of myth, tradition, and folk culture have long been central topics of Albanian studies, both locally and internationally. Orientalist European anthropological studies of Albanian culture, for instance, have fetishized studies of *kanun* (an unwritten code of honor and law) and *besa* (honor, oath). Communist ideology also appropriated this fetishization, as well as folk culture more generally, and reframed them as cultural essence and a crucial component of Albanian nationalism. Bardhoshi and Lelaj (2018) note that this was then temporalized during the communist times as remnants (*mbeturinat*) of the past that had to be cleansed through the emancipatory practices of communist modernity (see also Bardhoshi 2018; Bejko this volume). The fetishization and temporalization of tradition, myth, and folk culture have reemerged in the context of postcommunist transformations, a phenomenon with which chapters in this volume engage, providing more nuanced and multiple appropriations and critique of the imaginaries of myth, tradition, and folk culture.

One innovative approach in these chapters is to highlight how different actors—artists, environmental activists, amateur linguists, among others—evoke, restore, idealize, and/or critique various myths and traditional culture. In some chapters, myths and tradition feature as an idealized past that is invoked in the present as a way of critique, of restoring/generating national pride, and as what Rosen calls, following Raymond Williams, a "structure of feeling." Gregorič Bon, for instance, explores the invocation of the mythological figure of Kuçedra as a means to remit and restore the

meaning of and relation to authority, and bring back vital understandings of water and "environment" in order to reassure sustainable futures. Endresen explores the emergence of a new national myth based on amateur linguistic theories that the ancient Albanian language is the origin of various world languages. Other forms of glorious pasts recur in a number of chapters that explore contemporary engagements with the communist period. De Rapper studies communist photography and points to different moments (the 1980s and '90s) that featured photography from before the communist period in reference to an "eternal and immutable" Albania. In Endresen's study, the glorious past serves as a source of pride that counters the experience of marginality in the contemporary geopolitical and cultural space of Europe, thus serving as a temporal reference point for articulating identity and community that circumvents the twists and turns of history.

A number of chapters that focus on the production of literature, art, and photography also note persistent local engagements with myth and tradition that present various approaches, some disclosing different forms of idealization and nostalgia, others critiquing self-Orientalizing representations. Thus, a work of art featured in Sofia Kalo's chapter consists of a video of a grandmother making *byrek*—a traditional dish originating in Ottoman cuisine—thus capturing a historically specific affect, namely, emigrant nostalgia for the country left behind. Yet other examples of artistic or literary production take a critical approach to contemporary invocations of myth and tradition in the Albanian public sphere. Another artistic example explored in Kalo's chapter, for instance, features an Albanian man of traditional appearance. The painting, titled "Homo Balkanicus," performs a critique of the traditional mentality (*mentalitet i vjeter*) that is holding back Albanian culture. Backward mentalities, Bejko reminds us, were also a target of communist ideology and propaganda, which temporalized cultural practices; *mentaliteti i vjetër* was a remnant of the past, while emancipation was the promise of communist modernity. Bejko concurs that the notion of *mentalitet i vjetër* persists in contemporary Albania as well, marking a continuity between communism and post-communism. Additionally, Rosen traces nationalist discourses of a glorious past in nineteenth-century Albanian literature but notes that readers and publishers of his acquaintance in twenty-first-century Albania do not share these idealized visions of traditional national culture but are, on the contrary, critical of the dominant Ottoman, communist, and postcommunist forms of governance and cultural discourse. These approaches to myth and

tradition reflect a growing critique of the self-Orientalization of Albanian culture in public and official discourses, and also in academic representations.[4]

Albanian studies of the past three decades have engaged with time and temporality in various ways. Recent historical works have revised Albania's position and changing relations with the broader socialist world, highlighting important periods and transformations within the communist period from the internationalism of the '50s and '60s to the increasing isolationism of the '70s and '80s (Bejko this volume; Mëhilli 2017). A number of historical and ethnographic accounts produced in the first two decades of the twenty-first century also explore the discourse and practice of a communist modernity that permeated developments in infrastructure and industry (Mëhilli 2017); the everyday life of peasants and workers undergoing a process of proletarianization (Lelaj 2015); and the production of music, literature, art, and photography (de Rapper 2019; Rosen 2019; Tochka 2016). Other works explore the microhistories and experience of everyday life during communism (Hemming et al. 2012; King and Vullnetari 2016; Vullnetari and King 2014; Woodcock 2016). Using the oral histories of people who lived through it, Shannon Woodcock (2016) for instance, draws attention to the microhistories of the time, which provide a nuanced and granular account of the experiences, affects, and struggles of the everyday under the communist regime. In a similar vein, the project "*Zërat e Kujtesës*" (Voices of Memory) (Lleshanaku and Tufa 2014–2016), organized by the Institute for the Study of Communist Crimes and Consequences in Albania, has built up an archive of such memories as a way to provide more depth and nuance to the experience and postmemory of communism in Albania. More remains to be done, however, in scholarly work.

Remitting, Restoring, and Building Contemporary Albania presents multiple forms of engagement with the pre-communist and communist pasts by various actors in contemporary Albania that highlight a multiplicity of temporalities that are often entangled or/and coalesced. A number of contributions in this volume are grounded in the broader literature on

[4] On Orientalism in representations of the Balkans in literature and scholarly accounts see Todorova (2009). On the presence of Orientalism in Albanian literature and intellectual life see Sulstarova (2006).

postcommunist memory and/or nostalgia.[5] Tracing the history of nostalgia as an emotion imbued with a particular temporality, Svetlana Boym (2001) approaches the emergence of this affect in various postcommunist cities, framing such expressions as a critique of the present and distinguishing between restorative and reflective nostalgia: the former seeks to restore an idealized and sanitized version of the past, whereas the latter regards the past as a vantage point from which to critique the present.

A number of chapters in this volume note manifestations of different forms of memory and/or nostalgia in artistic expression, photography, and architecture. De Rapper, for instance, considers the orientation toward the communist past in the publication of two albums of communist photography. He notes that, while the authors of these albums seek to restore a temporality of timeless humanity that was co-opted by communist ideology, the images within them attest to the communist past as a memory that endures and needs to be restored and reckoned with in the present. Kalo finds the production of postmemory (Hirsch 2008) and reflective nostalgia in a number of the works by artists who draw comparisons and parallels between the failure of the communist past and the postcommunist present (see also Rosen this volume). Smoki Musaraj notes the mobilization of a restorative nostalgia in state redevelopment projects, such as the "Return to Identity" urban renewal initiative that painted Tirana's communist buildings in bright colors. This project, however, is criticized by residents and artists alike (see Kalo this volume) for not going far enough in restoring and redeveloping the crumbling architecture and infrastructures of communism or in developing better postcommunist cities.

Another important temporality explored in postcommunist studies is that of modernity, which implies a temporality of linear progress toward a future radically different from the past. Scholars of postcommunist societies have revisited communism as an alternative modernity and also explored the disenchantment with both communist and postcommunist modernities. Explorations of modernity permeate many chapters in this volume,

[5] Early works focused on what is now defined as the first wave of postcommunist nostalgia, a nostalgia of people who were born and lived under the communist regime and were disenchanted with the early outcomes of the postcommunist transformations (Berdahl 1999; Boym 2001; Ghodsee 2011; Todorova and Gille 2010). A later wave, referred to as the second wave of nostalgia or postmemory, occurred in younger generations who had not experienced the communist times first-hand but were nonetheless drawn to that memory and lost past (Oushakine 2020; Petrović 2010a, b).

raising issues that include the failure of communist modernity described in conversations with readers and publishers in Tirana (Rosen this volume); the negative qualisigns of grayness and drabness attached to prefabricated, concrete panel apartments (Musaraj this volume); and a critical reading of communist-era films and discourses of morality and emancipation (Bejko this volume). Yet the chapters also speak of the disenchantment with post-communist modernity, as reflected in the popular discourses of the "betonizim" (concretization) (Musaraj this volume) or the destruction of the city (Rosen this volume) as a result of neoliberal development strategies. The chapter by Sula-Raxhimi reminds us that such policies have pushed different social groups at the margins of the city, living in different temporalities altogether. She documents the displaced lives of the Roma and Egyptian communities who live in makeshift structures in various margins of Tirana and whose repeated dislocations place them in a space of heterotopia, thus inhabiting a temporality that is clearly situated outside the national one, whether that is one of progress or of crisis.

To contrast discourses of modernity and progress, many of the interlocutors in these chapters note everyday efforts to materialize an enduring temporality. De Rapper and Kalo, for instance, call for an enduring temporality of the communist past in the present, not as a form of nostalgia but as a form of memory that needs to be reckoned with and that continues to shape the present. Musaraj's and Gregorič Bon's interlocutors demand a stop to "development," whether in the form of dams or of new high rises, and a preservation and restoration of existing natural landscapes and built infrastructures (the river, public spaces, parks). These enduring temporalities (Ringel 2014) are distinct from projects of restorative nostalgia in that they do not seek to glorify the past; further, they set themselves against the neoliberal temporalities of punctuated present and the promise of a messianic future (Guyer 2007; Musaraj 2020) that are intrinsic to the ongoing and uncontained construction in urban and rural areas.

Several of these works associate "the future" with "Europe," an association that has also been explored by other recent scholars (Dalipaj 2016; Gregorič Bon 2018; Musaraj 2020). As mentioned earlier, Musaraj's and Bejko's chapters in this volume discuss Europe and/or the Mediterranean as a horizon of expectations in twenty-first-century Albania. Europe and/or the Mediterranean here takes on different meanings and reflects different temporalities, standing either for a possible and desirable political horizon (such as accession to the European Union) or as a timeless temporality

that needs to be restored (such as belonging to a timeless European and Mediterranean cultural and physical space).

Taken together, these chapters push our thinking in the direction of modernity as a multiple rather than a singular project. Further, the chapters explore the potentialities of the future as they are imagined in the present: a horizon of expectations (Koselleck 2004) that shapes everyday experience. These multiple potentialities are further explored in chapters that study artistic and literary production in the postcommunist era.

Art, Literature, and Potentiality

Key recent contributions look to the history and practices of art production during communism and after (Kalo 2017a, b; Pistrick 2015; Tochka 2016), engaging, among other things, with popular song, state-controlled music production, and visual arts. These works explore political ideologies and their critiques, as well as affects performed and generated through these different artistic mediums. A key novel contribution of this volume is a deep engagement with "the social life" (Appadurai 1988) of artistic production, from the artist/producers, through intermediaries, to consumers/publics.

The volume offers ethnographic insights into various artistic communities: communist-era photographers (de Rapper this volume), indie book publishers and translators based in Tirana (Rosen this volume), and the visual artists of the transition period (Kalo this volume). In these chapters, we learn about the lives of these artists and publishers, their everyday challenges and frustrations, their local and transnational life trajectories, and the extensive social and professional networks that sustain and inform their works. By tracing the everyday lives of these cultural producers, the chapters highlight the challenges posed by the free-market economy to the world of artistic production and circulation. Free-market injustices and political corruption are prevalent themes in contemporary studies of Albania (Hoxhaj 2019; Kajsiu 2016; Musaraj 2018, 2020); they are also themes that emerge in the study of the lives of the artists and cultural producers, as well as artistic representations. Thus, the directors of the publishing house *Pika pa sipërfaqe* express cynicism and frustration over the economic pressures and challenges that the publishing world faces in Albania today (Rosen this volume). Seeking to expand the range of literature available to the Albanian reader, they encounter significant challenges that arise from a ruthless market regime and endemic corruption. Kalo

also posits market demands and limitations as an important factor shaping artistic production in Albania (Kalo 2017a, b; this volume). The protagonists of her ethnography are artists who are very much aware of and concerned with the global art market and attuned to the global interest in "alternative representations of difference" and "strangeness," while also providing "salient cultural critiques" (Kalo this volume) that seek to stimulate local debate as well as challenge representations of Albanian in the West.

Art, literature, and photography are, therefore, more than just a medium of representation and a vehicle of restoration of something that has been almost forgotten, intentionally buried (due to traumatic experiences), destroyed, or otherwise repressed. Eckehard Pistrick (2015) writes about migration songs of the post-1990s as popular artistic productions that are not just expressions of the traumatic experience of exile, but that also perform human action and cultural creativity. As aptly presented and explained in the chapters by Kalo, de Rapper, Rosen, and Bejko, art images, films, photographs, and literary works are active agents that engage with various pasts—be it distant or current—evoking affects, traumas, and memories, and restoring the present. By unveiling and juxtaposing different layers of the past, artworks and literature have the capacity to reflect, restore, and rebuild past events and interpret them in the nexus of contemporary events. Artistic objects and their expressions create the potentiality to transgress and/or transform the individual and society. Following Strathern, we define potentiality[6] "as the capacity for development as yet unrealized" (Strathern 1996, 17). In this sense, the ethnographic insights into various artistic communities in this volume generate potentialities that open up new ways of "looking at the communist past"

[6] In anthropology, the study of potentiality largely departs from research on reproductive technologies, biomedicine, and related issues (Strathern 1996; Taussig et al. 2013). In recent decades, potentiality has become a topic of temporal anthropology, with a particular focus on future realms (Bryant and Knight 2019; Petrović-Šteger 2020a, b). Here we particularly take as our starting point Petrović-Šteger's argument that the task of anthropology is to offer not only "critical descriptions of the present (on its historical trajectories), but possible intimations of a society's futures. Anthropological analysis, in other words, not only describes but also anticipates" (Petrović-Šteger 2020a, 3). In this view, we see the chapters dealing with art and artworks as textual trajectories that open up potentialities and might lead to possible assumptions and anticipations of something not yet realized, elaborated, or otherwise present.

(de Rapper this volume) or creating "new" (Rosen this volume) or "different" realities (Kalo this volume).

Kalo, for example, describes a number of artistic works that engage with folklore representations, the communist past, and postcommunist transition and portray ambivalent feelings such as resentment and nostalgia for the past. Thus, artistic production has the capacity to mobilize its audience and allow them to reflect on past atrocities, as well as to evoke pleasant memories. The artworks uncover different layers of history whose vestiges still endure and permeate contemporary lives as active agents that create potentiality for a possible transformation of individuals and society. De Rapper's chapter also grapples with potentiality, suggesting that the exhibition of communist photography instantiates the past as residue in the present. Communist photography thus becomes an object of a timeless reality that evokes the new "regime of historicity" (Hartog 2003), which can be read as having the potential to offer new or fresh views of the past and present, and to pave the way to a better future. Processes of building different, fresh, or new realities are also addressed in Rosen's chapter on literature and Albanian literary production. Intimate and comprehensive conversations between the ethnographer and young indie publishers reveal their ambitions to expand people's knowledge and enrich their mindsets (*mentalitet*). In their "organic" but at the same time strategic way of translating, publishing, and positioning national and international literary works in the Albanian market, these publishers aim to create "new realities" as an alternative to the uncertain everyday. They see their publishing activity as a social project or mission that aims to disseminate knowledge and "emancipate society." In this view, publishing activities create the potential for social and individual change—a prerequisite for a better future.

Although the studies in this volume do not explicitly address or elaborate in detail the meaning of potentiality, all tackle it implicitly. Hence, the chapters present various potentialities as "latently imagined" possibilities (Taussig et al. 2013, S4) of something that seems to appear, or that might or might not appear at all. Potentiality, thus, could be defined as something that is still in the process of becoming and not yet realized. In this sense, these chapters also lay new ground for future directions in Albanian studies.

Art, literature, and potentiality; myth and temporality; migrations, emplacements, and displacements are just some of the themes evoked explicitly or between the lines of this volume. These themes reflect recent

debates and contributions in the field of Albanian studies at large. We hope that this volume further extends these discussions and offers original perspectives on the recent history and the everyday experiences in twenty-first-century Albania. In conclusion, we highlight some key contributions.

Conclusion

One key contribution of the volume is our reflections on time and temporality as represented, imagined, and experienced in contemporary Albania. The chapters include articulations of different modernities—from the prewar to the communist to the postcommunist/European ones. Additionally, the volume explores multiple contemporary engagements with the communist and pre-communist past. These reflections echo local artistic production and public debate about representations of the past in the present. Our volume examines state-led initiatives to restore the past while also documenting various critical approaches to this past in art, literature, photography, and film. While acknowledging the multiplicity of these approaches, the volume underscores the enduring presence of the communist experience and the imperative to reckon with this presence.

A second contribution speaks to the *longue dureé* of Albanian mobilities, past and present, as well as the emplacements and displacements of different communities under different political regimes. Building upon a burgeoning literature around Albanian migration, our volume also emphasizes the intended and unintended top-down and bottom-up forces that shape, control, and affect migration patterns, remittance flows, and social ties among migrants, their kin, and the state.

Last but not least, the volume also provides insight into contemporary claims and aspirations toward different and better futures. We explore these claims to the future in everyday experience and discourse as well as in artistic portrayal and literary expressions. The volume provides new insights into forms of potentiality explicitly or implicitly evoked in contemporary forms of activism, artistic and literary production, and scholarly work. Here we invite readers to immerse themselves in the myriad timescapes experienced in contemporary Albania, and hope to inspire new topics and questions for further research.

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