UNIVERSITY OF DERBY

TRANSNATIONALISM AND MIGRATION: THE CONCEPT OF HOME IN POST-COMMUNIST ALBANIAN DIASPORAS

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Practice-based Research PhD submitted to the College of Arts, Humanities and Education of the University of Derby

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Preface

This practice-based research is my original investigation to submit for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy to the College of Arts, Humanities and Education at the University of Derby.

I would like to point out that none of the text of this research was taken directly from previously published articles or books, except for the references used, which are given in detail directly in the text and also at the end of the theses in the bibliography.

All interviews with Albanian contemporary artists were conducted with their permission to be published for my research. Some of the paintings of these Albanian artists used for my research are entitled in Albanian, which I have translated into English, and some of them were originally given English titles by the artists.

The series of oil paintings presented in Chapter 4 are my independent work undertaken as part of this research. During the research process, parts of this investigation have been published and exhibited at Theorem (Cambridge School of Art) (Vaqari 2017, 2019a), Dean Clough Galleries in Halifax (Vaqari, 2018), and in the journal *Medius* (Vaqarri 2019b).

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Abstract

This practice-based research aims to present the concept of home in post-Communist Albanian diasporas, particularly focussing on linking home to particular places, multiple homes, loss of home, how an old home transfers to a new home and the creation of a new home, as well as how such concepts can be represented in a body of creative practice. The research introduces the historical causes of Albanian migration, especially highlighting migration after the fall of Communism in order to understand in depth the causes of the most dramatic mass migration in modern Albanian history. The context of Albanian art is also considered: first through Socialist Realist art, which was widely practiced during the Communist regime, and played a significant role in transforming the concept of home and Albanian identity. Secondly, through contemporary art after the fall of Communism, where I focus on some artists whose work is relevant to my subject matter. Interviews have been conducted to investigate the ways in which these Albanian contemporary artists have dealt with the concept of home. Transnationalism is discussed and analysed from the perspective of contemporary Albanian migration in terms of the political, economic and socio-cultural aspects. Furthermore, theorising the concept of home has led to a focus in my practical work on the physical space, social relationships and positive emotional attachments. My art practice takes the form of a series of oil paintings which are a reaction to and build upon this theoretical and practical basis. The paintings are described and analysed as research outputs considering how technical aspects such as shape, size, composition, and colour are used and experimented with to investigate transnationalism and the concept of home. Following discussion of exhibitions of the body of work, it is concluded that art practice is a suitable medium to respond to and open debate on such turbulent personal and emotional contemporary issues.

Acknowledgements

Without you all I could not have imaged getting to this point!

God bless you all!

Introduction

Aims

This project aims to investigate, through practice-based research, the concept of home as a facet of identity after the collapse of Communism in Albania, and the resulting transformation of the definition, perceptions, memories, and experiences of home arising from the newfound transnationalism. There is particular reference to Germany and the UK where I have a personal experience of the situation. In investigating these themes, I intend to:

1. Understand the importance of national identity and transnationalism relating to the concept of home within the historical, social, geographical and political contexts.
2. Draw similarities or differences between the countries and cultures in question in relation to their role in understanding the concept of transnational home.
3. Explore and understand past and future perspectives of this transnationalism.
4. Explore ways to symbolise the home in the three nations for transnational migrants and represent these in a body of creative practice.
5. Understand how the process and form of my creative practice may answer the research questions and contribute to new knowledge.

Rationale

There are a number of motivations for undertaking this project: first the current trend of globalization, which constantly questions the concepts of identity, culture, and nationality, making it no longer easy to define the nature of the local and the international. As a result, the transnational is taking on greater importance. While the idea of the transnational home is in itself a widely debated issue, and the concept of home has been investigated through a range of media, I am not aware of any research that allows a multi-faceted view of Albanian

transnationalism. More specifically there is a lack of research relating to the large scale Albanian emigration to Germany and the UK (Azzarri and Calogero, 2009), where immigration, including from Albania, has been and continues to be a hugely controversial topic, particularly in relation to the current political landscape.

Furthermore, the situation in Albania following the fall of Communism is particularly noteworthy. During the Communist regime, emigration from Albania had been extremely limited, and under the isolated regime Albanians were raised to see themselves as "the navel of the world" (Lubonja, 2000:15). The fall of Communism not only shattered these illusions, but also led to political and economic instability across Albania, which impacted significantly on Albanian society and resulted in three major episodes of migration. First with the fall of the Iron Curtain across Eastern Europe, and directly after the fall of the Communism in Albania in 1990-1992; secondly, with the collapse of the Albanian pyramid savings schemes in 1997; and thirdly, with the Kosovo war in 1999 (King and Vullnetari, 2009a). Despite this, research on Albanian transnationalism has been scarce.

Current research is mostly concerned with gender and economic issues. After the collapse of Communism, Albanian migration was mainly a male phenomenon (King and Vullnetari, 2009b). In the early 1990s, female migration was characterized through marriage and joining a partner, or following the family migration (Konica and Filler, 2009). The rate of female migration had increased considerably by the late 1990s, and according to Italian statistics the number increased from twenty-four per cent in 1994 to thirty-nine per cent in 2000 (Bonifazi and Sabatino, 2003). This impacted significantly on traditional social and family life. The economic and social remittances of migration have been another focus of much of the research in this field. The current importance of economic issues, which are a result of the political situation, alongside the current European migrant crisis means that Albanian transnationalism remains a controversial topic. Despite its extent, I am unaware of any artistic projects that have dealt with Albanian transnationalism on an extensive scale.

Therefore, in drawing together these elements, the project provides a new context in which to undertake further research on Albanian transnationalism and the concept of home.

Another motivation for undertaking the project relates to the value of creative art practice as a research method. While many studies have been undertaken in order to understand and define transnationalism, the theoretical debate continues (Vertovec, 2009), seemingly becoming more and more abstract. Thus, alongside theoretical research, there is also a need to problematise the subject matter through the visual image in art practice to address the highly personalised experiences and emotions. A particular benefit of art practice as a research methodology is that it can merge the theoretical and practical, by opening a debate among artists, historians and critics of art. Moreover, the multi-faceted, emotional, and introspective nature of the subject means that art practice, more specifically painting, is particularly suited as a medium to explore these issues, whereby content, process and form may be used and experimented with in order to reach an understanding of the concept of home.

The significant value of painting alongside other new art media continues to be relevant and to have a privileged position in the contemporary art world. Various artists have used the medium of painting to address issues of migration, identity and the concept of home. My work can be seen alongside the work of some of these artists who have explored these issues within a comparable formal and conceptual framework. These include the African-American painter Jacob Lawrence (1917-2000), British artist Lubaina Himid (b. 1954), and German artist Gerhard Richter (b. 1932). While these artists have all explored similar subject matter, they have not necessarily dealt with the specific transnational context of migration. However, there are similarities to my work, such as the influence of personal experience of migration on their work, and in their manipulation of the technical aspects of painting, specifically, working through a series of paintings of the same scale and format, and applying different stylistic approaches.

Lawrence created a series of paintings entitled *Migration of the Negro* (1941) dealing with the mass movements of African American migrants at the beginning of the 20th century from the rural south to the urban north of the United States (Hills, 2009). For this series, he intentionally used the same shape and size, in order for the works to be seen as a unified narrative of his personal experience of migration. He conceptualised the paintings as sequences of migrants' daily lives, by treating the images in a combination of Realist and Abstract Expressionist styles.

Himid elaborates themes of culture, identity and belonging among African migrants. In her series of ten paintings entitled *Revenge* (1993), she focuses on the role and influence of black African migrants in European history and culture, but also suggesting some oscillation of their identity (Rice, 2003). She has used large canvases for her artworks, which feature pairs of black women in various scenes applying a modernist abstract style treated through thick brush strokes and using metaphoric images to address political issues of migration, such as exile, displacement and loss.

Richter is a prominent example of how an artist applies different visual approaches. His ability to explore the medium of painting is shown clearly in his use of different stylistic approaches, such as Socialist Realist Art, Photorealism, Pop Art and Postmodernism (Storr and Richter, 2002). His early training at the Academy of Fine Arts in Dresden was focussed on Socialist Realism, which was the official style of visual arts in East Germany. His relocation from East to West Germany allowed him to discover modern art, and thereafter he began to experiment with a range of styles and techniques in his painting. Richter's series of landscapes entitled *Korsika* (1968) treats the image with precise realistic detail through colourful, smooth and blurred use of paint. This shows the influence of the Socialist art school during his education in East Germany. The influence of German romantic art, particularly Caspar David Friedrich, can also be seen in technical elements of the composition, such as the allegorical conception of the landscape achieved through the use of light and contrast (Elger, 2009). At the same time, in contrast to his photorealist work, with

the series *Farbschlieren* (1968) he was also experimenting with abstract shapes, applying blurred and transparent streaks and layers in thick brushstrokes, giving the illusion of spaces and places. The development of Richter's work over time clearly shows how it has questioned the association between different artistic styles political ideologies and suggests his scepticism towards style for this reason. My own stylistic approach is similar to that of Richter in that we both began our artistic formation within Socialist Realist art and have been influenced by this style, but later, through migration, have developed modernist stylistic influences. However, whilst Richter applies different styles in different paintings, I have combined different styles within a painting, which can be seen as a reference to the mobility of transnationalism.

Instead of choosing a realistic approach to their images, these artists use an abstract visual language to represent their subject matter, which is transmitted through their technical skills, such as the use of colour, shape, lines and expressive emotion. Furthermore, these artists have used series of paintings to represent historical scenes of migration and gender issues. However, in the context of my research, the series of paintings is to be seen as a continuum in which each painting complements the others to suggest various aspects of the transnational home, combining different stylistic approaches focusing on a realistic visual representation of the subjects (see Chapter 4 for further detail).

Personal experience and previous creative practice

Originally from Tirana, the capital of Albania, I grew up during the Communist regime and experienced its fall in 1990, which for me has bound the concept of home with the historical and political situation. Having later lived, studied, exhibited and worked in Germany and the UK, I have experienced transnationalism personally and been part of the Albanian diasporas in these countries, and now have dual Albanian-German nationality.

As a student at the University of Art in Tirana, I was taught and mentored by several of the artists whose work is discussed as part of this thesis. These include Shefki Çela, Ali Oseku, and Edi Rama, and much of my creative practice at that time focussed on political aspects of the historical context or nostalgic representations of home. For example, the final work for my Master's degree was directly related to the political and economic situation in 1997, which caused migration on a large scale from Albania (Vullnetari, 2007). During this time my country was thrown into chaos and on the brink of civil war, due to the collapse of the pyramid savings schemes (Jarvis, 1999) (see Section 1.4.2 for further detail). The composition of *The year of 1997* (2000) (Fig. 0.1) consists of three images.

Figure.0.1. Dashamir Vaqari. *The Year of 1997,* 2000.
Oil on Canvas, 110 x 150 cm. Photograph the Author.

In the foreground a shattered glass dominates, and a bone appears in the centre of the breakage. The shape of the fracture in the centre of the glass implies an image of three fingers, which was a significant symbol used by the Serbian army during the wars in the former Yugoslavia (1991-2001). This symbol was taken on by some southern Albanians during their protests against the government for the loss of their savings in 1997 (Vickers and Pettifer, 2007). Considering this, I intended to connect the meaning of this symbol with the shape of the bones emerging from the broken glass, which is conceptualized in the allegorical form of a raised fist, a symbol commonly perpetuated by Communist regimes. The economic protests in 1997 also took on a political significance, being supported by the Albanian Socialist Party, formerly the Albanian Workers' Party (Partia e Punës e Shqipërisë, or PPSH), which ruled Albania for forty-five years during the Communist regime (Vickers and Pettifer, 2007). The broken glass might symbolically suggest fragility and be a metaphor for the unstable democracy, which still prevails in Albania. The breakage itself was intended to convey an impression of a shot from a gun, entailing the turmoil and conflict of the protests. In the background, bone shapes dominate the composition, symbolising the people killed by criminal gangs. To create further dramatic effect I used a black background as a metaphor for my pain as an artist in the perpetuation of this situation.

During my studies in Tirana, I engaged with various works, exhibitions and other artists but this was never as part of a structured project or undertaken in a research context; it was rather a combination of individual works on a similar theme.

My relocation to Germany in order to study brought a great change to my life, in memories, experiences and perceptions of homeland, which are reflected strongly in my creative output at the time. It is not that my visual approach as an artist changed, rather the purpose and the ideas behind the work when seen against my feelings and longing for the homeland began to develop and were reflected strongly in my work, for example *Longing* (2005) (Fig. 0.2), which was first exhibited in "*My Life part 2*" (Vaqari, 2005) at the Art Forum of the University of Regensburg, Germany.

Figure 0.2. Dashamir Vaqari. *Longing,* 2005.
Oil on Canvas, 60 x 80 cm. Photograph the Author.

In creating this work I was fascinated with how history, architecture and urban spaces are common to a place when compared with other regions, and might identify warm emotional attachment to that place, allowing it to take on the concept of home. Superficially, this composition may be perceived as an image of a single city, but I have connected my nostalgia and homesickness for Tirana during my stay in Regensburg. *Longing* is a particularly important work for me, as it shows what home meant to me – the mixture of multiple views of Regensburg and Tirana. To communicate visually how the sense of multiple homes displayed in my mind, I conceptualised the historical Stone Bridge of Regensburg in the foreground of the composition, which links the two parts of the city and serves as a metaphor for the connections people build there. In the background, the

historical part of Regensburg is represented; however, behind this the Clock Tower of Tirana is integrated surreally. In this work, I attempted to deal with issues of memory, where the Stone Bridge and Clock Tower appear as interconnected spaces, as an imagined view that remains in a sense of longing and belonging. Yet the viewer may never see this, as at first glance it appears to be simply a townscape, but for me, there are the symbols of the two towns merged into one.

Another of my earlier works on this theme intended to understand the importance of national identity to the concept of home, and is entitled *Shining Light and Rebirth of Albania* (Fig. 0.3).

Figure 0.3. Dashamir Vaqari. *Shining Light and Rebirth of Albania,* 2007.
Oil on Canvas, 90 x 120 cm. Photograph the Author.

I attempted to convey the image of home through the Albanian national hero, Scanderbeg. It is composed of three symbolic objects displayed in a surreal landscape. Scanderbeg's helmet is represented on a hill, in a grandiose surreal shape. Next to the helmet, a contemporary street light is used to suggest different interpretations. For instance, the light's tube may communicate the shape of a sword, but it might also appear in the form of a Christian cross as might be placed on a grave. The stormy sky in the background serves as a metaphor for the turbulent atmosphere of the war, which Scanderbeg successfully led against the Ottoman Empire. On the right of the canvas the sword can be seen falling from the sky, which is intended as a symbol to imply his divine power. The round shape of the light is intended to symbolise the shape of the world, indicating Scanderbeg's central role in Albania's global identity. He is deeply etched upon and has strongly influenced the collective memory of the Albanian people. The National Awakening in the second half of the nineteenth century (Skendi, 1967) brought a depth of awareness of national identity. Thus, Scanderbeg's flag was brought back into use with the proclamation of independence from the Ottoman Empire on 28th November 1912 (Figure 0.4).

Figure 0.4. *Coat of Arms of Albania,* 2018. Photograph Flagmakers.

The colours and double-headed eagle used in the national flag derive from Scanderbeg's use of these colours and symbols, and his helmet is shown in the current coat of arms. After being forgotten after 500 years of Ottoman rule, these now serve as symbols of national identity for all Albanians.

These examples of my previous artistic work present the concept of home from my personal perspective, partly reflected in the literal titles of the works, which do not always leave space for critical analysis and debate. So, for the current doctoral research project, in order to enable a critical process, it was necessary to formulate specific research questions.

- What constitutes home in post-Communist Albanian diasporas in Germany and the UK?
  - Is home linked to a particular place for transnational migrants?
  - Can they develop multiple homes?
  - Do transnational migrants experience loss of home?
  - Can an old home transfer to a new home?
  - Do they acquire new homes?
- How can these questions be addressed and interpreted in a body of paintings?
- How can this project contribute new knowledge?

Sources

Within the framework of this project, the history of migration in Albania is investigated in order to understand and contextualize its causes, and as a basis for the images in the new works. Secondly, to achieve a better understanding of the research subject matter, a review of existing literature on the topic of transnationalism, considering the political, economic and socio-cultural aspects is undertaken (Vertovec, 2001; Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt, 1999). However, transnationalism and the concept of home are still debated, with discussion in the

literature focussing on aspects such as having multiple homes, losing a home and creating a new home. There are a range of perceptions and meanings, but I draw on those conceptions of home which are most relevant to my personal experience and the subject matter in order to address the gaps in this knowledge. First, home as a physical space and place (Norris, 1994; Creswell, 2004); secondly, home as a dimension of time (Berger, 1984; Piepmeier, 1990); thirdly, social relationships and identity (Bausinger, 1990; Easthope, 2004; Piepmeier, 1990); and fourthly, positive emotional attachments (Piepmeier, 1990).

In addition, the representation of the concept of home in art practice is considered. This leads into a discussion of previous creative work in this area by contemporary Albanian artists based on interviews and the literature of Albanian art in order to understand how the subject has been investigated and discussed. These artists have been selected as they fall into one of two categories – artists whose creative work deals with the topic of home; or contemporary Albanian artists with personal experience of transnationalism through time spent living and working abroad. However, with their focus on home in national symbols and identity, home in urban spaces, and home in architecture, these works have been more nostalgic in a form of mourning and suggest a loss of home. My work differs in that I focus rather on the transnational home suggesting a sense of belonging, linking home to particular places (Cuba and Hummon, 1993), and being here and there in host and sending countries (Waldinger and Fitzgerald, 2004). Furthermore, I consider the Socialist Realist tradition, which was the style of art practised most widely in Albania during the Communist period, and has been influential in the art academy in Albania since that time (see Section 2.2). The influence of my studies in the Albanian academy may still be seen in my use of technical aspects such as the realistic treatment of form. However, research on Albanian Socialist Realist art, especially in the Albanian language, is scarce due to the academic avoidance of this period after the collapse of Communism. Socialist Realist art had a negative impact on the collective memory of Albanian society, and authors or artists who discuss this period are suspected of supporting the regime (see Section 2.2). However, some research is now being

undertaken with recent publications on the cult figure of the dictator and political ideologies (Hoxha, 2017; Velo, 2014). Furthermore, as the applied doctrine of this art was very similar to that of the entire eastern bloc, I have also drawn upon other studies of Socialist Realist art in the German and English languages.

The practice-based research draws on these sources and my personal experience to create a body of work in which I use my own creative practice as a painter to investigate the concepts of home in post-Communism in Albanian diasporas. The sources mentioned here are discussed in detail in this thesis (see Chapter 2), and form the basis of the images in my paintings, which are developed through the methodology followed. The paintings are intended to be viewed from different perspectives to allow different interpretations in consideration of Barthes' (1968) and Foucault's (1969) views on authorship, while still maintaining the social contextualisation brought through my personal experience (Ward, 2010) (see Section 4.1.1).

Methodology

The project addresses the research questions through a circular process of painting and critical self-reflection, which developed the research over the course of the study; as well as written documentation and discussion of the context in which the work has been made to support its position. Nelson (2009) details an approach to practice-based research, consisting of five stages, which I adopted for this research. First, I analysed and evaluated the knowledge in the field, including literature and practice-based research. Secondly, I brought this material into question through critique of current or past practice and knowledge. Thirdly, I formulated research questions and theories to develop a position from which I could begin the investigation. Fourthly, I refined my ideas and responded to the research questions through the creative stage involving all aspects of practice alongside changes, improvements, and interpretations resulting from self and external critical reflection. In the

fifth stage, I explained and supported the meaning of the work, through the documentation and discussion of the critical reflective processes.

The five stages of the methodology developed continually until images of transnational home in the research context emerged. This involved experimentation with, questioning, challenging and reflection on theories of art, historical theories relating to previous work, including my own work and that of other artists. The methodology acknowledges that the process of thinking and making might develop and change the artwork through self-critical reflection, to highlight or suppress images, attitudes and ideas in relation to their role in understanding the concept of transnational home. Therefore, through the process of creative practice, I experimented with all aspects and levels contributing to the image including content of the work, symbolism, and technical and physical aspects such as shape and framing the work. In addition, I focussed on aesthetics as idealised images evolved, particularly in scenes of longing for home, but also the lack of feeling for the new transnational home. The historical and aesthetic approaches were central to the visual representation of national and transnational symbols including images, ideas, politics, emotions, people, and places. A range of sources have influenced the project, including: critical reflection on Albanian art; interviews with contemporary artists and scholars; and research on transnationalism.

As a result of the methodology applied, this thesis includes a discussion of the historical context of Albanian migration (Chapter 1). Chapter 2 focuses on how home has been dealt with in art, considering Albanian art both in the Communist period and afterwards. Literature on the phenomenon of transnationalism and the concept of home is reviewed in Chapter 3. In Chapter 4, the methodology applied for this project is described in more detail and the resulting paintings that form the practice-based research are discussed in terms of home in particular places, multiple homes, loss of home, how aspects of an old home transfer to a new home, and new home. Finally, conclusions are drawn and responses to the research questions are proposed.

1. Historical context of Albanian migration

The Albanian language has many terms for migration and migrant. The word 'kurbet,' which originates from the Turkish word 'gurbet,' (King, 2004:38) refers to migration to a foreign country usually for work. This word has strong connotations in the language, and is seen as a tragic occurrence where mass emigration took place, particularly to the United States of America. It has even earned a place in Albanian literature and folk music, with many 'kurbeti' folk songs still being well-known today. Secondly, there is the term 'mëgrim', which can be translated as 'migration' and entails the idea of homesickness. The terms 'emigrant' and 'refugjat' both have negative connotations and are mostly used to describe the economic migrants of the 1990s (King and Vullnetari, 2003:18).

These different terms may result from the fact that migration has played a part throughout the history of Albania, with the earliest documented emigration resulting from the Ottoman conquest at the end of the fifteenth century (Zickel and Iwaskiw, 1994). Further significant migration took place during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with large numbers emigrating to the United States of America (Tirta, 1999). Following this, as a result of the strict Communist rule of 1944 - 1990, emigration was reduced to a minimal number of individual cases. Following the fall of Communism in 1990, emigration from Albania grew exponentially, with three significant periods (see Section 1.4). Albania has demonstrated one of the most dramatic mass migrations in recent European history with a quarter of the population living outside Albania in 2009 (King and Vullnetari, 2009:19). The following sections describe these major episodes of Albanian migration in more detail.

1.1 Ottoman period

In the fifteenth century, the Albanian national hero, George Castrioti Scanderbeg (Gjerj Kastrioti Skenderbeu) resisted the Ottoman conquest for twenty-five years, defending his homeland and Christianity (Skendi, 1967). He was born in 1405 as the youngest son of the Albanian nobleman Gjon Kastrioti, the Lord of Middle Albania. From 1415 until 1423, Scanderbeg was sent as a hostage to the Ottoman court in Adrianople. Under Ottoman rule, Albanian young men were forcibly recruited into the military and were sent to fight for the Empire; Scanderbeg and his brothers were forced to leave their homeland and fight for the Ottomans in this way (Vickers, 1995:12). However, during a stay in Albania as an Ottoman governor, Scanderbeg maintained ties with his paternal village and other Albanian noble families (Barleti, 2005). He deserted the Ottoman army along with three hundred other Albanians and led them to Kruje, where they arrived in November 1444 (Pollo and Puto, 1981). During this time, Scanderbeg renounced Islam to return to his Catholic roots. He became Lord of the city and regained much of his father's territory (Barleti, 2005). Scanderbeg raised a red standard with a black double-headed eagle on it, which is still the symbol of Albania and its national flag today. Albanians from all across the region, not only Albania identify Scanderbeg as the founder of modern Albania. For his contribution to the protection of Christianity in Europe, the Pope Nicholas V honored Scanderbeg before his death as a "champion of Christendom" (Skendi, 1967:4).

After his death in 1468, Albania eventually fell to the Ottoman Empire in 1478 (and remained occupied until 1912). As a result, by the sixteenth century, approximately one quarter of the Albanian population had fled their homes on religious grounds to avoid Islamisation (Barjaba, 1992). They settled mainly in Italy, but also in Greece and along the Dalmatian coast (Carleto et al, 2004:2). According to Armillotta (2001), this emigration came to an end in the second half of the eighteenth century. Estimates say that around two hundred thousand Albanians settled in Calabria in southern Italy, and others settled in Sicily and founded a 'little Albania' there (Berxholi, 2000; Skendi, 1967; Tirta, 1999). Considering the Albanian population at this

time, the numbers of this migration resembled "an exodus of Biblical proportions" (Barjaba, 1992:514). Still known as the Arbereshe, which is an old word for Albanian people, they continue to speak the archaic dialect of Tosk Albanian. The dialect has its origins in southern Albania and does not have any Turkish influence. The Arbereshe still identify strongly with Albania through their music, traditional dress, and traditions. Even after five hundred years they call Albania their homeland (Malcolm, 2002).

In 2005, to honour the six hundredth anniversary of his birth, the US Congress issued a resolution honouring Scanderbeg for his role in saving Western Europe from Ottoman occupation as a "statesman, diplomat and military genius" (US Government, 2005).

1.2 Late nineteenth and early twentieth century emigration

Following almost five hundred years of Ottoman rule, Albania was the last country to declare independence in November 1912 (Vullnetari, 2007). However, the ideal of uniting all Albanian territories was abandoned only one month later at the London Conference by the Great Powers. More than half of Albania's territory, inhabited by around 40% of the ethnic Albanian population, was divided between Serbia, Montenegro and Greece (Biberaj, 1999:18). Kosovo became a part of Serbia and later Yugoslavia, while Cameria became part of northern Greece. The decision was by no means unanimous among the Great Powers, with the UK, Russia and France in favour of the new border, while Germany and Austria supported a greater ethnic Albanian territory. As a result, the situation in Albania was unstable, and the country was occupied by twelve foreign armies during World War I. It was only because of the indecision between Serbia, Greece and Italy over how the country would be separated and the support of American President Wilson that Albania remained an independent country within the current borders (Biberaj, 1999:18). Furthermore, the country was in political and economic ruin and in the decades leading up to and following

independence, the rapid industrialization and urbanization in Europe and North America led to large numbers of Albanians emigrating (Vullnetari, 2007:13). At the end of eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries around ten thousand Albanians from Korce in the south of the country emigrated to the United States on economic grounds (Nagi, 1989; Tirta, 1999). Most of them settled in Boston, where they founded the first Albanian Church in the USA in 1908 (Nagi, 1989). Ironically, one of these migrants was the father of the dictator Enver Hoxha, who worked for a time in the United States and later returned to Albania (Biberaj, 1990). Furthermore, many of the Arbereshe who had settled in Italy emigrated to the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century and formed part of the larger Albanian diaspora there (Hall, 1999:141). This economic emigration largely involved men from south Albania. They mostly did not intend to settle permanently, but were predominantly uneducated Orthodox young men who intended to return home after achieving some financial stability (Ragaru, 2002). However, by the mid-1940s, some sixty thousand Albanians were living in the United States (Tirta, 1999).

During the Second World War, Albania did not organize any significant resistance to the incoming German and Italian troops. This was a strategic act as a result of the German and Italian decision of 1941 to return Albanian parts of Yugoslavia, most notably Kosovo, to Albania. As a result, most Albanians were living in a single unified state for the first time in thirty years (Biberaj, 1990). The unification of the territory of Kosovo and having Albanian as the language of education meant that Albanians in the former Yugoslavia regained the rights they had lost, leading to increased national consciousness. Serbia has always seen the education of Albanians as a very dangerous matter, because it led to an awakening of national identity and strong resistance against continuous Serbian injustice and discrimination. Kostovicova (2005) notes that Albanians in Kosovo could learn the Albanian language and history for the first time in 1941. However, this unified single Albanian state did not last and the borders were changed once again at the end of World War II.

With the rise of Communism in 1944, Albania's borders were closed and the migrants could not return. Previously strong contact between home and diaspora broke down, with second generation immigrants often no longer being able to speak the language, which weakened the Albanian identity and feelings for home among these migrant communities. Mother Teresa, for example, was unable to set foot in her home in Tirana for 45 years (and missed the passing of her mother and sister). Despite these difficulties, the Albanian diasporas in the United States became an important factor against the Communist government, staging a number of unsuccessful attempts to overthrow the regime (Bethell, 1994).

1.3 Emigration during the Communist period

From 1945 until 1990, the dictator Enver Hoxha imposed one of the world's most oppressive Communist regimes on the people of Albania (Biberaj, 1990). The regime has been described as:

> Essentially the dictatorship of one man (Enver Hoxha) over all Albanian men and women, locating him as the father-figure and moral guide of the 'nation-family' within the values of obeisance and submission that stem from the cultural background of the whole of Albanian society (Mai, 2001:268).

At the end of 1944, when the war was over in Albania, between thirty and fifty thousand anticommunists (Hockenos, 2003:213), anticipating the arrival of a Communist dictatorship decided to escape to Italy and Yugoslavia, from where some of them later settled in the United Kingdom and United States (Vickers, 2011). During the Communist period, Albania's borders were closed and international migration from Albania was mostly stopped. Few foreigners ever visited Albania, and those who did were from the eastern European Communist bloc, or members of Western European Communist parties.

The country became increasingly isolated, with economic and political contacts even with other Communist countries decreasing over Hoxha's reign: Albania broke from the Soviet bloc in 1961 and from China 1977 (Vullnetari, 2007:6). A high-voltage fence ran along the entire land borders of the country, separating Albania from Greece and the former Yugoslavia. Meanwhile hundreds of thousands of concrete bunkers were built in order to protect the country from outside attacks from the West and the Soviet Union. The exact number of bunkers constructed is still debated, but different sources give figures from six hundred thousand to seven hundred and fifty thousand (Schwandner-Sievers and Fischer, 2002; Howden, 2002; Hosken, 2006). These bunkers appear nowadays not only in a metaphorical form as a part of the country's identity during the dark time of the Communist regime, but also are strongly embedded in the collective memory of the Albanian people.

Those who attempted to emigrate by crossing the borders to Yugoslavia or Greece were killed or imprisoned for lengthy periods under very difficult conditions. Their families also faced severe repercussions from the Communist government under the so-called '*Article 55 AGITATION-PROPAGANDA'* legislation against the Communist regime and the dictatorship of the proletariat (Simons, 1980:20).

In contrast, internal migration was prevalent during the Communist period. Migration from rural to urban areas was promoted during the early years of the Communist regime with the creation of forty-one new urban centres (Berxholi, 2000:32-33). When the Communists came to power in 1944, 20.5% of the population lived in urban areas; this rose to 27.5% in 1955 and 30.9% in 1960 due to industrialization, job opportunities, climate and population pressure (Borchert, 1975). However, this migration pattern was short-lived, with the regime imposing strict state control on internal migration after the first decade (1944-1954), where in the 1980s the rural population accounted for two thirds of the total Albanian population (Müller and Munrore, 2008). Migration to Tirana in particular became very difficult. It was necessary to have a work permit and be granted residence by the government. Those who worked for

the government and the secret services were particularly privileged in this respect; otherwise some bureaucrats and army officers moved from town to town with their families as their positions were rotated. The majority of these migrants were from the south of the country, and many of them were spies who remained favoured by the government until the fall of Communism, meaning they did not have to return to their original homes away from Tirana (Dervishi, 2012). In order to house these migrants in the city, the government claimed land from private ownership and used 'voluntary' labour or political prisoners to build typical Socialist apartment blocks (Bakiu, 2010:343). The work was unpaid and under miserable conditions (Adler, 2017). Alternatively, affluent well-known families with long ancestries in Tirana were removed from their homes to house these internal migrants. Any protestations were punished by death or life imprisonment of the entire family; those who did not protest were sent to live in rural areas to work the land for minimal pay.

1.4 Albania after the fall of Communism

The fall of Communism not only shattered the illusions of national grandeur propagated by the regime, but also led to political instability, resulting in three major episodes of migration. The first, in 1990-1992, when Albania became a part of the changes resulting from the fall of Communism across Eastern Europe and people took advantage of the political instability to leave the country (see section 1.4.1). The second followed the collapse of the pyramid savings schemes in 1997 (see section 1.4.2), and the third when over one million refugees from the Kosovo war arrived in 1999, causing emigration by Albanians (King and Vullnetari, 2009) (see section 1.4.3).

1.4.1 The fall of Communism (1990-1992)

Following the fall of the dictatorship the first major wave of emigration in forty-five years occurred in mid-1990, when nearly five thousand Albanians entered several Western

European embassies in the capital Tirana (King and Mai, 2004), and were granted political refuge in those countries. Around three thousand two hundred refugees entered the German embassy in Tirana on 2nd July 1990 (Fig 1.4.1.1).

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Figure 1.4.1.1. *German Embassy. Garten und Residenz. Am 8 Juli 1990. Tiranë. Albanien.* Photograph Deutsch-Albanische Freundschaftsgesellschaft.

The Popaj family, consisting of two brothers and four sisters, entered the Italian embassy in December 1985 only months after Hoxha's death (Qesari, 2000:160). Their presence caused a stand-off between the Albanian and Italian authorities and they remained inside the embassy until May 1990, only leaving for Italy after a visit from the UN Secretary General (Qesari, 2000). The case set the precedent for others, in particular many intellectuals who could not envision the future of the regime, to seek political asylum at the embassies. Among them was the pro-democracy, Nobel-prize nominated author Kadare who claimed political asylum in France. The storming of the embassies in Tirana by other political asylum seekers began on 2nd July 1990 (Biberaj, 1998:50).

With the ultimate fall of Communism at the end of 1990 leading to the collapse of the economy, approximately twenty-five thousand Albanians, mostly young men, crossed the Adriatic Sea to southern Italy in overcrowded boats in March 1991 (Mai, 2001). A few months later, in August 1991, a boat carrying a further twenty thousand emigrants docked at Bari, Italy (Vickers and Pettifer, 1997; Mai, 2001) (Fig 1.4.1.2).

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Figure 1.4.1.2. *Bari, Italy. The Port of Bari on 8 August, 1991.*
Photograph Angelucci and Zuppardo.

During this period the phenomenon of female migration was almost non-existent. Many of the migrants then moved on to other areas of Europe, in particular to Germany and the UK. These two episodes of migration were represented differently in the Italian media, where the first was considered political and the second as economic (Mai, 2005).

Italy was the destination of choice for many migrants due to the historical links, its cultural and geographical proximity, and familiarity with the language (Mai, 2005), with many migrants perceiving greater chances of living and working illegally for an initial period. Mai mentions the role of television as a crucial element in influencing the Albanian migration toward Italy: "Italian television could be seen in Albania since the early 1970s and, until 1991, it was virtually the only window on the outside world available to Albanian citizens" (Mai, 2005:546). The Communist government tried to stop the receiving of foreign broadcasts but this was unsuccessful with people secretly finding different ways to regularly watch Italian, Greek and Yugoslavian television (Braga, 2007). These factors have played a special role in the integration and success of the Albanian diaspora in Italy where migrants continued to land illegally throughout the 1990s (Vickers and Pettifer, 1997). Faced with difficult manual jobs and with an inferiority complex in the countries where they worked and lived, alongside the lack of protection under European law, in many cases these immigrants felt the need to hide their nationality and identity as strong stereotypes quickly developed (Schwandner-Sievers, 2008:49).

Between 1990 and 1995 the number of emigrants from Albania represented between nine and eleven per cent of the country's population (UNFPA, 1997:3). It was hoped that with establishing a democracy and democratic reforms, emigration rates would gradually slow but the unexpected socio-economic crisis of 1997 led to a further wave of mass political and economic emigration.

1.4.2 Collapse of pyramid schemes (1997)

The second peak of post Communist migration occurred in 1997. It has been estimated that more than half of Albanians (King and Mai, 2004), including my family, had invested their savings in the widespread 'pyramid schemes,' which were also supported by the government

(Jarvis, 1999:7; Goldstein, 1997:537). They had invested in these schemes, using money earned by migrants working abroad (Goldstein, 1997) (statistics from 1996 estimate the number of Albanian guest workers to be between three and four hundred thousand (Konica and Filer, 2005)). Some of these 'pyramid schemes' began to emerge in the early 1990s (Bartlett, 2007), quickly becoming successful, benefiting from the lack of knowledge and experience of this phenomenon among both Albanian citizens and the government. In late 1996, the interest from these pyramid schemes reached the highest rates of fifty per cent per month on deposit offered to the savers (Bezemer, 2001:10; Goldstein, 1997:536).

When the schemes inevitably collapsed, which officially began on November 16, 1996 (Carletto, 2004), a large number of the population lost their savings. The losses were calculated at approximately two billion US dollars, or about fifty percent of Albania's gross domestic product (GDP) (Bogdani and Loughlin, 2007:127). Civil unrest ensued with violent protests, attacks on government institutions and looting in the cities. During these protests, the government lost control of parts of the country, which fell into the hands of criminal groups. Supported by the opposition at the time, the Socialist Party, these criminal groups managed to manipulate the protests and attacked the army's weapons depots (Bezemer, 2001:5), culminating in armed revolt and bringing the situation out of control especially in the south. This entire situation proved fatal to ordinary citizens, as the initial peaceful protests quickly turned violent, resulting in the loss of two thousand lives (Carletto, 2004:3), and further increasing the country's political and economic instability.

This instability and its resulting hardships led to the emigration of approximately seventy thousand Albanians (King and Vullnetari, 2003). The number arriving at Brindisi port, Italy on 7th June 1997 closely mirrored the situation in 1991, when migrants landed in Bari. This kind of migration continued in the same way until the beginning of the war in Kosovo.

1.4.3 Kosovo war (1999)

The story of the two world wars, as a result of changing borders in Europe, was one of the darkest periods of forced migration. The collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe and the consequences that this regime left on the political, economic and social systems was another cause of mass migration within Europe. Unfortunately, this period was repeated in European history during the war in the former Yugoslavia, which led to a mass forced migration through ethnic cleansing (Mann, 1999).

Following Albania's independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1912, Kosovo has been a constant source of conflict in the region, with the Kosovar Albanians paying for their freedom from Serbs with blood and population displacements as described in the Report of the International Commission to Inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan wars:

> Houses and whole villages reduced to ashes, unarmed and innocent populations massacred en masse, incredible acts of violence, pillage and brutality of every kind such were the means which were employed and are still being employed by the Serbo-Montenegrin soldiery, with a view to the entire transformation of the ethnic character of regions inhabited exclusively by Albanians (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Division of Intercourse and Education, 1914:151).

Vickers also describes atrocities committed by Serbians against the Albanian population in the former Yugoslavia in 1945:

> Perhaps the worst atrocity occurred in Tivar in Montenegro, where 1,670 Albanians were herded into a tunnel which was then sealed off so that all were asphyxiated (1998:143).

This political ethnic cleansing of the Albanian population continued after the Second World War in various forms. In 1956, Serbian security chief Aleksandar Ranković and the Turkish authorities signed an agreement to expel 'Turks' from Yugoslavia to Turkey, however, these people were of Albanian origin (Petrisch, Kaser and Pichler, 1999).

During Tito's rule of Yugoslavia (1945-1980), discrimination and the colonisation programs of Kosovar Albanians began to change, and ended with the granting of autonomy in 1974 (Krieger, 2001). With this status Kosovo enjoyed a similar basic structure to that of a state, as one of the federation of six republics in the former Yugoslavia. This autonomous status had a huge impact in granting Albanians rights to education and employment in the same way as other ethnicities in Former Yugoslavia. Albanians were also granted rights throughout Yugoslavia to use their own national symbols, including national emblems and the Albanian flag. However, following Tito's death in 1980, the economic and political situation began to deteriorate in Kosovo (Krieger, 2001; Dahinden, 2005). The dominant Serbs and Montenegrins began to radicalise against Kosovar Albanians, treating them as a second class citizens. Mass protests were initiated by Kosovar Albanian students on 11 March 1981, seeking again the same equal rights as all ethnicities living in Yugoslavia (Karadjis, 2000; Judah, 2002). These protests were extended throughout Kosovo, resulting in more than a thousand deaths, thousands of people arrested, and many injured by the demonstrators (Perrit, 2010; Judah, 2002). It has been claimed that seventy five per cent of political prisoners throughout Yugoslavia in the 1980s were Albanian (Karadjis, 2000:42). Furthermore, throughout the 1980s, the economic situation steadily worsened: unemployment was very high compared to other areas in former Yugoslavia, according to government statistics, only sixty-seven thousand Albanians were registered as unemployed, but in fact the number counted much higher, with around two hundred and fifty thousand of a population of 1.5 million in Kosovo (Roux, 2002). The Serbian assembly in Belgrade finally removed Kosovo's autonomous status on 28th March 1989 (Caplan, 2005). The Kosovar Albanian reaction came on 2nd July 1990, where the Albanian members of the assembly, passed the resolution of Kosovo as an independent entity within the framework of the Yugoslav federation, with one hundred and fourteen out of one hundred and twenty-three votes. At this time the Albanian state was also weak following its long period of Communism, and could not support its citizens living outside of the country, which undoubtedly had a significant impact on the Kosovan situation (Mandelbaum, 2000:245).

The result of the Kosovan resolution was a massive emigration among the young people of Kosovo, looking for a job and a better life abroad. Their destinations were the UK, Germany, Switzerland, and Austria; this because having family members in these countries from previous waves of emigration made their migrations easier (Kostovicova, 2005; Perrit, 2010). In 1991, Kosovar Albanians underwent a referendum, in which ninety-nine per cent voted for Kosovo as a free, independent state. Despite this result, Kosovar Albanians experienced continuing discrimination and denial of their fundamental human rights. In response, the Albanians in Kosovo became better organised by creating a collective responsibility, self-control, self help and organizations, for example by using private homes for schools (Fries, 2003).

All these factors mentioned above contributed to the political instability that ensued in the region leading to the Kosovo war in 1998-1999. This war lead to mass emigration, not only from Kosovo, but also Albanian communities living in Macedonia, Serbia, and Montenegro emigrated massively (Dahinden, 2005:192-193). Having barely had the chance to recover from the crisis of 1997, Albania played host to almost four hundred and eighty thousand refugees from Kosovo in 1999 most of them being woman and children (Kondaj, 2002:190). With the Balkan wars throughout the 1990s, Albanians living in the former Yugoslavia were constantly at risk - almost two million were living in Kosovo, six hundred thousand in western Macedonia, one hundred thousand in southern Serbia, and fifty thousand in Montenegro (Shehu, 1997). The circumstances of the Albanians in Kosovo worsened further in the spring of 1998, when special Serbian forces attacked the home of one of the most important Kosovar Albanian leaders, Adem Jashari. The siege of his house resulted in a fatal massacre of the Jashari and his family, killing "nearly sixty individuals, including women, the elderly, and young children" (Perrit, 2010:9) (Fig. 1.4.3.1). This act raised international political awareness of the atrocities in Kosovo.

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Figure 1.4.3.1. *President Clinton comforts a young Kosovar refugee at Stenkovic*
1 Refugee Camp near Skopje, Macedonia, 1999.
Photograph William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum.

In 1999, Milosevic's Serbian forces drove the Kosovar Albanians from their homes,

committing genocide and crimes against humanity in their so-called ethnic cleansing of the

Kosovar Albanians (Perritt, 2010). It was precisely the use of the Kosovo issue by Milosevic,

which made him a major factor in Serbian politics (Judah, 2002).

As a result of US President Clinton and British Prime Minister Tony Blair's interventions, in 1999, NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) was authorized to bomb targets within Serbia, and the majority of the refugees returned to Kosovo by the end of the year (Blair, 2010; Clinton, 2004). However, the influx of such large numbers had once again destabilized Albania's economy and led to an estimated one hundred thousand Albanians leaving the country for Northern Europe, in particular Germany and the UK (Kule et al, 2002). The large number of Albanian migrants at this time is in part due to the ease of seeking asylum in Germany and the UK by posing as Kosovars thanks to the common language and the lack of identification documents for displaced Kosovars (International Organisation for Migration, 2014; King and Vullnetari, 2009).

1.4.4 Current situation

According to some scholars Albanians make up the largest percentage of migrants in any European transitional economy (Castaldo, Lichtfield and Reilly, 2005), and this migration still persists. The current phenomenon may not be as obvious or well-publicised as in the three previously mentioned periods, but it is happening nonetheless. However, Albanian government statistics give the impression of stability and economic progress in the country. Currently, the nature and causes of migration are largely due to economic and social reasons - employment, for a better education for children, and a better quality of life (King and Vullnetari, 2003; Barjaba, 2004). Another reason is the young democracy and current political situation, in which it is relatively common that people who are connected to a political party will be given employment when that party wins an election. Similarly, those who were in employment due to their connections with an outgoing party will lose their employment (King and Vullnetari, 2009:22). This situation is certainly playing a role in the current economic migration, which became an issue following the 2013 general election in which the Democratic Party was ousted by the Socialist Party. Coupled with increased corruption and increased taxes, many small businesses are failing, which is also contributing to this wave of

emigration. In particular, the younger generation and educated people do not see any future perspectives in their home country (Fevziu, 2017). Furthermore, the government does not currently have any kind of program to entice such migrants neither to stay nor to return. However, some of the older generation, brought up under Hoxha's ideology, do not want to leave themselves, and plead with their younger family members to stay: to them, having the family at home is particularly important. Furthermore, the older generation does not have any experience of emigration due to Hoxha's tightly closed borders and they often cannot understand younger family members wanting to leave the country. The paradox is that it is precisely this closed mentality that prevailed under communism and destroyed the sense of national identity.

However, as migration is becoming more widespread, more and more Albanians have been able to emigrate legally in recent years as compared to the early 1990s. On 7th October 2010, the European Parliament agreed to visa-free travel across most of the EU (Schengen area, not including the UK) for ninety days for Albanians holding a biometric passport, meaning they can easily enter the EU area (Council of the European Union, 2010:1). These legal migration channels include greater availability and accessibility to scholarship schemes for students and researchers. However, this phenomenon has a negative impact on the future perspectives of the development of the country. Since 1990 about fifty percent of well qualified intellectuals and scholars have emigrated (Barjaba, 2013), leading to a brain drain from Albania. It has also been shown that around sixty-six percent of Albanians who received a PhD from western universities decided to stay and work in the receiving countries (Gadeshi and Black, 2006).

The number of economic migrants in the first six months of 2015 reached just over 20,200, ranking Albanians as the fourth highest number of migrants in the European Union (Eurostat, 2015). Many had hopes of settling in Germany, where they had been falsely informed that immigrant workers were required. It is obvious that the current migration is not related to

geographic or cultural affinity as at the beginning of the nineties, but the most powerful

economic countries of the European community are targeted, like Germany, France, and the

UK. Some migrants were disappointed at the lack of opportunities to work legally in Germany

and France, so the next destination was the UK. Despite not being part of the borderless

Schengen zone, the UK remained a desirable destination for these economic migrants due to

the language and the high number of Albanians already there. Many migrants paid incredibly

high fees to cross illegally to the UK from France. However, the migrants view this as a

valuable survival strategy for their families, focussing on the education and opportunities

available to their children, moving abroad is seen as an investment in the future (Barjaba,

2004). There are many factors that relate to expectations for a decent education, which

currently cannot be achieved in the unstable economic and political situation in Albania.

Statistics indicate that every Albainan family has had at least one of its members

experiencing migration (INSTAT, 2011: Gërmenji and Swinnen, 2005). According to the

statistical office of the European Union, in 2016 Albanians were the second largest group

acquiring citizenship of an EU member State, at 67,500 citizens (Eurostat, 2018). The 2017

Gallup World Poll states that sixty-two per cent of Albanians have expressed the desire to

migrate permanently to the EU, if they had the possibility, and the most desirable country for

them would be Germany (Esipova and Ray, 2018a). Some Albanians have been lucky

enough to win the Green Card Lottery, an annual migration program provided by the

American government (Vullnetari, 2007). In recognition of Albania's citizens living outside her

borders, on 18th December 2006 the Albanian Parliament legally established the 2nd of July

as a national '*Emigrant Day*' (Kuvendi i RSH, 2006).

The 2016 Gallup survey also classified Albania as one of the host countries accepting a

significant number of migrants (Esipova and Ray, 2018b). Notably, Jews escaping the Nazis

during the Second World War were accepted and rescued in Albania without a single fatality

(Gershman, 2008; Fischer, 1999). Another significant wave of immigration into Albania was

from the displaced refugees from Kosovo during the war in 1999 (see section 1.4.3). Many

Albanian host families, including my own family, shared their accommodation and food with them. This contact between Albanians and Kosovar Albanians had been almost non-existant during Communism, with only a few exceptions in the form of visits from small cultural and intellectual groups from both sides, who were selected by the Communist regime. However, there remained a very close spiritual connection with many Albanians living outside of her borders still considering Albania as their home and motherland. After the fall of the Communist regime and the opening of borders, the ethnic Albanians and those from the diasporas, gradually began to visit and to have contact with their homeland. However, the first impression was usually one of great disappointment seeing the economic problems and political situation, leading to a virtual loss of home as reality quickly replaced the idealised home created in Communist doctrine and the related imagery.

It is clear that the history of Albanian migration has been turbulent, and is described in the Albanian language as a 'plague' on society. This negative view could perhaps be a contributing factor to Albanian transnationalism whereby the migrants retain particularly strong connections to their home country, rather than settling wholly in the host country.

2. Art, home and Albanian identity

2.1 Introduction

Art has played a significant role in the culture and development of nations and identities throughout history. For example, the Italian Renaissance became a model for the architectural style of construction and urban spaces for the whole of Europe, and changed the perception and image of home across the continent (Toman, 1994). Similarly, during the Communist regime in Albania, the historical context which formed Albania's strong national identity (see Chapter 1.4) was transformed in part through Socialist Realist art. The ideology attempted to transform the people's perception of home and identity. So successful was its doctrine that it still persists as a stereotype for Albania. However, a number of artists resisted this in their work and produced underground art, which did not conform to the Communist ideology.

Over recent years, the concept of home has been researched and explored through various artistic media in contemporary art including photography, installation, performance, and painting. With varying degrees of success, technical and formal aspects of art have been experimented with, in order to debate and define transnationalism, migration, and home by focusing on the meaning of the place, rather than mechanically mirroring a place or places. Artworks focussing on the post-Communist concept of home have been shown in exhibitions across Europe, with recent examples being the Bulgarian Cultural Institute's multi-media exhibition *Home: Contemporary Female Masters* at the Bulgarian Embassy in London (Bulgarian Cultural Institute, 2013), *Heimat Kunst* at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin (Heimat, 2000), and the photographic exhibition *Heimat? Osteuropa in der zeitgenössischen Fotografie* at Kunstforum Ostdeutsche Galerie, Regensburg (Ostdeutsche Galerie, 2014). These exhibitions have focussed on either the loss of home due to the movement of the borders of the Eastern European bloc following World War II, or the question of what

homeland can mean today, with the aim of differentiating between past and present, and local and global.

Art can also play a positive role in changing perceptions of national identity, for example there are several successful contemporary Albanian artists representing ideas about their country of origin across the globe. A number of Albanian artists whose work has dealt with the topic of home will be discussed in this chapter, many of whom have a direct relevance to my research questions. The artists discussed here have been selected according to the themes of their artworks. I have conducted interviews with and analysed the work of these artists in order to gain a better understanding of their creative processes and of the meanings behind their works. The interviews focused particularly on how they have dealt with home, transnationalism or the Albanian context, and therefore enabled me to critique their work and identify gaps in knowledge (see Appendix 1 for interview transcripts). These artists rely mainly on linking the concept of home within three main themes: first, home as seen through national symbols and identity; secondly, home as particular urban spaces; and thirdly, home as particular types of architecture. As some of them have practised during both the Communist and post-Communist eras, it is useful to analyse their changing representations of home and national identity.

2.2 Art in Albania during the Communist period

2.2.1 Socialist Realist Art

Socialist Realist art, through its ideology, has influenced the Albanian concept of home. This style began in the early twentieth century in the Soviet Union and was later adopted by other Communist countries (Ellis, 2012). Similar to the entire Eastern bloc, Socialist Realist art in Albania was closely linked to and controlled by the state regime for 45 years. Socialist Realism was propagandist in nature intending to manipulate the masses, and contribute to

the creation of a new Socialist identity (Hoxha, 2017). Taylor defined propaganda as a phenomenon which "attempts to influence the public opinions of an audience through the transmission of ideas and values…. and manipulates that audience for its own purposes" (1998:15). As Pope Gregory the Great observed at the end of the sixth century AD: "Painting can do for the illiterate what writing does for those who can read" (Gombrich, 2003:135).

This style of realistic art dominated the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe from 1932 until the 1980s (Cullerne Bown and Taylor, 1993), where writers and artists were required to comply with the state's aim of spreading Communist ideology to influence people's daily lives (James, 1973). The movement has its roots in Russian literature of the 19th century, when the original aim was to truthfully present the daily life of ordinary people.

Socialist Realism became state policy in the Soviet Union on April 23rd, 1932, introduced by the Central Committee for the Reconstruction of Literary and Art Organizations (Cullerne Bown, 1998). A year later, the Soviet writer Maxim Gorky published an article entitled 'On Socialist Realism' (1933) in which the concept was more clearly formulated. When Stalin gave consent and approval to this decree, he declared at a meeting of writers in Gorky's flat that: "If the artist is going to depict our life correctly, he cannot fail to observe and point out what is leading it towards Socialism" (James, 1973:85-87). At this political meeting it was emphasized that not just some proletarian art groups, such as RAPKh (Russian Association of Proletarian Artists), but all groups needed to support the Soviet regime and the development of a communist society, in which the artist actively participates as a key figure (Guldberg, 1990). After the Congress of 1934, the first All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers unanimously approved four points, which artists and writers should follow (Cullerne Bown, 1991):

- Themes relevant to the workers and understandable to them.
- To depict an idealized scene from everyday life in which art focuses on ordinary people.
- The style and treatment of the topics are to be realistic.

• To promote the state and advance the Communist party line and propaganda and influence the development of society (Christie and Tayler, 2002:231-33; Dado, 2010:22; Booker and Juraga, 2002:68).

Two years later in 1936, the Party's Central Committee for the Arts was formed with the direct responsibility for controlling and setting visual art exhibitions and the works of the artists (Groys, 1990; Reid, 2001). This style of art spread to other Soviet-dominated European countries after the Second World War when the division of Europe into Eastern and Western blocs had a decisive influence on the art world. The Cold War between East and West was not only political and military, but affected all aspects of life, including culture, sports and the economy (Caute, 2003). In the visual art of Eastern Europe this propaganda and the strong political influence in and of Socialist Realist art helped to create new myths, new identities and new concepts of homeland in all countries under Communist regimes. This was denoted by Benedict Anderson (1983) as "imagined communities," where the political power of a state and its ideology are particularly strong, such that these states may try to impose a common identity upon their people under the banner of nationalism. This was clearly evident in Hoxha's regime in Albania, and the Socialist Realist period showed how art could affect and change culture, history, consciousness and identity (Gutkin, 1999).

The Albanian Communist regime intended to better embed their ideology in the minds of the general population through thematic paintings. Hoxha applied Stalin's ideology of building Socialism, consolidating his power to rule, strike and eliminate in the same way as Stalin did with his political opponents (Duka, 2007:252). So strong was the impact of this propaganda that ordinary Albanian citizens often began to live in a completely false, idealised reality (see section 1.4). This process began at an early age - children attended painting courses that were offered by the regime free of charge. The subjects that were addressed in these courses may have differed, but most importantly, they were intended to encourage the younger generation to grow in the ideological and revolutionary spirit (Van Gerven Oei, 2015), of the so-called 'mother party' (nëna parti), which should then be also reflected in the

children's creative work. When these children reached the age to attend high school, those who were more talented were subjected to a drawing contest to win a place at the Lyceum. It should be emphasized that access to these schools was very limited and, alongside talent, the family biography played a parallel, and often more influential, role. Students had a 'clean' biography only if the family had not been deported or politically sentenced against the regime. School lasted four years, and the subjects taught were similar to those in mainstream schools, but art was granted particular precedence, and followed a strict Socialist Realist programme studying directly from life models. The first two years of study included exercises in nature and landscape techniques, associating this with theoretical subjects such as anatomy and perspective, and introducing different media such as pencil, water and acrylic colour. 'Liceu Artistik,' the first art high school in Albania, was founded in Tirana in 1946 and was named in honour of a martyr from the Second World War, called Jordan Misja (Xoxa, 2008). In 1959, the Faculty of Fine Arts[1] was founded in Tirana. The first contingent of teachers and professors were mostly artists who had completed their studies in the most famous art academies in Europe before World War II, often with a full scholarship from the Albanian State. For the most part, they were educated in Italy, France, Germany and the United Kingdom. This generation of artists had been educated in the 1930s and exposed to a different artistic influence, and adopted the theories of contemporary art with free creativity and no censure (Xoxa, 2008). They found it difficult to adopt the strict rules of the regime and to serve its propaganda, but nevertheless were required to teach these rules at the artistic high school 'Liceu Artistik.'

One of the artists who experienced this dilemma was Sadik Kaceli (1914-2000), who was recommended to study fine art at the *Ecole Nationale Superieure des Beaux-Arts* in Paris by Henri Matisse (1869-1954) (Hurdhri, 2018; Xoxa, 2008). After successfully completing his degree in Paris in 1941, Kaceli returned home to Tirana to work and share his experience as

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[1] In 1966, it became the Higher Institute of Arts, and incorporated the three artistic faculties of music, fine arts, and performing arts. Then, in 1990, due to changes in the education system, it was established as the Higher Institute of Arts at University level, and named "Academy of Arts". With further changes to legislation in 2011, the Academy of Arts became the University of Arts, with no changes to the structure of its faculties (Universiteti i Arteve, 2008).

a lecturer in fine art at the Liceu Artistik. His painting *Kalimi i divizionit të parë në veri (The Passing of the first division into the north)* (1954) (Fig. 2.2.1.1) is an example of how these western European educated artists were forced to adapt to Socialist Realist principles (Xoxa, 2008). In this work Kaceli's effort to adapt to this new reality in art is apparent, where he focuses more on the detail of the propagating image rather than the formal aspects of the work such as colour and shape, thus lacking his usual artistic quality.

Figure 2.2.1.1. Sadik Kaceli. *Kalimi i divizionit të parë në veri.*
(The Passing of the first Division into the North), 1954.
Oil on Canvas, 97 x 141 cm. Collection, National Art Gallery, Tiranë, Albania.

Struggling to conform to the approved themes of Socialist Realism, in the late 1960s, Kaceli returned to subjects he enjoyed and were less problematic for the regime, such as portraits and landscapes, for example *Në bregdet – ullishtat (On the Seafront-the Olive Groves)* (1969) (Fig. 2.2.1.2), which he painted until his death in 2000 (Hurdhri, 2018; Xoxa, 2008).

Kaceli has described his love for the Albanian landscape: "I've loved the coast since I was a child; therefore I found special pleasure when I painted the magnificent Ionian Riviera" (Xoxa, 2008:85). Due to his decision to quietly avoid officially sanctioned subject matter and focus on uncontroversial themes, he was allowed to continue to work as an artist, but his western education meant that he was largely ignored by the Communist regime and found himself on the periphery of the Albanian art scene.

Figure 2.2.1.2. Sadik Kaceli. *Në bregdet – ullishtat. (On the Seafront-the Olive Groves)*, 1969. Oil on Card, 64 x 90 cm. Collection, National Art Gallery, Tiranë, Albania.

The majority of Albanian artists who studied in western academies tried to follow the same path as Kaceli in order to avoid persecution by the Communist regime.

In contrast to Kaceli was the sculptor Odhise Paskali (1903-1985), who adapted his work to conform to the regime's ideology. Graduating in art history from the University of Turin, Paskali showed an interest in sculpture and took lessons at the studio of Italian sculptor Edoardo Rubino (1871-1954), where his talents quickly became apparent (Çipi, 2018). Later,

he became the best known Albanian sculptor, and one of Hoxha's favourite artists (Elsi, 2012:348). In 1961, for his contribution to the development of Albanian sculpture, the Communist government awarded him the highest honour "Sculptor of the people" (Kuqali, 1985). His work Shoku Enver Hoxha (*The Comrade Enver Hoxh)* (1965) (Fig. 2.2.1.3) was considered the most original sculptural rendition of the dictator's likeness.
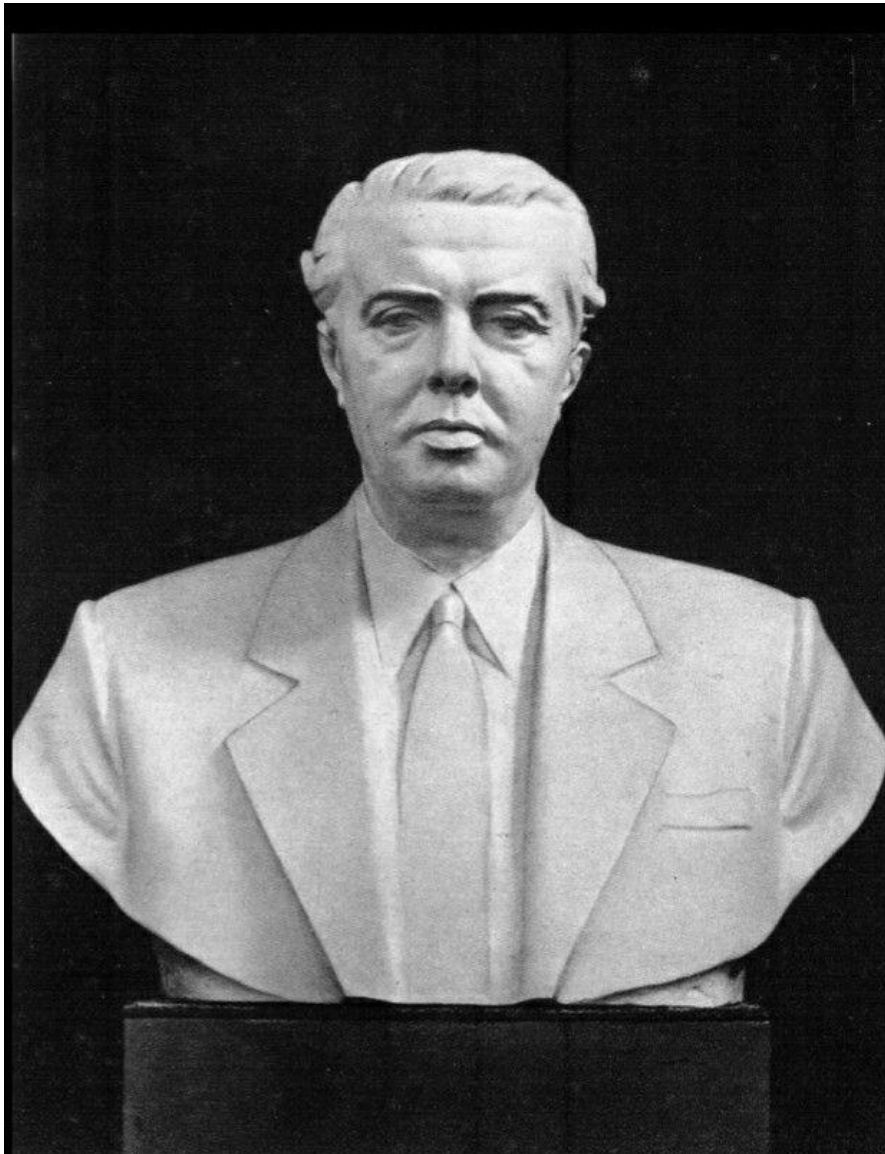
Figure 2.2.1.3. Odhise Paskali. *Shoku Enver Hoxha.*
(The Comrade Enver Hoxha), 1965.
Bust in Bronze.Collection, National Art Gallery, Tiranë, Albania.

It quickly became the most popular bust during the dictatorship, being reproduced by the thousands for gifts (Çipi, 2018), and moreover, serving to spread the cult of the dictator by being present everywhere - in schools, universities, workplaces, homes, and all state offices[2].

During the 1950s a cultural agreement between the Albanian Government and the other states of the Eastern bloc resulted in a new generation of artists being educated in the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and East Germany (Varvarica, 2016; Hoxha, 2017). These artists immediately adopted the practices of Socialist Realism. After attending and successfully completing their studies they returned to their homeland to rigorously implement what they had learned, thus introducing a Soviet model of learning (Varvarica, 2016; Hoxha, 2017). Under the influence of Communist propaganda and with the aim of creating a cult-like following for the dictator, they began to develop his symbolic presence in their creative works (Hoxha, 2017). One of these examples can be seen in Vilson Kilica's (1932-2006) artwork entitled *Në studio (In the Studio)* (1979) (Fig. 2.2.1.4). Kilica was a graduate of the Repin Art Institute (latterly The Russian Academy of Arts) in St Petersburg (formerly Leningrad) and a strong adherent of the Socialist Realist approach. In this work it appears that the dictator is instructing the artist on how Socialist art can be practised in a form to affect the masses. In 1977, the dictator demanded that:

> literature and the arts more broadly reflect the struggle, work, and life of the worker-people, its ideals and aspirations, its noble feelings, its heroic character, its simplicity and majesty, its revolutionary force, that the artistic and cultural institutions are at any time guided by the ideo-political demands of the Party, that they fight and unmask bourgeois ideology, with the aim of exerting a revolutionary educational influence on the masses (Hoxha, 1977:253-254).

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[2] Paskali's original bust was owned by the National Art Gallery in Tirana, but it was stolen in 2014 and has not yet been found.

Figure 2.2.1.4. Vilson Kilica. *Në studio. (In the Studio)*, 1979.

Oil on Canvas, 70 x 80 cm. Collection, National Art Gallery, Tiranë, Albania.

Kilica is also one of the artists of the vast mosaic on the facade of the National Historical

Museum (Muzeu Historik Kombëtar) in Scanderbeg Square in Tirana, entitled *Shqipëria*

Albania (Fig. 2.2.1.5)*,* which was built and realised in 1981 (see also Bakiu in section 2.3).

This giant mosaic is one of the last official works of Socialist Realist art, and consists of

thirteen figures, each ten meters high, representing different periods of Albanian history. The

mosaic, created by a number of artists, consists of three groups of figures, who are looking in

different directions. On the left, the group of figures reflects historical moments, dating back

two thousand years, referring to the Albanian ancestors' Illyrian period, then continuing to the

period of Scanderbeg's war against the Ottoman Empire (see section 1.1).

Figure 2.2.1.5. Vilson Kilica. *Shqipëria. (Albania),* 1981.
Mosaic, 37 x 11 m. Muzeu Historik Kombëtar, Tiranë. Albania. Photograph Dashamir Vaqari.

Finally, these historical moments end with the Albanian rebirth, which led to the declaration of independence of Albania in 1912. The group of figures on the right side refers to the heroic war of the Albanian National Liberation army against the Italians and Germans during the Second World War. In the centre of the mosaic special attention is given to the trio of Communist figures, which glorifies the power of the socialist revolution in developing the country, where women were the main force of the new Albania (Muzeu Historik Kombëtar, 2016). Through the costumes worn by the figures, the artists refer to the various periods of Albanian history. Recalling history through the image of art and perception of home was significant in the regime's aim of strengthening the Albanian identity, with the dictator stating that "the Albanian People have paved the way of history with the sword in the hand" (Buza, Dedi and Trebicka, 1973:35).

Furthermore, the state was the employer and the main guarantor for artists' work, in that it provided their studios and the materials necessary for making their art, organised exhibitions, awarded prizes, and also dealt with the purchase of their works**.** For the Communist regime, this was a positive method of bringing fresh and dynamic development not only to Socialist Realist art, but also to teaching progress. This new contingent of artists gradually replaced the generation of artists who had graduated from the western academies. The transient

years proved very difficult, particularly for those artists who were not seen positively by the regime, and who were, for a long time, under the supervision of the state security. They experienced great pressure in their artistic and private lives. However, some of these artists managed to adapt to the regime's doctrine of Socialist Realism.

The idealisation of everyday life was the primary task of the artist. Socially, the family had an important role, and propaganda had created the belief that families in Albania had the highest standard of living in Europe (Hamilton, 1992:11). Vilson Halimi (1931-2002) was a product of the Soviet art school and addressed social themes depicting contented family life of the people in his artwork. *Kudo jemi në ballë* (Everywhere we are at the forefront) (1976) (Fig. 2.2.1.6) shows a happy and healthy family from the city who were always ready to give their contribution to the development of new socialist villages.

Figure 2.2.1.6. Vilson Halimi. *Kudo jemi në ballë. (Everywhere we are at the forefront),* 1976. Oil on Canvas, 145 x 200 cm. Collection, National Art Gallery, Tiranë, Albania.

Halimi tries to emphasize this idealization in the use of a warm and beautiful village landscape in the background, suggesting the well-being and success of Socialist life. The bus, tractor, and helicopter suggest modernity developing in Albania.

Particular attention was also given to the representation of the working class in art, as can be seen in the creative work of Spiro Kristo (1936-2011) (Varvarica, 2016). According to Communist doctrine, the true hero of Socialist work should be a person of self-sacrifice as an example to mobilize all parts of society.

In *Zotër të vendit* (The Ruler of the Country) (1969) (Fig. 2.2.1.7), the new Socialist man is presented in an idealized way, with the figurative mysticism of his physical dimensions meaning he appears in the form of a supernatural human. The daily newspaper of the regime *Zëri i Popullit* (The Voice of the People) was influential in the formation of this new Socialist man, with one article claiming:

> The greatness of the party's work consists primarily in moulding our new man with a Marxist-Leninist world outlook and revolutionary characteristics. This new man spends all his energies in applying the party line, supports and embraces what is new and advanced, and fights consistently against everything that is alien and regressive (Bowers, 1989:442).

This was the young Socialist man, who is shown with one hand ready to defend his country and simultaneously ready to build it with his other. He also represents the well-cultured, educated and healthy citizen as the product of the new Socialist Albania. Furthermore, apart from the figure in the foreground, Kristo allows the background a special intensity to elevate the enthusiasm for the country's industrialization, including scenes from daily work, modern industry and architecture.

Figure 2.2.1.7. Spiro Kristo. *Zotër të vendit.* (The Ruler of the Country), 1969.
Oil on Canvas, 230 x 193 cm. Collection, National Art Gallery, Tiranë, Albania.

Similarly, Lumturi Blloshmi's (b.1944) *Aksionistja* (The Brigadier) (1970) (Fig. 2.2.1.8)

attempts to convey the Socialist idea of collectivity, but the focus here is on agriculture,

entailing the idea that agriculture and industry are equally important for the development of

the country. Blloshmi is a product of the Albanian art school during the Communist period,

graduating from the High School of Arts in 1968 (Drishti and Demiraj, 2018).

The work reflects women's emancipation as a revolutionary power in all aspects of life in the

service of the party and the new Socialist homeland.

Figure 2.2.1.8. Lumturi Blloshmi. *Aksionistja (The Brigadier)*, 1970.
Oil on Canvas, 65 x 110 cm. Collection, National Art Gallery, Tiranë, Albania.

In *Aksionistja,* Blloshmi presents a female, suggesting a powerful and a triumphant character of youthful energy, and the idea that the "new Socialist woman" (Nikolla, 2012:151) is equal to the male in the contribution to the development of the homeland. However, this idea of gender equality was more propagandist than reality.

The examples of art practice described above influenced the everyday life of ordinary people by attempting to transform their perception of national identity, showing the transition from an old home to a new Socialist home. As a result of the totalitarian isolation and lack of free thinking the Communist state was able to present itself simultaneously as the most important period in Albanian history and the beginning of the new Socialist home. Traces from the Communist period can be seen everywhere in Albania in the transformation of home and identity, for example in the innumerable Socialist Realist apartment blocks and bunkers. The presence of the new Socialist man from the Communist past is still felt nowadays in Albanian society in the form of exaggerated pride and a bunker mentality (Bajrovic and Satter, 2014:145), while these bunkers and images of grandeur still form the stereotypes and national identity of Albania.

2.2.2 Underground Art

During the Socialist Realist period some artists felt they could not conform to the regime's wishes and protested quietly by withdrawing from their role as artists and performing other occupations. Another group decided to continue their modernist-influenced work in secret, while keeping hidden private bodies of works in their studios or homes. Shefki Çela (b. 1944), who made abstract paintings, (*Abstrakt* (*Abstract)* (1970) Fig. 2.2.2.1) has explained how he was not willing to become a tool of the regime and thus made a silent compromise with himself to not display these works during the Communist regime, fanatically guarding some of his works in his basement, while others were destroyed (Çela, 2018).

Figure 2.2.2.1. Shefki Çela. *Abstrakt. (Abstract),* 1970.
Oil on Card, 78 x 74.5 cm. Photograph Shefki Çela. Private Collection, Tiranë, Albania.

Under the auspices of the Cultural and Ideological Revolution, undertaken in the USSR and

in China, by Communist leader Mao from 1966 (Wang, 2008), and then pursued by Hoxha in

Albania from 1966 to 1975, large-scale persecution of artists in all fields who did not conform

to nor serve the political line of the Communist regime began (Biberaj, 1986). Those most

affected by the so-called Cultural Revolution were visual artists. Security searches were

carried out in painters' studios and homes with the aim of finding work which went against

the principles of Socialist Realism. Many of the artists whose secret work was found were

imprisoned, exiled for their views and their modernist vision of contemporary art. One of

these artists was Ali Oseku (b. 1944) who was sent to work in the city of Elbasan for 're-

education' from 1973-75 (Drishti, 2018a) due to the "alien manifestation" (shfaqje e huaj)

(Tochka, 2013:3) in his painting. He was arrested in 1975, and spent four years of his life in the prison of Spac, where he worked in the mines as a forced labourer (Drishti, 2018a; Binder, 1991). According to Binder (1991), Oseku was arrested by the Interior Ministry police under the charge of 'making propaganda for the enemy,' and state security forced him to burn all his paintings. Although after his imprisonment, Oseku had been banned from practising and exposing his art, he continued to work in secrecy, and his work from 1983, (*Një portret gruaje) A Portrait of a Woman* (Fig. 2.2.2.2), clearly shows modernist influences. Oseku avoids a naturalistic

Figure 2.2.2.2. Ali Oseku. *Një portret gruaje. (A Portrait of a Woman),* 1983.
Oil on Card, 31 x 44.5 cm. Photograph by Dashamir Vaqari.
Private Collection, Tiranë, Albania.

portrayal, rather expressing the emotional side through the use of distortion and vibrant colours.

The nationally well-known artist Edison Gjergo suffered the same fate and was sentenced to eight years in prison (Drishti, 2018b) for his work entitled *Epika e yjeve të mëngjesit (The Epic of the Morning Stars)* (1971) (Fig. 2.2.2.3), which the regime saw as degenerate with "bourgeois-revisionist" influences (Drishti, 2018b).

Figure 2.2.2.3. Edison Gjergo. *Epika e yjeve të mëngjesit. (The Epic of the Morning Stars)*, 1971. Oil on Canvas, 179 x 119.5 cm. Collection, National Art Gallery, Tiranë, Albania.

Gjergo presents a group of anti-fascist fighters from the Albanian National Liberation Army during World War II in a composition which is a departure from the heroic myths of the

partisan's life - rather they are represented in a real humane situation. The partisans are gathered around an elderly highlander from northern Albania, dressed in the region's traditional costume and playing a music instrument (*lahutë* (lute)), which is an important part of the Albanian national identity. This intrument is usually played "to accompany epic songs of the Frontier Warriors" (Elsie, 2012:160). In this work, colour is treated expressively, which was unusual in comparison to Socialist Realist artists. It is impossible to understand the effects of these actions or the influence of these works because most of them were destroyed. After leaving prison he worked as a manual labourer and was never allowed to exhibit his artwork to a public audience (Drishti, 2018b).

Others, who had received advance warning of these searches or out of fear of the state security, destroyed their work to eradicate any trace. Shefki Cela, who was one of Oseku's closest friends (and my own closest mentor during my studies), recounts that on hearing the news of Oseku's arrest and fearing a possible search of his own studio he burned a large number of his oil paintings. Another artist, architect and painter, Maks Velo, was arrested on 14th October 1978, accused of modernist influences on his art, and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment and hard labour (Velo, 2009; Demiraj and Drishti, 2017). After the fall of Communism Velo described Socialist Realism as one of "the main ideological weapons used by Hoxha, where art and literature were administered to the Albanian people like soothing and dream-inducing drugs; they created a mirage of happiness" (Velo, 2014:11).

This kind of political influence in art also had a significant impact on the development of student artwork at the Higher Institute of Arts in Tirana (now the University of Arts). Bashkim Dervishi was not allowed to stage his degree show in 1973 because of its modernist tendencies. He was forced to repeat his final year and present another artwork in the spirit of Socialist Realism (Dervishi, 2018). In this way, the art school tradition that was created in Albania before the Communists came to power was destroyed, as were many other positive aspects of pre-Communist Albanian society including economic, political and socio-cultural freedoms.

Those found guilty of being against the regime under Article 55 AGITATION-PROPAGANDA were called 'deklasuar,' meaning declassed (Simons, 1980:20), that is to say, stripped of all privileges and rights to the extent that children of a declassed parent were not allowed to pursue higher education studies regardless of talent or intellect (De Waal, 2005:23). Here I can speak from personal experience: in July 1989 I took part in the national competition for visual art, which was the competition for access to the Liceu Artistik. I was not able to win a place to study fine art at this school as a result of my family biography - my father was a former political convict. Ironically, three months later one of my works was awarded a prize by UNESCO, at an international exhibition, which took place in Lidice in Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic). Despite honouring my country with my participation in this competition and winning the first prize, I was still not permitted to attend the high school for studies in fine art. A year later, when many things had changed after the fall of the Berlin Wall, I was able to compete again and finally to win a place at the Liceu Artistik in Tirana.

Due to the degree of control by the regime, artists had no access to contemporary critical and theoretical literature about modern art or indeed modern art itself, and thus their understanding and application of modernist influences were very limited. Furthermore, non-conforming artists lived in fear of being arrested under propaganda laws and were thus unable to develop their critical thinking or express this in their creative works. Alongside this stylistic monopoly, the history of art was not studied and researched as an academic discipline; consequently there was a lack of knowledge on how to undertake a genuinely critical analysis of art or understand its context. In the academy, the history of art was studied for only one hour a week, focussing solely on Socialist Realist art, and was predominantly related to discussion of the media of the artwork. Discussion of painters such as Picasso, Dali and other famous western modernist artists were strictly banned by the regime, although many artists in Albania discussed their work secretly in their studios. Even nowadays it is to be noted that the history of art is not offered as a specific degree course in Albanian academia; rather the criticism of work is done by artists. Although there is now a younger

generation of Albanian artists who have been educated in art history and critical theory in various universities around the world, they have not returned to their home country due to the lack of state support and the current socio-economic problems (see Chapter 1.4.4); therefore most of them are forced to live as transnational migrants after graduation.

2.3 The concept of home in contemporary Albanian art

Albanian art is still experiencing the effects of the Communist period. Being isolated from the West for forty-five years had a significant influence on Albanian artists' lack of development, and created a gap that is also felt in art theory. After the fall of Communism, the impact of this came to light as various artists attempted to operate and integrate into the contemporary art world. Some artists began to break off from the influence of Socialist Realist art in the early 1990s, attempting to work as contemporary artists in the same way as other artists in the world. However, in some cases their works were simply a mechanical reproduction of modernism, and not a result of their own critical input (Bengu, 2016). On the other hand, some artists reacted to their new situation through their artwork, reflecting and incorporating the subjects of the political, economic and socio-cultural changes, which included migration and the concept of home. Therefore, alongside the theory of transnationalism and the concept of home (see Chapter 3), in order to bring new knowledge it is useful to position my work in relation to those contemporary Albanian artists who have considered the subject matter. In looking at the work of contemporary Albanian artists I have categorised these into three dominant themes: home in national symbols and identity; home in urban spaces; and home in architecture, which are also relevant to my own practice.

2.3.1 Home in symbols of national identity

Unlike neighbouring countries in the Balkans, whose national identity is linked with their religion, Albanians associate national identity with history, culture and language, while

religion is of secondary importance (Strazzari, 2009:81). In a discussion of the concept of identity formation, Stuart Hall explains:

> Identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular, but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices, and positions. They are subject to a radical historicization, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation (1996:4).

After living with socialist propagandist imagery for so long, Albanians faced significant problems with their own identity. Albania is thus a good example of Hall's comments on the transformation of identities during different historical and political periods. Even now questions around Albanian identity persist. Four artists who consider the concept of home in relation to national symbols and identity in different ways and through different media in their work are: Anila Rubiku (b. 1970); Bashkim Dervishi (b. 1951); Venera Kastrati (b. 1975); and Ardian Isufi (b. 1973).

Anila Rubiku graduated from the University of Arts in Tirana in 1994 and completed post-graduate studies in Milan at the Brera Academy (Rubiku, 2012). Her creative work deals with issues related to the Albanian Communist period, such as identity, memory, home and migration (Hadjipolycarpou, 2017). One of her series of works focuses on how the concept of home was transformed through the bunker phenomenon in Albania (see section 1.3). Rubiku has treated this phenomenon in various media, including the watercolour painting *Bunker Mentality* (2014) (Fig. 2.3.1.1). According to Deidre McPherson (2016), "living with these bunkers had a profound psychological effect on Rubiku and all citizens of her country," while Rubiku herself (2016) explains "the way that me and you think about the same object is different. That fascinates me. We all have different life experiences."

Figure 2.3.1.1. Anila Rubiku. *Bunker Mentality,* 2014.

Water Colour on Arches Paper, 121.5 x 158 cm. Photograph Anila Rubiku.

Bunker Mentality/Landscape Legacy (2014) (Fig. 2.3.1.2) is an installation, which was

created for the first Kiev International Biennial of Contemporary Art, in the Ukraine[3] in 2012

(Elliot, 2012:56). The installation consists of fifty-one bunkers, which are made from different

materials, twenty-five are made from concrete, one in neon, and the other twenty-five are

made from wax (Galerie Dix9, 2019). The British curator David Elliot called Rubiku's *Bunker*

Mentality/Landscape Legacy "a celebration of the economic stagnation caused by the same

mentality in which Albania is still mired," and went on to explain the significance of Albania's

bunkers to the national identity, saying "they have even become a kind of kitsch national

emblem in the form of souvenirs and ash trays" (2012:56).

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[3] Significantly, the Ukraine is another former Communist country with a history similar to that of Albania.

Figure 2.3.1.2. Anila Rubiku. *Bunker Mentality/Landscape Legacy,* 2012.
Installation. 500 x 700 x 50cm. Photograph Anila Rubiku.

Rubiku dispersed the bunkers in a disorderly and dense way in a limited space, attempting to

convey an image of a frightening time that cannot be forgotten. With these bunkers, Rubiku

recalls not only a dark period that affected Albanian identity, but also the impact that this

system has left behind in Albanian mentality and can be seen in political, economic and

socio-cultural aspects.

National symbols also proliferate in Bashkim Dervishi's art. His painting *Krenaria legjitime*

(Legitimate Pride) (2012) (Fig. 2.3.1.3) focuses on national identity after the fall of

Communism. The painting was created for an exhibition celebrating the one hundredth

anniversary of Albanian independence.

Figure 2.3.1.3. Bashkim Dervishi. *Krenaria legjitime (Legitimate Pride),* 2012.
Oil on Canvas 68 x 110 cm. Private Collection. Photograph Bashkim Dervishi.

The work consists of two similar yet different motifs which complement each other. Two young people are positioned in front of traditional Albanian national symbols, which highlight the historical context and the identity of the Albanian people. This image of the younger generation symbolizes the hopes and possibilities for the future of the country, but also Dervishi's concerns about the future of the culture. The artist has carefully selected the symbols and placed them in subtle juxtaposition in order to both express his aim for the work but also to allow his audience space to interpret and consider their symbolic importance for the past, present and future of the country. Regarding the risk posed by globalization to the transformation of identity, particularly among the young generation in Albania, Dervishi says:

Perhaps in this time of globalization that we are living it is good for the younger generation to grow up with these symbols and not ever lose the national identity. Keeping our national identity especially for the young generation is very important, because it represents our large homeland that we call Albania (Dervishi, 2016).

In contrast to Dervishi, who deals with identity within the home country, Venera Kastrati's work deals with how her feelings for home affect her identity in the host country. Kastrati's education and career developed between Albania and Italy. Her experience of migration, both emotionally and physically, is reflected in her creative work. Her strong emotions for home are reflected in her work entitled *Home Sweet Home* (1999-2000) (Fig. 2.3.1.4). This work consists of three fragments: two are represented as colour prints, and the third is an installation in the centre of the artwork. She created it in 1998 at the beginning of her studies at Brera Academy of Fine Arts, Milan after her first year being abroad.

Her work focuses on memory and nostalgia for home, and how it can be transformed to a threat for the future perspectives of her identity. Speaking about this work, Kastrati asks:

Are we in front of reality or imagination?
The fragile and insecure material of construction risks the identity of construction itself. Inside survives the world of my secrets, emphasising my essential diary. The sounds light the curiosity for this unknown identity. Is there un-identity under the not-identity?
The little girl of the diary is the innocence, mankind perpetration and sincere reality that, with her naive expression, open us the truth.
My sweet home is hot and noisy, full of light and life. It's my identity where I sleep quiet. I wish it was safe but its frailness frights me [sic] (Kastrati, 2017).

In her work, Kastrati perceives a kind of nostalgic feeling for her childhood, for the house that she had before, which gives her security and a warm attachment in contrast to the difficulties in creating a new home after her relocation to Italy. In *Home Sweet Home,* she connects the concept of identity with the perception of home, but also leaves space for an interpretation of uncertainty about losing her identity.
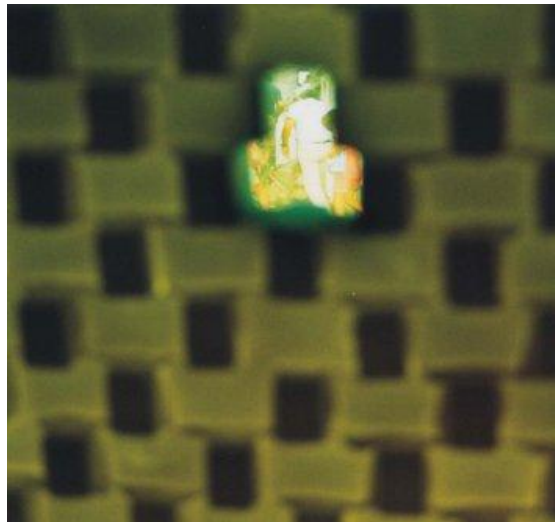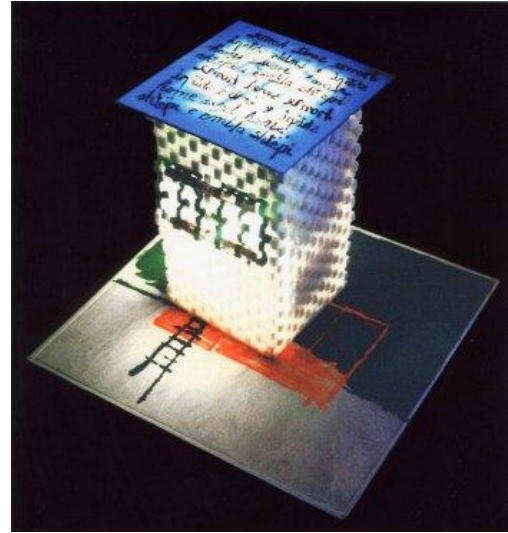
Figure 2.3.1.4. Venera Kastrati. *Home Sweet Home,* 1999-2000.
Colour print, dimensions variable.
Installation. Sugar cubes, wood, plexiglass, lamp 120 W, photo negative.
Colour print, dimensions variable. Photograph Venera Kastrati.

Finally, Ardian Isufi's work, *ANTI-HOMAGE* (2015) (Fig. 2.3.1.5), focuses more on the

political aspects of identity and the memory of the past. This installation is conceived such

that visitors walk through a narrow corridor, similar to an isolated tunnel. When they reach its

end they face the death mask of Enver Hoxha (Isufi, 2018). More than any other, in political

and historical terms, Hoxha was the figure, who influenced and transformed the concept of home in Albania, connecting it directly to a new Socialist homeland.

Figure 2.3.1.5. Ardian Isufi. *ANTI-HOMAGE,* 2015.
Installation. Photograph Ardian Isufi.

A reaction to this installation (Fig. 2.3.1.6) shows a young man, who, clearly from his age, was not a part of and has no personal experience of the Communist era, yet his reaction to the mask implies the enduring impact of this period, even on the younger generations. Ironically, the Communist period remains an integral part in the transformation of identity experienced in Albanian society, under the slogan of building a new Socialist man. This image also ironically conveys feelings against the dictator's individual cult that was constructed through Socialist Realist artworks (see section 2.2.1).

Figure 2.3.1.6. Ardian Isufi. *Reacting to the Mask of the Dictator,* 2015.
Photograph Ardian Isufi.

Furthermore, the scenario created through the installation might evoke or lead to an imaginary dialogue between visitors and the dictator. Isufi explains:

> this contact with the portrait-mask pushes us towards a psychological approach, where the face of visitors, or their emotional body language, will be seen as an anti-homage to our history of dictatorship. For this reason the road to see this death mask will go through a mental tunnel, installed here as a psychological stream of consciousness in the central hall of the National History Museum (Isufi, 2018).

Interestingly, visitors were not informed that this fictional meeting would be recorded or photographed, in order to provoke an immediate and honest reaction.

2.3.2 Home in urban spaces

Urban or public spaces offer social relationships, encouraging communication and occasional meetings between people (Talen, 2000). Such spaces can be seen as common sites of interaction, carrying a symbolism, such as political, cultural or places of identity

(Mannarini et al, 2006). They may also allow citizens to experience the feeling of belonging at home in their community (Hummon, 1992; Mesch and Manor, 1998). Here I discuss the work of: Shpend Bengu (b. 1962); Gazmend Bakiu (b. 1960); and two pairs of collaborators - Fatos Lubonja (b. 1951) and Isufi; and Flutura Preka (b. 1972) and Besnik Haxhillari (b. 1972).

Shpend Bengu is based in Albania but has also worked in Italy. He started his practice in a Socialist Realist tradition, but has gone on to deal with the issues of memories of home and focus on the social aspects. His *Xhiro në bulevard* (*Stroll on the Boulevard)* (1986) (Fig. 2.3.2.1) shows a nostalgic image of people's daily activities during the Communist period.

Figure 2.3.2.1. Shpend Bengu. *Xhiro në bulevard (Stroll on the Boulevard),* 1986.
Oil on Canvas, 80 x 110 cm. Private Collection. Photograph Shpend Bengu.

It mirrors the social and cultural life of the capital, where people can "use places to communicate qualities of the self to self or other" (Cuba and Hummon, 1993a:112). This daily promenading was quite significant for the residents of Tirana as a meeting point, but also as a kind of silent fashion parade of well dressed people trying to show their own style during the difficult economic and political situation that the country was experiencing. Bengu describes this work not only as a fact of his life, but as well as a particular social place for many people during the Communist period, when this urban space was a crucial part of the identity of the capital. Moreover, it is closely linked to the memory of his childhood, when the evening stroll was a family ritual, even a social need, for many Albanians. According to Tuan (1977; 1979) a space can be transformed into 'place' by the values and meaning that we attach to it, constructing experience and fostering the sense of place. From this viewpoint, the boulevard stroll was not just a form of a social life for Tirana's citizens, but also as a place where people could discuss the day's social, cultural and political events, and where close and trusted friends would even criticise the Communist regime. In this vein, Stedman argues that "memories and meanings are with people in place rather than just the physical setting" (2003:823). Bengu (2016) has explained that a cold blue colour dominates in the work as a metaphor and perception for the fear and insecurity that people experienced at that time, because many people were arrested for political reasons during the boulevard stroll.

Nowadays the pedestrians have been replaced by cars, which Bengu (2016) considers a form of loss of home and the identity of the capital, remaining only in the collective memory of the people. Discussing the changes he has experienced in this city, Bengu describes his nostalgia:

> I think Tirana nowadays does not belong to me, it belongs to the others; my Tirana has died... I have attempted through my artworks to document these periods that were beautiful to me in my memories of Tirana, which appear nowadays to me in both a nostalgic form and in a sense of belonging (Bengu, 2016).

Similarly concerned with the concept of home in urban spaces, but in a different medium, Gazmend Bakiu undertakes his research through photographic images. He concentrates on the historical and political aspects of home, especially in the radical changes of perceptions and memories of home that Tirana's inhabitants experienced during the Communist era. His father, Ali Bakiu, was the mayor of Tirana during the years 1945-46, which influenced Bakiu's focus on the destruction of the collective memory of the city. He is a collector and one of the best-known Albanian scholars of photography, as well as a researcher of the political history of the capital. In his book, *Tirana e Vjeter* (Old Tirana) (Bakiu, 2013), he presents old photographs of the city, describing the photograph as a social communication tool, illustrating not only what home was before but also what has been lost, in both the physical sense and the social relationships that these spaces offered to their community. He describes this change as follows:

> Architecture is the best witness of the history and identity of a country or a city; the Communist regime wanted people to "read" only the "history" which was written and created by them, thus as far as possible they eliminated everything that had been done before. It seems incredible, but it happened like this. They wanted to say that history began with them. In Tirana, the main victim was 'Skanderbeg Square'. In 1981, in order to leave space for the construction of a national museum, in typical Socialist Realist architecture, they demolished the city hall, which had been one of the most important symbols of the capital for a long time. This is not far from a war, or a war situation. But it was worse than a war, because when the war has ended, many buildings will be rebuilt, while here was quite the opposite, as I said above, the goal was the loss of identity. They wanted to undo the city and its historic centre, and unfortunately they achieved a good part with a great success (Bakiu, 2017).

To reach a better understanding of how aspects of an old home can transfer to a new home we can see both examples in the photographs of *Scanderbeg Square 1933* (Bakiu, 2017) (Fig. 2.3.2.2), and *Scanderbeg Square 2019* (Vaqari, 2019) (Fig. 2.3.2.3). The city square has lost its identity - many buildings shown in the earlier photograph no longer exist, for instance City Hall, which, as Bakiu described above, was inaugurated on September 1st 1931 and demolished in 1981.

Figure 2.3.2.2. *Scanderbeg Square, Tiranë,* 1933. Photograph Author Unknown.

Figure 2.3.2.3. *Scanderbeg Square, Tiranë,* 2018. Photograph by Dashamir Vaqari.

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This building dominates the square and shows the national symbol of a double headed eagle on both sides. Bakiu argues that Tirana is one of the few European capital cities that did not experience any destruction during the Second World War, but what it experienced in its architectural transformation during the Communist regime was even worse than a war. Hoxha's influence on the re-urbanization of Tirana and ensuing transformation of the home can be seen in a speech given in 1948, where he declared in front of the Raised Urban Issues Commission of the City of Tirana that:

> Everything built must abide by the principles of our people's regime. Buildings must be horizontal, not vertical: architects must respect our folk styles. Attention must be paid to group administrative buildings in the centre, in apposite places where they conserve and beautify the city (cited in Pojani, 2014:76).

It is quite clear how dictatorial regimes can influence and change the perception of the home. Nowadays the square is still subject to public discourse, where many people still feel the loss of their identity and home (Pojani, 2014). The old Tirana has become an old home, which may nowadays only appear in some form of collective memory among its citizens.

Ardian Isufi and Fatos Lubonja have also considered the concept of home by focussing on urban spaces in their installation, which presents symbols of the dictatorship in a significant location. Isufi works in mixed media, and is the current Dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Arts in Tirana. Lubonja is a writer, political analyst and dissident. (His father, Todi Lubonja, was a close associate of Hoxha, who later imprisoned both father and son for many years for voicing opposition). Isufi and Lubonja created the installation, *Post Bloc* (2013) (Fig. 2.3.2.4), which is realized in an urban space at the entrance to the *Bllok* (*Bloc*) district in Tirana, where the Communist rulers and their families lived during the regime. During this time, this area was shielded by soldiers who did not allow any civilians to enter the "beyond" territory.

Figure 2.3.2.4. Ardian Isufi and Fatos Lubonja. *Post Bloc, Tiranë,* 2013.
Installation. Photograph by Dashamir Vaqari.

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The installation consists of three objects from the Communist era in East Germany and

Albania: a piece of the Berlin Wall that symbolically divided Europe into two parts; a bunker

symbolising the Communist regime in Albania (see section 1.3); and thirdly, concrete pillars

taken from the most notorious Communist prison, Spac, which was known as 'Albania's

Auschwitz' and where Lubonja himself spent years of his life. All three of the objects are

constructed in concrete, which gives a meaningful dimension to this urban space,

transmitting a sense of fear or isolation and the memory of the past. The installation can be

understood as a form of collective memory of remembrances of the persecution at the time,

not only between Berlin and Tirana, but perhaps to transnationally convey the ideology of

Communism that divided Europe into two camps. Sociologist Maurice Halbwachs has

studied the phenomenon of the 'collective memory,' and argues that memory is "a

reconstruction of the past using data taken from the present" (1982:119). Crinson (2005) also

discusses the importance of urban spaces and the connection between urban memory and the role of history, which transmit historical and political memories in a society. Lubonja himself says "this work was a dedication to the people who did not have the chance to overcome the dictatorship era and live in the time we live today" (Top Channel, 2013).

The artistic collaborators Flutura Preka and Besnik Haxhillari, known since 1998 as *The Two Gullivers,* have also considered travel and migration in urban spaces in their installation *Transparent Travel* (2004), but in a very different way. Both artists graduated from the University of Arts in Tirana in 1994 (Artslant, 2018), and have personal experience of migration, having lived and worked in Montreal since 2000. Preka and Haxhillari have explained that their inspiration in the selection of this artistic name was the notion of travelling and displacement, as signalled in the allusion to Jonathan Swift's novel *Gulliver's Travels* (Preka and Haxhillari, 2018).

Figure 2.3.2.5. The Two Gullivers. *Transparent Travel,* 2004.
Mixed Media on Paper, 21.6 x 27.9 cm. Photograph The Two Gullivers.

The mixed-media draft of their performance, *Transparent Travel* (Fig. 2.3.2.5) led to the final result, which is represented in the form of an installation, performance and photography.

The final version of their work (Fig 2.3.2.6) is mainly based on a transparent suitcase, as an object that is exhibited in different locations significant for travel across the globe.

Figure 2.3.2.6. The Two Gullivers. *Transparent Travel,* 2004.
Installation, 65 x 42 x 28 cm. Photograph The Two Gullivers.

The suitcase is located in a transit space where the travellers are invited to reflect and become part of the artists' performance. During an interview about the project, Preka explained:

> First we thought of a way to re-invent the suitcase, a travelling object, attached to us and used by all, on a daily basis. So the idea was to do a long-term performance, from Montreal to different countries in Europe or states of America" (Preka, 2016).

With regard to the place of the representation of the suitcase, Haxhillari explains that:

> While not being a traditional place of exhibition, the suitcase becomes a mobile and transparent space in which we can exhibit pieces that remain visible from the outside. At the same time, the transparent object itself is seen as a performative object (Haxhillari, 2017).

Being exposed in different urban transit spaces, this transparent suitcase intended to sensitize the various problems that migrants encounter while travelling home, such as arousing the authorities' suspicions in the host country. However, the transparency shows that the migrants have nothing to hide and reveals nostalgic souvenirs or valued objects containing memories from home.

2.3.3 Home in architecture

Recent research names history and architecture as integral parts of the concept of home (Mallet, 2004). Clearly migration is not the only cause of creating a new home, but with the advancement of various contemporary technologies and styles of construction in global spaces, the perception of home begins to transform, which may then develop in our memory as a symbolic attachment to an old home. Moreover, it creates a new environment or architectural space that no longer offers a sense of security. The concept of home is closely linked to architectural styles in some contemporary Albanian art. In this section, I consider the work of three artists who live and work outside of Albania and have transnational experience - Ardian Paci (b. 1969), Anri Sala (b. 1974), and Bengu - and a fourth, Bashkim Dervishi, who has remained in Albania.

Ardian Paci, who lives between Italy and Albania, is one of the most well-known contemporary Albanian artists. He completed his degree in fine art at the Art Academy in Tirana in 1991. Between the years 1995-97 he lectured in art history and aesthetics at the School of Art in Shkodër, Albania. During the collapse of the pyramid schemes in 1997 (see Section 1.4.2), he left his country (Pomeranz Collection, 2007) and settled in Milan with his family, where he lectures in Visual Arts at Accademia Carrara di Belle Arti in Bergamo and

the Università IUAV in Venice. Based on personal experience of migration and influenced from the pain of exile, Paci's work frequently addresses the political, economic and social aspects of his homeland, especially the loss of home, nostalgia and memories (Ghada, 2016), applied in different media, including painting, sculpture, photography, performance, video and installation. *Back Home* (2001) (Fig. 2.3.3.1), is one of a series related to the topic of home considered through architecture, and is a mixed media work, consisting of a photograph of his family posing in front of a reproduced painted backdrop of their former home (Cesareo, 2018).

Figure 2.3.3.1. Ardian Paci. *Back Home,* 2001.
Photograph Ardian Paci. Deutsche Bank Collection.

Although they are physically separated from their home, they highlight themes of nostalgia and memory through architectural views, finding themselves in front of what they had left behind, presented in a new environment. This example reflects their emotional attachment to

the image of home and the sense of belonging this brings, where many migrants from

Albania move with an intention to stay abroad only temporarily. This emotional attachment to

home serves as a metaphor for the strength of family identity as a key component of

Albanian society. Paci himself describes the series in this way:

> Emigrants often take pictures in front of important buildings in the cities they live in and send
> them to their families. I wanted to invert this by asking friends of mine to give me permission to
> take pictures in their houses in Albania. I used these pictures to paint four backdrops with the
> houses of four different families, and then I invited them to my studio to pose for a photograph
> in front of the painted house. In this way, the painting derives from a photograph and is then
> converted back into a photograph through this experience. I liked the whole process, and the
> final picture is only the last moment of this process (Deutsche Bank AG, 2012).

In the installation *Home to go* (2001) (Fig. 2.3.3.2), he deals with the concept of home

through the lens of social and economic remittances of transnational migration. A cast of the

Figure 2.3.3.2. Ardian Paci. *Home to Go,* 2001.
Installation. Photograph Peter Blum Gallery, New York, United States of America.

artist's own body is hunched over by the weight of a segment of a typically Albanian ceramic-tiled rooftop he carries on his back. Conceptually it contains emotional attachments to home, describing a part of the reality of Albanian migrants. The artist presents the physical and psychological burden of his exodus, including the difficulties and problems that migrants carry during their period staying abroad, such as trying to save and invest this money in building a new home or to improve living conditions at home.

Anri Sala provides an example of the how art and colour can change the architectural image of home. Sala was raised and educated in Tirana and Paris, and now lives and works in Berlin. As an international artist, he works in a range of different artistic media, focusing mostly on video, photography and installation (Godfrey, Obrist and Gillick, 2006). In 2003, he created a sixteen-minute colour film project entitled *Dammi i Colori* (*Give me the Colour* (2003) (author's translation) (Fig. 2.3.3.3), which focuses on the transformation of Tirana after the fall of Communism (The Guardian, 2006). This film was first presented at the 2003 Venice Biennale (Sala, 2003). It presents a conversation on a night trip through the city centre, with the mayor at this time, Edi Rama, who is also Sala's mentor (Boym, 2005) and, since 2013, Prime Minister of Albania[4]. Sala's film focuses on the painted facades of the mass-constructed apartment blocks in Tirana, transforming the specific architecture style that prevailed in many eastern bloc countries during the Communist period. During this conversation among friends, Rama describes his project to transform Tirana into a city of choice (Boym, 2005) through the use of colour, and how this topic became a subject of open discussion and debate, not only in academia, but also among Tirana's citizens. The purpose of this project, which he called "A Return to Identity" (Pojani, 2014:79), was to bring a new perception of home, to make it a warmer and more habitable environment that would convey hope, confidence and security to his citizens**.**

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[4] Rama is also a contemporary artist, and was my professor at the University of Art in Tirana from 1994-95.

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Figure 2.3.3.3. Anri Sala. *Dammi i Colori (Give me the Colour),* 2003.
Film still. Photograph Anri Sala. Tate Gallery, London, UK.

On the one hand there was agreement for this transformation, but on the other hand, many disliked the prevalence of strong primary colours, which was new and unusual for the city. Rama himself describes the use of colour in this way:

> I think that a city where things develop normally might wear colours as a dress, not have them as organs. In a way colours here replace the organs. They are not part of the dress. That kind of city would wear colours like a dress or like a lipstick ... There is no other country in Europe where colour is so vehemently debated." (Sala, 2003)

While Sala describes his project as follows:

> I wanted to show images from a place where speaking of utopia is actually impossible, and therefore utopian. I chose the notion of hope instead of utopia. I focused on the idea of bringing hope in a place where there is no hope ... It is about dealing with the reality where the luxury of time and money is missing (Sala, 2003).

Rama's influence on the colours of the painted facades of Tirana can be seen through his work *Politics with its insanity can make art even better* (2007) (Fig. 2.3.3.4).

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Figure 2.3.3.4. Edi Rama. *Politics with its Insanity can Make Art Even Better,* 2007.
Rama's office doodles. Mixed Medium on Paper, dimensions unknown.
Photograph Cathy Carver and Marian Goodman Gallery, London, UK.

The influence of architecture and politics in the transformation of the city are, as Bakiu mentions above, seen through how politics foster the sense of home and place, in which the citizens now have to live, regardless of their level of agreement with the new appearance of their city.

The importance of the architectural space in informing the perception of home is also seen in Bengu's work. *Hyrja ne Ambasada* (Entering the embassies) (1990) (Fig. 2.3.3.5) is a graphic print and focuses on the collective memorial day of the first wave of Albanian migration. On 2nd July 1990, nearly five thousand Albanians entered several western European embassies in Tirana as political refugees.
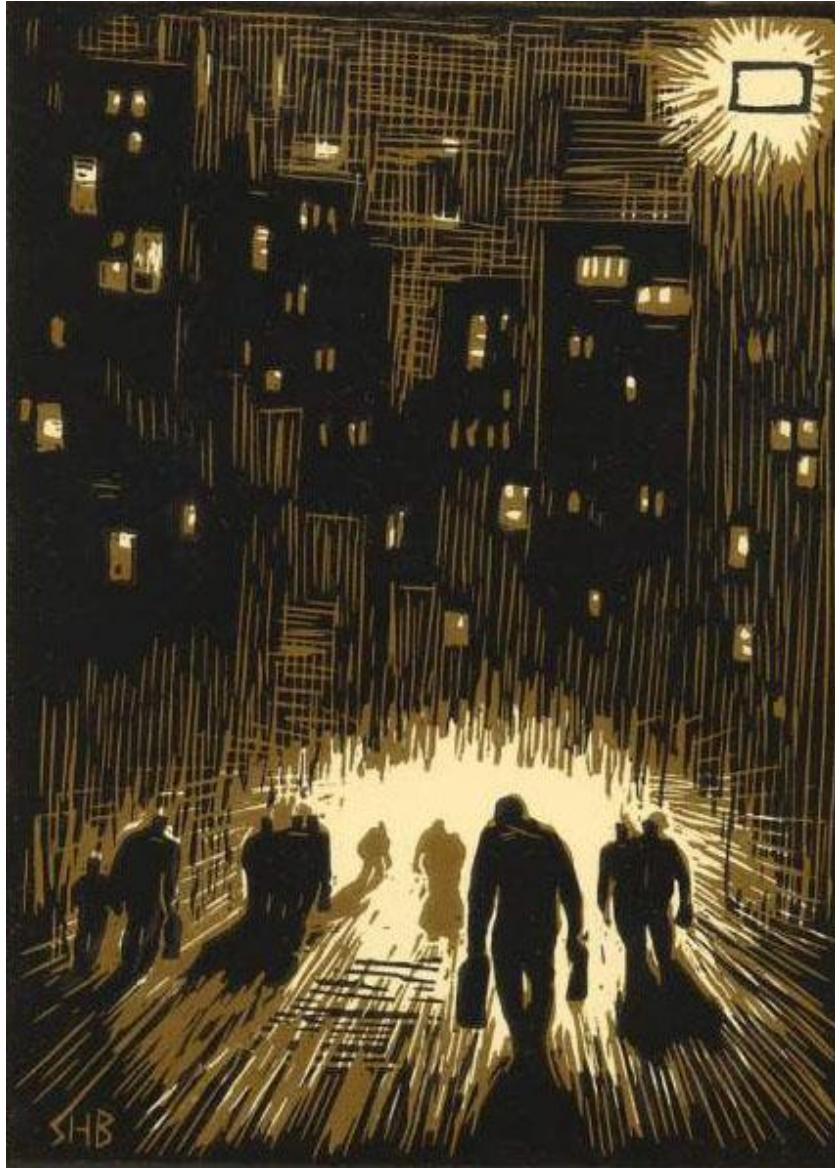
Figure 2.3.3.5. Shpend Bengu. *Hyrja në ambasada (Entering the Embassies),* 1990.
Print 15 x 11 cm. Private Collection. Photograph Shpend Bengu.

Bengu cites his inspiration for this graphic as being on 1st July 1990; when he was returning

home from work he saw large crowds of people running with luggage in their hands, all

heading to the foreign embassies. All these people are presented from behind, which Bengu

describes as a metaphor, observing that "they left me behind as I did not take that decision to

migrate" (Bengu, 2016). In contrast to the powerful light in the foreground, the background is

presented as very dark and Communist era apartment blocks prevail. Bengu describes these

apartments as an allegory in the form of a bunker or open jail, from which by leaving these apartments, people sought new light of hope. The Socialist architectural style in the background is present everywhere in Albanian daily life, yet Bengu perceives them negatively: "living in those blocks of apartments is terrible. The way that they have been built reminds me of the Rome Empire, how they built houses for their slaves…" (2016). In his work, he closely links the perception of the home to the surrounding architecture, speaking nostalgically of his previous home:

> In personal terms I had a very nice childhood as I grew up in a house with green garden and flowers, where red roses dominated. This transformation began when my house was demolished by the Communist regime to leave space to build the apartment blocks that we have nowadays. The most frustrating and exhausting moment of my life was when I saw the bulldozer demolishing my garden and the house. Then, as a family, we were forced to live in those apartment blocks. My children do not know this house with garden and flowers... (Bengu, 2016).

To represent the situation more effectively, at the upper right of the work Bengu has metaphorically presented an eye shape as a powerful light on an apartment terrace symbolizing the Communist regime that wanted to control everything. He explains "this light is powerless to control and stop people's freedom and their hope for a better life" (Bengu, 2016). Concerning Albanian migration, he explains that:

> these people did not abandon the country, but they were forced to leave it, which is the same as is happening today. I never wanted to leave my country, but on the other hand I think of the future perspectives of my children... (Bengu, 2016).

Another example of the concept of home dealt with through architecture in contemporary Albanian art can be found in Dervishi's work, which fuses Socialist Realism and modernist influence.

Figure 2.3.3.6. Bashkim Dervishi. *Ija,* 2008.
Oil on canvas 120 x 180 cm. Private Collection. Photograph Bashkim Dervishi.

His practice has dealt with the problems of globalization, home and spaces, relationships between people, and cultural, social, architectural and the resulting national identity changes. For instance, he experiments with the mutual exclusivity of these two periods of time in his work *Ija* (2008) (Fig. 2.3.3.6), which shows the older generation living in the traditional way in the foreground contrasted with the skyscrapers and modern symbols of globalization, which are beginning to be seen more and more in Tirana, in the background of the work.

A sense of warmth and peace dominates around this old woman, which is emphasized by the colours. The soft orange colour which gradually passes into ochre reminds him of the sunlight which Tirana had before with low houses and buildings. He speaks with nostalgia about the traditional lifestyle, and represents this in his work in soft, warm colours to also represent the warmth and tranquillity of the period, in contrast to the black and white cold tones used in the background to represent what is in his opinion the faceless nature of globalization leading to the alienation of this traditional culture against the will of the people. Dervishi explains:

> The problem of globalization has always preoccupied me as it comes with characteristics and great speed which often flatten tradition and culture. It aims to form a person without nation and identity (Dervishi, 2016).

Research in cultural studies has also argued that the influence of globalization in many societies can be seen as a danger that can undermine the culture and local identity (Featherstone, 1995). Cultural research on the sense of place has also discussed how "phenomenology of light, of colour, of architecture, of landscape, of place, of home, of travel and seeing" (Seamon 2000:158) can contribute to the meaning of the sense of place in various ways, and can share and transmit the conception and perception of home.

2.4 Impact on my work

The information gathered from these Albanian artists has led me to focus in my practical work on national symbols, architectural images, and places and spaces that are so central to Albanian identity. However, in contrast to the artists discussed above, I have attempted to transform national images and refine my ideas of national identity in the transnational context by investigating the effect of merging symbols of home with those related to the new or multiple homes. Bengu (2016) describes the role of the artist as being perhaps more significant in generating new knowledge through their artworks than the role of a scholar in

theory. He argues that theory is based on facts, while an image leaves room for interpretation and debate and thus plays a significant role in generating new ideas. Considering that my research subject is closely related to feeling and memory, I have attempted to conceptualize these national images through a different approach to the way of seeing and thinking. Thus, I have adapted these images to a perception of the transnational phenomenon of the concept of home, in relation to Albanian migration, rather than the more nostalgic focus seen in the work of contemporary Albanian artists as described above. Their work might suggest a concept of loss, where nostalgia can refer more to a time than to a particular place (Hutcheon and Valdés, 1998:2). The word 'nostalgia' comes from Old Greek, and is an amalgamation of two words - nostos meaning "return home" and algos "pain." (Soanes and Stevenson, 2004:976). The term may nowadays evoke a sentimental feeling of yearning for something that exists only as a memory in the form of mourning rather than a positive feeling of belonging in a transnational context (Rubenstein, 2001:5). In this sense, Savage argues that "belonging is not that of an individual to a fixed community rooted in place, but rather, one in which the place becomes valuable to the individual" (2005:80). The phenomenon of transnationalism centers on belonging, where the migrant tries to maintain multiple linkages between places and identities in sending and receiving countries (see Chapter 3). This is the focus of my body of painting and may differentiate it from previous Albanian artwork on the concept of home.

Furthermore, focusing on the artists' descriptions of their works and how they have conceptualised the topic of home through their use of different media, imagery and techniques highlighted for me the importance of making a distinction between my practice-based research and pure practice (Candy, 2006:2). In order to answer my research questions, I explored previous theoretical and practical research, where I have also been influenced by all of these factors in defining my practical framework. Thus the analysis of others' previous work as described above led to the aim of avoiding the phenomenon of nostalgia in my research, but rather to investigate the transnational aspect of home in new

ways and from new perspectives. Therefore, I experimented with different ways to address the historical context of the concept of home in post-Communist transnational Albanian diasporas. In my body of work, I have intentionally represented examples of the historical aspects of migration giving significance to the links between particular places, identities and mobility within the European context of transnationalism, which I will explore further in the next chapters.

3. Transnationalism and the concept of home

This chapter analyses the phenomenon of transnationalism and discusses the ways in which it has been defined and investigated from the perspective of contemporary Albanian migration. According to a World Bank report of 2011, Albania is one of the countries with the highest emigration in the world, relative to its population, with 1.4 million Albanians living abroad (2011:4 and 54). The effects of Albanian transnationalism can be seen negatively as so many citizens have left the country, but it may also have a positive impact in the economic and socio-cultural development of the homeland through financial contributions from migrants (see sections 3.1.2, 3.1.3).

3.1 The meaning of "transnationalism"

Despite significant bodies of research on transnationalism (for example: Bauböck, 2003; Glick-Schiller et al., 1992; Smith and Guarnizo, 1998), the term remains contentious with some definitions including the economic, political, and socio-cultural aspects of transnationalism, and the idea of multiple linkages across borders, while others are more concerned with immigration, globalization, language, or the need for a term for the concept (Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt, 1999). Some definitions have been criticised as the abstract language used may neglect the emotive nature of the topic (Waldinger and Fitzgerald, 2004). Therefore, in exploring the term, I argue that practice-based research provides a new complementary perspective.

One of the earliest uses of the term 'transnational' within the context of migration can be seen in Bourne's discussion of American immigrants' feelings of loyalty towards their new country alongside continued affection for their home countries (Bourne, 1916). Following the end of World War II, there was a need to revive the economy in many European countries, where the growing industrial development demanded a greater work force, which could not

be fulfilled due to losses sustained during the war. Thus, in the 1950s and 1960s, some states, such as Britain, Germany and France, introduced guest worker schemes (Carrera and Pitkänen, 2014) leading to the beginnings of transnationalism as a phenomenon in Europe. During the 1960s the word transnational was widely used by students of political economy to refer to the establishment of corporate structures with established organisational bases in more than one state (Martinelli, 1982). The concept of a "transnational society" was first discussed by Aron (1966:105); his study involved activities across borders including the exchange of ideas, movement of people and goods, and various organizations (Aron, 1966).

Nowadays, transnationalism remains an emotional topic, and still does not have a clear or exact definition. It is a broad field of study involving a variety of multiple activities as a network between sending and receiving states. Vertovec, for example, suggests six main areas of transnational activity:

> Firstly, transnationalism as a social morphology; secondly, as a type of consciousness; thirdly, as a mode of cultural reproduction; fourthly, as an avenue of capital; fifthly, as a site of political engagement; and finally, as a reconstruction of 'place' or locality (2009:4).

There is some agreement amongst scholars in referring to transnationalism as a phenomenon of cross-border exchanges, of which Glick-Shiller writes: "we call these processes transnationalism to emphasise that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural and political borders" (1994:8).

While there remains discussion and disagreement surrounding the exact definition and scope of transnationalism, the majority of existing research focuses broadly on the political, economic, and socio-cultural aspects, which all involve long-term linkage across national borders in terms of both activities and sensibilities (Vertovec, 2001; Gupta and Ferguson, 1992; Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt, 1999).

3.1.1 Political transnationalism

Østergaard-Nielsen (2003) has divided transnational political activity into three broad strands. Firstly, "homeland politics" deals with migrants' political activities that are exclusively concerned with the home country but performed in the host countries. This concern for the political situation in the homeland has also been described as a kind of "transnational activism" which allows transnational migrants to respond to their feelings of "social obligation and belonging" (Guarnizo et al, 2003:1239).

Østergaard-Nielsen's (2003) second category of transnational political activity is "immigrant politics," which refers to immigrants' political interests in the new country, and includes concerns such as gaining status and rights, integration, and fighting discrimination. As an example, one of the cases which is described under this kind of political activity is migrants' support for or opposition to the political system in the new country. The political and economic power of the host state has a significant impact on migrants' engagement with transnational activities – this may even determine their role and involvement in the society, where and to what extent they may operate in their sending and receiving state, as well in their integration processes.

The third strand of transnational political activity described by Østergaard-Nielsen (2003) is termed "translocal politics" and is concerned with migrants' interest in and support for specific localities in their country of origin, with the aim of developing these areas by supporting certain political parties.

Some scholars consider transnationalism to be an extension of the idea of diaspora, to highlight the links migrants maintain between their homeland and host states (Basch et al, 1994; Schiller, Basch and Szanton-Blank, 1992b, 1995; Waldinger and Fitzgerald, 2004). Others suggest that transnationalism provides a more coherent response to the trend of globalization (Castles, 2003). Diaspora theory also recognises conceptual differences in the

meaning and explanation of diasporic and transnational. One approach argues that diaspora, in contrast to transnationalism, is more like a kind of exile, a "homing desire" (Brah, 1996:180) focusing, engaging and rooted more in the homeland than in the host country (Clifford, 1994:304). While transnationalism is sometimes portrayed more as a phenomenon that is related to migrants who live dual lives between the sending and host countries (Schiller, Basch and Szanton-Blank , 1995:52).

The term diaspora has in itself had a wide interpretation in the literature; however, definitions are usually concerned with the three-stranded relationship between the home countries (which may have been home to the current members of the diaspora or their ancestors), the receiving countries, and the identifying ethnic groups spread across the world (Vertovec, 1999). Research on diaspora has also had varying foci – looking at the politics of diaspora (Cohen, 2008; Sheffer, 2003), the formation of identities and communities (Fortier, 2000; Laguerre, 1998), and the role of the collective memory of another place and time (Appadurai, 1995; Falzon, 2003). Examples of transnational political engagements can be easily identified in the Albanian diasporas, especially in the United States, United Kingdom and Germany, one such example was their contribution during the Kosovo war. Most of the members of the Albanian diasporas were born and raised in the host countries, especially in the United States, where Albanian migration, as noted in Chapter 1, has very early roots. After the fall of Communism, Albania was considered as a friendly and privileged country in its relations with the American government, and nowadays the Albanian diaspora is very strong, not only in socio-economic terms but also in political engagements (Nazi, 2000; Ragaru, 2002). Having a powerful sense of national identity, being well-educated (Nedelkoska and Khaw, 2015) and politically minded, the diaspora began to be increasingly active in achieving external support in sensitising the Albanian rights issue (Perritt, 2010:3). Particular mention must be made of the contribution of the Albanian American Civic League, which is an extremely influential organisation lobbying for Albanian affairs (Fig. 3.1.1.1).

The importance of supporting Albanian affairs by the Albanian diaspora in the United States is explained most accurately by a well-known saying in the Albanian language: "*Shqiperi, mos ki frike se i ke bijte ne Amerike*" meaning "Albania, be not afraid, for you have sons in America."

Figure 3.1.1.1. *Albanian Parade,* 2018.
Photograph Beqir Sina. New York, United States of America.

This political organisation was founded in 1989 by Congressman Joseph DioGuardi, son of Arberesh Albanian immigrants (Ragaru and Dymi, 2004).

Through their loyalty and dual lives in different countries, transnational communities can be perceived as a connecting bridge between the sending and receiving countries. From a

different perspective, this dual linkage could also be seen negatively, as a perception of disloyalty rather than full acceptance in the respective societies (Waldinger and Fitzgerald, 2004). Thus, from a political perspective, living in multiple places may result in a negative perception not only in the receiving state but also in the sending state, which can make these migrants feel like foreigners in both countries.

3.1.2 Economic transnationalism

There has been some research on the economic effects of migration, including migrants' financial contributions (Landolt, 2001; Basch, Glick-Schiller and Blanc-Szanton, 1991). These contributions to the sending state have a significant impact on the economic development in both countries, and statistics indicated that these contributions have reached at least $75 billion world-wide (Martin, 1994 cited in Vertovec, 1999:452). These remittances have had many benefits, affecting the growth of credit value in the country of origin and having a crucial impact in obtaining loans at a lower cost (Guarnizo, 2003). Albanian migrants are also economically active in their homeland. For instance, the contribution of Albanian emigration was dominant in the positive performance of the transitional Albanian economy after the collapse of Communism. Economic studies within the field of transnationalism have estimated that Albanian migrants' financial contribution during this period constituted ten to twenty per cent of the country's GDP (Vullnetari, 2007). It has been shown that these emigrants are investing in a variety of ways, but primarily financially supporting their family members (King and Vullnetari, 2009:19-29).

Furthermore, the phenomenon of economic globalisation can create more opportunities for business or have a greater impact on the economic involvement of migrants in doing business between home and host countries (Landolt, Autler and Baires, 1999). It is significant here to note that the amount of building in Albania, particularly buildings without planning permission, has increased considerably since the 1990s in relation to the population

(INSTAT, 2011), as shown in these photographs of the village of Bathore, Tiranë in 1994 (upper image) compared with 2007 (lower image) showing much unplanned building (Fig. 3.1.2.1).

Content removed due to copyright reasons.

Figure 3.1.2.1. *Densification of Bathore, Tiranë between* 1994 – 2007.
Photograph John Driscoll.

Positively, the remittances of savings and experience from work abroad are often invested in business or property, particularly in building new houses, with the aim of returning to the country of origin in the future. However, current statistics show that a significant number of Albanians want to leave the country, and that the likelihood of short-term migration is unrealistic in the current political landscape (Esipova and Ray, 2018). Thus, these investments may have a temporary positive impact in the transnational economic sense, but

in the case of long-term migration these investments in the construction of new houses or purchasing properties are futile, as in most cases the properties remain empty, as perhaps unconsciously emigrants do not accept reality. Therefore, these investments can be transformed and seen as a spiritual home in the sending state, while the migrants are more likely to have a permanent address in the receiving state.

3.1.3 Socio-cultural transnationalism

The socio-cultural benefits of transnationalism are numerous in the sending and receiving societies. In maintaining economic and political ties with their country of origin, migrants are more likely to also retain socio-cultural links in behaviour, language, sport, music and arts, and more, but above all in their sense of identity (Vertovec, 2001; Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt, 1999). These socio-cultural transnational links are exemplified in the work of two contemporary British singers of Albanian origin. Firstly, Rita Ora is a singer and actress, who was born in Pristina, Kosovo, and whose family emigrated on political grounds in 1991 (see Chapter 1.4). Dua Lipa, also a contemporary singer, songwriter and model, was born in London after her Albanian parents left Kosovo and in 1990 for the same reasons. In both of these cases the artists identify themselves as Albanian, and both have shown this in their music videos through their use of the symbolic double headed eagle (figure 3.1.3.1), which forms part of Albania's national flag, and connects and identifies Albanians all over the world. The two singers are clear examples of how artists can make a contribution beyond the boundaries of the nation-state, representing on the one hand an integral part of British culture and social life, while maintaining strong connections to their original home. Albanian migrants have made significant contributions in host and sending countries, with other examples including: John and James Belushi - actors in the USA; Kadare - novelist and poet in France; Ermonela Jaho - soprano, based in New York; Ornela Vorpsi - writer and photographer living in Paris; Kodra, Paci, Kastrati, Sala, Rubiku - artists in Italy and Germany

Content removed due to copyright reasons.

Figure 3.1.3.1. *Dua Lipa, gesticulating with the Albanian double headed eagle,* 2017.
Photograph Toplica.

(see section 2.3 for discussion of contemporary Albanian artists with a transnational
background).

Frequent family trips to the home country also have a significant impact on migrants' children
by maintaining regular social ties to the country of origin. However, the transnational social
connection is not only developed through family visits, but also through modern technology.
Social media, online portals, and satellite television allow migrants to be regularly well-
informed about events in Albania. Such media may have a significant socio-cultural role in
the same way as through the illegal viewing of Italian television during the Communist period,
Albanian citizens gained "a unique source of information about the outside world in a context
where this information was filtered by the apparatuses of the Communist regime" (Mai,
2005:546). These technological connections may also support the second generation of

migrants in learning or perfecting the Albanian language, which is very important for this generation to be an integral part of or to stimulate future transnational activity.

However, as a result of migration, family relationships appear to have weakened (Espiritu, 2003; Smith, 2006). One explanation of this could be that the second generation were born and raised in the host country, and, in contrast to their parents, have been successfully educated, integrated and settled. Research has shown that, due to insufficient knowledge of the language of the host country, first generation migrants mostly maintained ethnically homogenous social networks with people from their homeland with the same socio-cultural background (McPerson, Smith-Lovin and Cook, 2001). However, the construction of transnational linkages between sending and receiving country varies from individual to individual.

Social class may also play a role in determining the effects of transnationalism, particularly where labour migration is the dominant cause of transnationalism. In contrast to the working class, the middle class, due to their social and cultural formation, generally find it easier to penetrate and contribute socially and culturally to the host and sending states (Pluss, 2005; Raj, 2003). Living in a different social and cultural system, some less educated migrants may exploit co-national social relations as a form of adaption to a new alien environment (Bretell, 2000). Such contacts between people of limited resources can result in a narrowing of transnational social spaces and failure to connect with the host country. This phenomenon is less noticeable among the second generation migrants, where transnational links with both countries are stronger.

A further socio-cultural aspect of Albanian transnationalism is evident in migrants' social remittances of care for the families who remain behind. The impact on the construction of houses, modernization, improvement in quality of life, establishment of businesses, development of new skills in technology and education may also be a result of the financial remittances from transnationalism, for example supporting family members to study

(De Soto, et al., 2002; King, 2005). Many Albanians have been educated in European and American Universities, and after graduation, some remain and build lives in the host countries. These emigrant students serve as transmitters of knowledge and as a bridge between sending and receiving states. While those who return not only use their experience to raise the quality of teaching in their homeland but also bring a part of the culture from the place where they have lived and studied.

Tourism and the different climates and physical geography within Europe could also cause socio-cultural transnational activity, where transnational networks may be built as people re-locate to other countries, even if only temporarily, and may result in the creation of multiple homes. This has manifested in Britons purchasing homes in warmer climes such as Spain, or Germans spending time in Greece and Kosovars at the Albanian coast.

Transnational theory also recognises differences in the ways in which migrants identify themselves in host societies. Some studies have found that migration has never been a process of assimilation, but rather migrants simultaneously create and maintain a series of links with the country of origin as well as becoming incorporated into the countries where they settle, albeit to varying degrees (Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007). Other studies have found that most transnational migrants seem to have several identities, making them identifiable with more than one nation, while others identify their belonging more with one society (Schiller, Basch and Szanton-Blanc, 1992a). Migrants still value the retention of social links with the country of origin, and thus planning for a potential return to the country of origin remains an open option for them.

The phenomenon of Albanian transnationalism since the collapse of Communism has transformed the current Albanian society and culture, with both positive and negative consequences. Clearly, there is a gap between the desire and the reality of returning to Albania, which is related to the current political and economic situation there, where hope for stability in the country seems far away.

3.2 The concept of home

The concept of home as a facet of identity is an important aspect of transnationalism, and is the major focus of my recent art practice. While there are many reasons why people are forced to leave their home, the homeland often takes on a particular importance as people migrate to other countries. With regard to transnationalism, it has been suggested that such movement of people leads to a strong sense of a loss of home (Timotijevic and Breakwell, 2000); while elsewhere it has been found that those living in a foreign country develop a particular yearning for their original home; and others, as they move through their lives, rediscover a sense of home again and again (Dahl and Sorenson, 2009). This has been the subject of many studies and recent debate, where definitions, meanings and interpretations may differ and space remains for debate and further research. To some extent the subject has been investigated in the visual arts, as described in Chapter 2. Emotional experiences of perceiving the home are different and multidimensional, adding another layer of difficulty to reaching a definite definition. This section focuses on understanding and interpreting various dimensions of the concept of home.

3.2.1 Meaning and interpretation

The Concise Oxford English dictionary defines the meaning of 'home' as "The place where one lives permanently" and "a place where something flourishes or from which it originated" (Soanes and Stevenson, 2004:681). The word 'home' could otherwise be defined as the antithesis of social alienation (Bausinger, 1990:77). It is also an emotionally loaded word, which has implications in geographical, ethnological and psychological research (Ratter and Gee, 2012), and has produced a growing number of significant studies. The art critic, novelist, poet and essayist John Berger's discussion of the meaning of home has been influential in my creative work (see Chapter 4):

Home was the centre of the world because it was the place where a vertical line crossed with a horizontal one. The vertical line was a path leading upwards to the sky and downwards to the underworld. The horizontal line represented the traffic of the world, all the possible roads leading across the earth to other places. Thus, at home, one was nearest to the gods in the sky and to the dead of the underworld. This nearness promised access to both. And at the same time, one was at the starting point and, hopefully, the returning point of all terrestrial journeys' (1984:56).

The word carries associations with the individual identity of a person, as well as the national identity of a people, both of which are strongly bound to social, psychological and emotional attachments (Easthope, 2004:136) and spiritual feelings. These feelings are likely to become even stronger if we relocate to a foreign country, for reasons which may include forced exile, such as ethnic cleansing, or voluntary migration for economic, political, social and religious reasons, for example education. In this way, the concept of 'home' takes on greater meaning for those who migrate, and is built on lived and remembered experiences (Chapman and Hockey, 1999; Clifford, 1994).

The word 'home' is difficult to translate into other languages as there are so many different perspectives intrinsic to its meaning, and every single one is loaded with so much emotion. In the quest for a definition of the term, scholars cite meanings dating back to the language of Old Norse *Heimer*, High German *heim*, or Greek *komi*, meaning "village" (Berger, 1984). The German word 'Heimat' first appeared in the 19th Century at which time it was used principally as a judicial category. In 1877, in their German dictionary, the Grimm brothers defined 'Heimat' firstly as "the country or part of a country in which a person was born or has long-term residence;" and secondly as "the place of birth or permanent domicile." They also noted that "even the parental house and property is so-called in Bavaria" (Grimm and Grimm (1877) 2010:863). In any discussion, the German word 'Heimat,' the English 'home,' and the Albanian 'vendi im' as well as the term in many other languages are closely related to our origin, identity, language, social behaviour and cultural formation, which give us the feeling and perception of who we really are.

Regardless of definition or language used, there are certain features that form an integral part of the meaning of 'home,' such as the place of birth or the first language, in the same way that a person will never be able to determine their physical appearance or ethnicity. However, with the passage of time, the place where we were born and raised may be in continuous development; friends change and others enter our lives; we have children and create a new family; people change jobs or even professions; all these factors may influence the meaning of the concept of 'home'.

In his attempt to define the concept of home, Piepmeier (1990) focuses on five issues: first, as a space linked to ownership where the person is rooted or was born; secondly, as a dimension of time, including perceptions and experiences in particular places and how these may be biased in the memories from childhood onwards; thirdly, as modern working society, where employment creates material security and thus plays a crucial role in the movement of people, but work can neither become home to itself nor can work alone create a home; fourthly, as being closely related to emotional and social relationships, and describes positive emotional attachments such as friendship, family and society and explains their importance in creating the feeling and content of home; and finally, as politics, which may also relate to historical events.

Norris defines home as a physical space, which a person can leave, but which never leaves the person (1990:238). This implies not only the need of home in a physical sense of space but also as a spiritual place, through the creation of relationships and memories over time and gives us a subjective meaning of places and the possibility to be ourselves. Douglas (1991) also recognises that home is a kind of space that is not fixed but manifests as a space over time in the memory.

3.2.2 Social environment and personal identity

The importance of childhood, place of birth and ties to the place of origin are recurring themes in explanations of the term 'home.' Both local identity and the people who live or have lived in a place form a major part of our image of 'home,' but it is also the place where we often feel comfort, security, tranquillity and a sense of well-being and is the primary site of family interaction (Bastian, 2012:23; Spranger, 1984:16; Lorenc, 1988:263).

Imagination could be another aspect in forming the sense of home – we may imagine things we have never experienced. For instance a rich oral tradition of story-telling by grandparents, aunts and uncles and other family members or friends is also very important when children are raised in a foreign country as through such contact with the parents' origin, the child may develop closer links to these places and even ultimately have two homes, or live in two places. For some, the "first" home might remain the place, where our most important and beautiful memories are made. The "second" might be constructed in a sense of nostalgia through stories and memories of the family history.

While it must be noted that home is deeply significant to a person's individual identity, and a universal definition is likely to be inappropriate, there are some aspects that are constant across the various definitions. First, the relationships we create with the environment we live in, where we build and develop our activities in daily life (Dovey, 1978). These activities bring a personal dimension to this environment and the space around us and over time will have a crucial impact in creating a sense of home. Dupuis and Thorns note four main aspects of this spatial attachment:

> Home as a site of constancy in the social and material environment; home as a spatial context in which the day-to-day routines of human existence are performed; home as a site where people feel most in control of their lives; and home as a secure base around which identities are constructed (Dupuis and Thorns, 1998:29).

The significance of the physical and spatial aspects of home may manifest in the memory when, for example, we decide to transform and modernise the internal structure, forcing us to adapt to a new environment in terms of the interior and exterior spaces of the home.

There are many aspects that directly affect the creation of the home. For example, the favourable economic and social situation in other countries has lead to a period of globalisation. This mobility and emigration influence and determine different life experiences (Sheller and Urry, 2006) and people can become attached to new places and spaces (Creswell, 2004:7) which may be constantly reworked in their memories. Experiences may result in creating new home or multiple homes, for example following World War II when many Germans were forced to leave their country (Marschall, 2017; Nereo, 2017), they slowly began to use the term "alte heimat" (old home) in contrast to "neue heimat" (new home) (Heller and Narr 2011:7). The contemporary experience of globalization is interconnected with the political, economic and social situation, and indirectly affects home-making. Considering the causes of the imposed movement of people, the sense of home may share certain dimensions in its meaning, which can lead to developing a new home, multiple homes or a loss of home.

In attempting to build their lives in the receiving country, migrants may experience different places, create a sense of belonging to a particular place, and develop multiple homes. Through these places they may experience different meanings attached to home as a part of their day-to-day social activities and interactions, during which the space of home is related to language, culture, food, friends, architecture, and other aspects, allowing a person to be "yourself at home" (Gurney, 2000:57-65). Over time, these conceptions of home affect the development of roots, existence, and the chronological history of our life, and the sense of home as a place to be oneself that offers security, privacy and comfort (Finch and Hayes, 1994).

Thus, home and migrants' new experiences may appear in different conceptions. Some of these movements may result in multiple homes, where participants are involved physically and emotionally in socio-cultural, economic, and political affairs in the sending and receiving states (Dupuis and Thorns, 1996). Furthermore, this way of life can slowly lead to the creation of a new home, when, due to living and working in the host country, the old home becomes more of a desired or imagined home.

3.2.3 Fatherland

The problem of defining the term becomes greater when we add the idea of the 'fatherland.' This may involve the language and dialect as a part of the culture of whole countries or regions. Albanians living in Albania use the term "atdhe" or 'fatherland' to describe their home country. Hermann Bausinger rejects the perception of home as a single location, rather he argues "everyone should still have a home - home in the sense of Fatherland" (1990:80).

Many who live outside the territory of Albania use the term "nena Shqiperi" or 'mother Albania.' This term is particularly significant for Albanians living in Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro or in Greece, who see Albania as the home where they are rooted. This is because they believe they suffered a historical injustice, when they were forced to live separated from the borders of their homeland as a part of other countries, resulting in the loss of their home. The term 'motherland' is also used in southern Albania, as a consequence of the migration of mostly men, where in the absence of a father at home, the mother's role was the primary care-giver and educator of children.

The meaning of 'fatherland' or 'motherland' may include a longing for recognition and identity, for feelings of security and comfort, and harmony with our direct surroundings. The strong influence of the idea of home with the country of origin as a 'fatherland' or 'motherland' can be seen in the Arbereshi community in Italy. The Arbersh are an Albanian

ethnic and linguistic minority, who migrated after the death of Scanderbeg as a result of the Ottoman conquest of Albania (see section 1.1). The Arberesh have been physically disconnected from their homeland for more than five hundred years – a long transition period across different generations, which might have resulted in a process of assimilation. In fact, completely the opposite occurred with this community, which still retains Albanian traditions, language and social culture despite only being distantly connected to an imagined home. For them, the meaning of fatherland is attached to their original home, but is now becoming increasingly linked across borders (Hall, 1994). This community is a very important example for studies claiming that transnational home has much earlier roots, where this example of migration has always had strong links with the country of origin (Levitt and Waters, 2002).

3.2.4 Albania as Home

In some historical periods, there has been an ideological manipulation of the notion of home, sometimes resulting in a negative perception. This is particularly noticeable in dictatorial regimes, where the concept of the home is applied to serve political party doctrine. A clear example can be seen during the Albanian Communist regime, where home was politicized and nationalistically used, leading to a reinvented history of the homeland. The regime began a destruction of the collective memory of home as exemplified in the elimination of historic buildings in the centres of the cities. The ultimate goal was to create a new home according to the Socialist ideology through the use of the approved Socialist architectural style, which also was applied in the construction of the Socialist Tirana (Rugg, 1994). This fanatical ideology was directly linked to Hoxha, who explained: "The Party has never separated the building of Socialism from the sacred duty of defending our socialist homeland" (Hoxha, 1970:33). The construction of the new socialist home had to continue according to Hoxha's teachings, where he defined the main principles as follows:

The whole life, even the production, the way of life and the behavior, even the creation of environments in the plant, school or village, and the way we build and fix our cities and villages, architecture and urbanism, road maintenance, the way we serve the people, all things, everything in us should serve the cultural formation of the new man (Hoxha, 1972:41).

These changes required a general mobilization of the population to build the common socialist home. In the realization of this project, a crucial role was also the involvement of young people, who "were recruited to do unpaid voluntary work building railways and bridges and digging drainage systems around the country" (King and Vullnetari, 2014:131). The ideology of creating a new socialist home also included creating a common identity, which Velo describes:

If you want to know the history of the victorious Socialism in every communist country, it is sufficient to follow the period of objects, clothing and food bags. There you can see the whole tragic-comic masquerade of Socialism (2003:6).

The consequences of the 45-year Communist rule on the Albanian home are still apparent. Private property was eliminated by the regime to become state property (De Waal, 2004:19), which negatively affected the perception of the home and led to a loss of home. An Albanian proverb says: 'aty ku prona është, është shpirti' (where the property is, is the soul). Nowadays the Albanian government still has serious problems in returning these properties to the families of the orginial owners. The traces and the negative effects of this socialist transformation of the home are still apparent in the Socialist apartment blocks, whose identical architectural style extends beyond the facades to the interior of the buildings. Also the bunkers constructed throughout Albania now form an undeniable part of the country's landscape (see Section 1.3).

Further social changes after the fall of Communism transformed urban spaces and the architecture of the cities once again by demolishing older and historical buildings and

replacing them with more modern, transnationally-influenced architecture. The intention of modernising these spaces has created the impression of a city without identity, leading to further questioning of the concept of home in Albania, exemplified particularly in the capital Tirana, where current debate centres on the proposed demolition of the National Theatre (Meço, 2019).

These different definitions of home all include aspects which could affect the formation of home and identity. In my art practice I have focussed on those conceptions of home which are most relevant to my transnational experience – the physical space and place, a dimension of time, social relationships and identity, and positive emotional attachments, as discussed in the following chapter.

4. Practice-based research

This chapter will analyse my own practice-based research, which takes the form of a series of twelve oil paintings. The methodological processes undertaken for the research and the resulting body of work are described and discussed here in relation to the research questions. First, *what constitutes home in post-communist Albanian diasporas in Germany and the UK?* Secondly, *how can these ideas be questioned, challenged, interpreted and visually represented in a body of paintings?* The chapter then defines their contribution to new knowledge in response to my third research question: *How can this project contribute new knowledge to the field?*

Each aspect of the methodology informs the creative process by seeking a response to the research questions. The dynamic process of working in the studio allows new ideas to form and be refined through critical self-reflection. Reflecting on the creative processes throughout the entire process of creating the paintings has allowed me to ensure that the research questions always remained the focus of the investigation. It has been a process which did not end with the completion of an individual painting, but developed with the creation of the next work (Nelson, 2009). Therefore, the methodology, alongside the theoretical premises, has been a key element in responding to the research questions and shaping the transnational image of home in my work. By applying all elements detailed in the methodological process with my full awareness and as a structured process, I intended to achieve a better understanding of transnational home in post-Communist Albanian diasporas, which will allow the findings of this project to contribute to research in the field of transnationalism more widely.

4.1 Methodology

The conceptual framework of painting as a medium experienced a crisis in the art world in the 1970s and 80s when many artists, critics, curators and collectors considered painting irrelevant and dead as a medium. Consequently, new art media and approaches, such as performance, installation, and digital art, began to dominate over painting in the contemporary art world (Tribe, Jana and Grosenick, 2006*).* The significance and value of painting as a medium is still debated[5] (Beaven, 2011), and has led to the widespread use of certain new media by many artists (Rush, 2005). After the fall of Communism, the debate on the value of painting versus new media was also felt in Albania. According to Bengu (2016), in the early 1990's, many Albanian artists abandoned painting and began experimenting with new media in their creative work, to the detriment of their painting. He explains:

> So, these artists having a significant lack of substantial knowledge of new media, they returned again to painting after a few years. This lack of time brought to light their creative problems in the painting, as these new works did not have the same success in comparison to their previous works. So, they felt the gap of time in their creativity (Bengu, 2016).

In Albania, the rapid transition from Socialist Realist art to Post-Modernist art, without having reference to a well-informed theoretical context, posed the question of whether Albanian artists could apply or adapt the various forms of contemporary art with sufficient self-awareness. Similarly, in my own experience as a student at the University of Arts in Tirana, there was a notable gap in the teaching of contemporary cultural and critical theory.

In selecting the medium for my own work, I consider how its technical aspects can best contribute to the creative work, which in turn is dependent on my skills in that medium. According to the Chinese-American geographer and humanist Yi-Fu Tuan, who has written on space and place, "art provides an image of feeling; it gives objectified form and visibility to

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[5] In a Tate Debate about the future of painting as a medium, Kirstie Beavan addresses the question "is painting dead?" that was asked at an exhibition press conference. She argues, "though painting has survived and evolved from cave painting to today, more than any other medium, we seem determined to analyse it" (2011).

feeling" (1975:161). The image of the transnational home can thus be characterised and conveyed through art and its various techniques.

First, the composition plays a significant role in determining the focal point of a painting. The composition also intends to make the transnational image and its emotional effects visible and to communicate meaning. To achieve this many artists use preparatory sketches, which are drawn as a part of the project foundation. In the case of this project I have decided not to apply this traditional method, but rather to create a series of paintings whose composition has emerged as a result of critical reflection, considering theoretical and practical aspects of transnationalism and my personal lived experience. In this way, the series of paintings has allowed me to offer and tackle different aspects of the subject matter. Every finished work provokes, and develops the creation of another composition, filling the gaps that were missing before. For example, the image of the bunker is used ironically in *Images of Place Traces* (2017) (Fig. 4.2.2.1) as a symbol of power and well-being during the Communist period, but in *A Multiple Attachment* (2018) (Fig. 4.2.2.3), the bunker is intended as an allegory for the causes of Albanian mass migration after the fall of Communism.

In developing an idea of the composition, I first decide where its constituent elements are to be placed, relating the elements across the canvas and considering the foreground and the background of the composition, as in *Images of Place Traces, 2017* (Fig. 4.1.1). In most cases the composition is conceived to suggest a process of overlapping memories of different spaces and places by interconnecting them in terms of one's feelings, or sense of belonging or being at home. Particularly important for the composition is how the visual elements of transnational home come together on the canvas surface, where shape and size, colour, light, contrast and shade are integral parts of the composition, including my use of transparent and reflected images to suggest multiple relationships in these places. For example in *Images of Place Traces* (2017) I have used a reflected image of the protagonist to give this sense of multiple attachments.

Figure 4.1.1. Dashamir Vaqari. *Images of Place Traces,* 2017.

Oil on Canvas, 80 x 120 cm. Photograph the Author.

The shape and size of the canvas are further significant considerations through their contribution to the overall meaning of the painting. Through the use of a portrait format, I intended to create a depth to the image by evoking the illusion of looking towards a place beyond the painting. This format is also intended to suggest the shape of a vertical window to invite the viewer closer into the image, and create a kind of intimacy between them and the paintings, for instance in *Relocated Home* (2017) (Fig. 4.2.4.2) and *Spiritual Traces* (2018) (Fig. 4.2.2.5). This attempts to convey a sense of touching, closeness and distance, and the social interaction of being here and there. I have conceptualised my practical work in a series of twelve paintings, all more or less the same size, intended to be seen together in continuity.

I use a range of oil techniques to visually suggest the significance of memory and emotional attachment. This is significant because one major difference between memory and reality is that the latter is physical and consists of visual elements, whereas in memory, the images may interact and become blurred. For example 'sfumato' (soft or blurred), which allows colours and tones to shade gradually into one other (Zöllner, 2007), better connecting the spaces and linking images on the canvas surface, as well as reflecting the way in which the visual memory of home might appear and be perceived sometimes clearly and sometimes blurred, depending on the daily contact or sustainability of the image in the memory (Westheimer and McKee, 1975). To show deeper contrasts and highlight the dramatic and emotional side of the subject matter I also use 'chiaroscuro' (Itten, 1975: 16). For example, in *Location and Dislocation* (Fig 4.2.3.1), I use heavier and thicker colours to show light and thinner oil for shadow and darker images, following the traditional Baroque method used to give more air and volume to a three dimensional form (Van Lil, 2004). In addition, as a result of its slow drying time, oil paint allows me to blend colours and create a transparent image, which I use as a metaphor to reflect transnational life and the maintenance of links between sending and receiving countries (see also Chapter 3).

Colour is an important feature of the medium in supporting the interpretation of the work. For example, Sullivan (2010:154) describes how Turner utilised his knowledge of the properties of paint pigments to realise and transform an image. The use of colour is closely linked to emotion as a crucial part of the visual communication of the artist, where artists might attempt "to convey information and abstract messages through material objects" (Hovers et al., 2003:492). Furthermore, colour can visually communicate this emotional meaning (Kress and Leeuwen, 2006:269). To suggest transnational mobility in my work I apply tonal transitions from cold to warm colours, from light to dark, achieved in places through a smooth transition of tone, in other places in contrast or sharply with the intention of indicating differences in places and spaces between foreground, middle and background (Fig. 4.1.2). In his studies on the effects of geographic places on the emotions, the cultural geographer Kent Ryden argues that the sense of place is "grounded in those aspects of the environment which we appreciate through the senses . . . colour, texture, slope, quality of light, the feel of wind, the sounds and scents carried by that wind" (1993:38). The transnational image of home develops in the memory over time, and it may reappear in our memories without warning when we enter different spaces or visit other places.

In creating the tonal variations, I mix the paint on the palette and then on the canvas, as unexpected effects can sometimes arise due to the surface structure of the canvas affecting the appearance of colours. Mixing helps to achieve the desired tonal value, including a range of nuances, which are also intended to represent the emotional attachment to the topic, and stimulate the replaying of memory of home. This constitutes the first phase of my creative work, which I call 'drawing with colour' as it looks almost like a collage, yet it allows me to see the image as a whole. To increase the element of visual detail, to refine it, and to reflect the immediacy of my response to the meaning of the image of home in our memory, the second phase of my creative process brings the layers of meaning through the use of colour and oil techniques (Fig. 4.1.3).

Figure 4.1.2. Dashamir Vaqari. *Images of Place Traces,* 2017.

Oil on Canvas, 80 x 120 cm. Photograph the Author.

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Figure 4.1.3. Dashamir Vaqari. *Images of Place Traces,* 2017.

Oil on Canvas, 80 x 120 cm. Photograph the Author.

At times, the image is almost transparent, letting light pass through the colours, allowing shapes to merge so that objects in the background can be seen as a visible form to suggest an overlapping set of meanings. The intention behind this was to visually reflect how transnational migrants may develop and maintain multiple relationships in these places through their memories, where home might be linked to particular places as a "trace maker" (Anderson, 2015:21) in a person's memory. The technical aspects of the use of oil paint as described above have allowed a merging of backgrounds, images, and symbols to suggest the internal turmoil of transnationalism and memories to deepen the meanings behind the work.

The framing of a painting can also have a significant impact and may open debate on its subject matter. The frame is not only intended for its practical and aesthetic properties, but also to communicate meaning, as explained by American artist Holly Lane:

> I realized that a frame could be many things: it could embody ancillary ideas, it could be an environment, it could be a shelter, it could be an informimg context, it could be in dialogue with the painting, it could extent movement, it could be like a body that expresses the mind and many other rich permutations (Shriver, 2016).

I have chosen a traditional-style gilt frame, in *Frame*, *Space and Place,* (2016) (Fig. 4.1.4) which is intended to ironically refer to the pretentions of grandeur in Socialist Realist art and the delusions of the Communist regime, which presented Albania as the richest and most powerful country in the world. This is intended to contrast with the images within the paintings, which investigate the actual conditions of social existence. To reinforce this distinction, the frame is identical for each painting.

Figure 4.1.4*. Frame.* Dashamir Vaqari*. Space and Place,* 2016.
Oil on Canvas, 76 x 118 cm. Photograph the Author.

The profile shape of the outer edge (Fig. 4.1.5) suggests golden ears of grain and be seen as a reference to the Albanian Coat of Arms used during the Communist period, which consists of a wreath of wheat ears (Fig. 4.1.6). This emblem was adopted from the first state emblem of the Soviet Union (Fig. 4.1.7).

Figure 4.1.5. *Frame,* 2016. Photograph the Author.

Figure 4.1.6. *Emblem of the People's – Republic of Albania. Albanian Coat of Arms,* (1946-1991).
Photograph Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 4.1.7. *First State Emblem of the Soviet Union,* (1923-1936).
Photograph Wikimedia Commons.

Grains were symbolically used as propaganda to represent the power and influence of farmers or common people in Socialist society and are used in the symbolism of many Communist regimes[6]. Moreover, in Albania, grain had a particular significance for the regime, with one of its main aims being to become self-sufficient in grain (de Waal, 2004). The regime used this goal as propaganda to show their power in providing food for the people, but ironically this later resulted in migration when the regime could not meet the people's needs.

Visually, framing the painting can be seen as an entrance door for the audience, which creates more spatial depth within the composition, enabling them to concentrate directly on the subject.

4.1.1 Stylistic approach

The technical aspects of oil painting described above form an essential part of my individual and emotional connection to the research. However, my work has been influenced by other artists or stylistic periods. Rather, education and experience gained in Albania, Germany and Britain has positively influenced the development of my approach and experimentation with a range of styles and techniques in my works. Studying in Albania gave me the opportunity to learn the tradition of the Socialist Realist art school in the visual representation of the objects in the most realistic way possible, precise to the smallest detail. This has allowed me to represent the lived reality of Albanian emigrants. Furthermore, studying art history and comparative cultural studies in Germany introduced me to the literature and philosophy of modern art and the canonical artworks in modern art history, which had been lacking in the Albanian art school. This gave me a broader understanding of art, with which I was able to experiment in my work. Lastly, through my studies in Britain I have come to understand how to combine practice and theory in my artwork and to develop my critical thinking.

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[6] For example: Soviet Union, East Germany, China, and Romania.

Throughout history, stylistic approaches in painting have served to transmit a message. For instance, during the Cold War, Socialist Realist art was the official style of the regimes of the Eastern Bloc to disseminate their ideology (see Section 2.2), while the United States' government supported modernist art for its "propagandistic potential" and for being "emblematic of western freedom of expression or, more broadly, of liberal democracy itself" (Burstow, 1997:69). Artists have always dealt with varied subject matter, and in the process have experimented with and developed new styles. In the context of my research, the style must be considered in terms of the emotive and real concerns around transnationalism and the concept of home. As the feelings associated with this subject matter are real, and not abstract, I have realised these visual images in a realistic way, as a result of critical reflection, to suggest various aspects of the transnational home and identity. This does not mean that social reality can only be interpreted by mechanically idealising scenes of Albanian transnational life. Knowledge of the artistic approaches discussed below has allowed me to apply them in a logical mix to my paintings and to build different visual aspects in the perception of the theme on a single surface.

Alongside Renaissance and Baroque references in my work as discussed above, I also allude to Romantic art in some elements of composition, such as *A Relocated Home* (2017) (Fig. 4.2.4.2) and *Images of Place Traces* (2017) (Fig. 4.2.2.1). For instance, in the treatment of light and shade to suggest a replaying memory through the feeling of gazing into the distance (Vaughan, 1994), and binding the migrant to more than one place in sending and receiving countries. In the appearance of the light and shadow I have also incorporated some of the stylistic approaches of Impressionism with the use of soft colours merging together with delicate brush strokes. For example, in *Reflection on the University of Regensburg* (2016) (Fig. 4.2.1.2) and *Attachment Place of Identity* (2017) (Fig. 4.2.2.2) the use of intermingling and the reflection of colour from a building may convey an impressionistic trace of the memory from the past, rather than detailing it realistically.

In most of my works the ideas and images surreally represent different situations, times, spaces and places, as shown in *Emplacement and Displacement* (2017) (Fig. 4.2.4.1). This influence of Surrealism is not a result of my unconscious mind, as is attempted in Surrealist art (Descharnes and Néret, 1994), rather it aims to concatenate and merge the image of home.

Other allusions in my work derive from Cubism and Futurism. The Cubist presentation of fragments in transparent and overlapping collage-like geometric shapes to show multiple and spatial dimensions (Poggi, 1992) and "overcome space and time" (Rowe and Slutzky, 1976:45) is used in *A Multiple Attachment* (2017) (Fig. 4.2.2.3), and in *Sending and Receiving* (2018) (Fig. 4.2.1.1). The influences of Futurism can be seen for example in *Here and There* (2018) (Fig. 4.2.2.4), or *Sending and Receiving* (2018) (Fig. 4.2.1.1) and especially in the treatment of the blurred shape and the intensity of the line used (Read, Tisdall and Feaver, 1974); the intention was to convey a sense of mobility among Albanian migrants (Sheller and Urry, 2006).

The adoption and recognition of these different aspects has been a key element in the formation of an individual approach in my work, which Vic Allen, the Art Director of Dean Clough Galleries in Halifax, described as combining "hard-edged representation with sfumato planes and a surface devoid of brush strokes" (Allen, 2018a).

The following section describes and analyses the body of paintings and, more specifically, their shaping and conceptualising of the idea of transnational home. However, through my use of symbolism, metaphor and allegory, I have intentionally left space for viewers to interpret my work, perhaps from different perspectives or within different contexts, particularly in consideration of Roland Barthes' argument in 'The Death of the Author' (1968) that a text might not be interpreted as intended by the author. Rather, Barthes argues that without the reader's interpretation, the text is simply a collection of signs, which must then be interpreted by a reader – he argues "it is the language which speaks, not the author" (Barthes,

1968:144). In fact, readership is so important to Barthes' view of literature that he suggests the "birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author" (1968:148). In an extension to Foucault's discussion of the limitless nature of a text, Barthes believes a text is "a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of cultures" (1968:146), as opposed to the cultural expression of the author alone. Foucault also cautions that understanding the role of the author as significant in the understanding of a text actually "limits, excludes and chooses" the audience by setting the text within a certain context, and therefore the author should not be considered as an all-knowing "genius," rather as an ideological product of the text (Foucault, 1969:186). As theoretical texts and hypotheses go through different cultural and historical stages, they continually accumulate and develop layers of meaning, enabling phenomena to be seen in new ways, which Foucault says must be "determined, or perhaps, experienced" rather then being seen from the author's perception (1969:186). Similarly in art, some new innovations historically lacked understanding and acceptance at the time, but have later been seen and interpreted positively by critics and audiences.

The art researcher Glenn Ward (2010:213) has suggested that Barthes' view removes the necessary social contextualisation and identity of a work. He argues "without the author, you imply that a text is 'just' a text ... a free-floating combination of words and images" (Ward 2010:213), and that it is useful to bear in mind the circumstances of its creation, arguing "surely it is significant, for example, whether the author is white or black, male or female, gay or straight, but the 'death of the author' wipes these matters away" (2010:214). Thus, it must be recognised that my background and personal experience of transnationalism inevitably bring some social context to my work.

Personally, I do not deny the role of either author or audience in a creative work, and therefore my description and analysis of the paintings is not intended to be absolute. Nelson also argues that the beauty of art is that "it is never likely to be absolute, as of mathematics"

(2009:107), and Mlicka (2007) states that in the explanation of a creative work the meaning of the image is more important than a literal description of the message that it carries. Therefore, this critical analysis suggests how the body of work intends to respond to the research questions and suggest perceptions of the concept of home as a facet of identity among the transnational Albanian diaspora. Simultaneously, through the critical reflective process I have undertaken, the body of work illuminates and allows different interpretations of the concept of home.

4.2 The concept of home in my creative work

My paintings investigate how the process and form of creative practice suggest the phenomena that constitute the perception of home among Albanian migrants. They also consider the past, present and future perspectives relating to Albanian transnationalism, which can be divided into three sub-sections: political, economic, and socio-cultural (see Chapter 3) all of which are referred to and considered throughout the body of work. Drawing upon my personal transnational experience, in many of the paintings the intention is to present the concept of the transnational home closely linked to a sense of belonging for Albanian migrants. My intention was not to represent nostalgic images, where time is more significant than place, and home is imagined, idealized, or memorialized, giving a feeling of loss of home, rather than a more positive idea of having multiple homes (Hutcheon and Valdés, 1998). Rather the meaning of home may metaphorically be described as a picture into which reality is poured (Bausinger, 1989). This reality is the lived experience and memory of different places and spaces which is formed and developed during life.

The following discussion of my intentions describes and analyses the body of paintings in response to the first research question according to five aspects of the phenomenon of the post-Communist Albanian transnational home: linking home to particular places; multiple homes; loss of home; how an old home transfers to a new home; and new homes.

These aspects are also intended to suggest how the concept of the transnational home can be questioned, challenged, interpreted through and visually represented in art practice.

4.2.1 Linking home to particular places

The concept of home may be described through "place affection" (Giuliani, 2003), which results in an attachment to home through particular places and the formation of place identity (Cuba and Hummon, 1993). Gieryn (2000) also describes the concept of place as being intrinsically linked to geographic location. My painting *Sending and Receiving* (Fig. 4.2.1.1), focussing on how home is linked to a particular place, considers how this physicality of place can be seen as a space that connects the transnational migrant to their home.

Under the influence of globalization, travel plays an important role in the relationship between different peoples and cultures, and mobility is one form of transnational social activity among migrants (Sheller and Urry, 2006). In this regard, airports, train, and bus stations can be seen as contemporary transnational social and transit spaces. These network spaces can be a reference point linking different places, forming connections with both the migrant's country of origin and host country. In such transnational spaces, migrants may begin to create the feeling of being at home or a sense of warmth and contentment waiting to go home.
In order to explore this space of transnationalism, in the centre of the composition I placed a figure walking, appearing as a shadow of himself, to suggest the physical mobility of a migrant. The protagonist is holding a bag, to symbolise a transit network of sending and receiving, perhaps in terms of family support. The transparent form can also be seen in The Two Gullivers' *Transparent Travel* (2004) (Fig. 2.3.2.6), where the transparency of the suitcase serves as a metaphor for lifting the suspicion that migrants can face when travelling to the host countries. In *Home to go* (2001) (Fig. 2.3.3.2), Paci also used the metaphorical
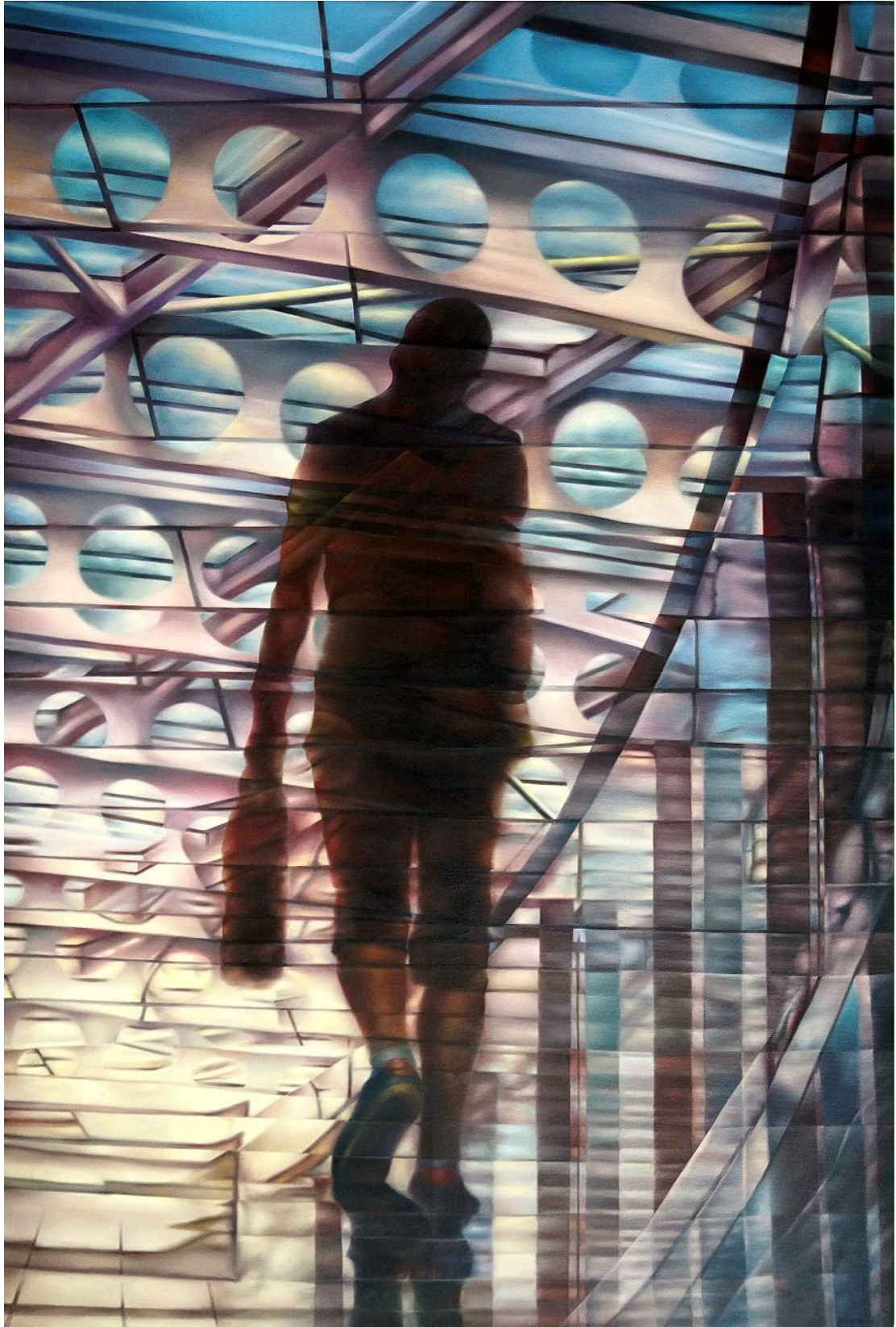
Figure 4.2.1.1. Dashamir Vaqari. *Sending and Receiving,* 2018.
Oil on Canvas, 80 x 120 cm. Photograph the Author.

image of the protagonist carrying the weight of the home on his back, however this work refers to the exodus rather than the constant mobility of transnationalism. In my work, the reflection and transparency of the body conceptualises a transnational life, being both physically and spiritually bound to multiple homes, going from one place to another throughout life.

The undefined nature of the background is intended to imply a sense of time, movement and the impression of travelling, which is further stimulated through the reference to railway tracks in the ceiling. The repetitive architectural structures in the background evoke a sense of spatial depth through the pronounced perspective. Thus, the place represented in the background is also intended to entail the idea of attachment through travel to or from the homeland.

The idea of time and motion suggested through the use of blurred or unfocussed images is also used in *Reflection on the University of Regensburg* (Fig. 4.2.1.2) in order to consider how home is linked to a particular place. For many people, a particularly important place is the university where they studied. At this place of education a person may grow and change in life, often new relationships are formed, and the future perspective of a life may be decided. As discussed in section 1.4.4, the opportunity of education to achieve a better life is one of the many causes of migration among young people in Albania.

Reflection on the University of Regensburg presents the building shown in an alternative way to provoke different meanings in the context of the transnational place, where the formation of home itself is closely related to the recollection from our memory (Marschall, 2017).

Due to the presentation of the image as a reflection in water, it could, at first, be difficult to understand it as a particular place. The aim of the reflection is to avoid a detailed real visualisation of the image, rather to give the impression of a "place of many, continuous displacements" (Hall, 1990:234). These reflected shapes can also stimulate a connection
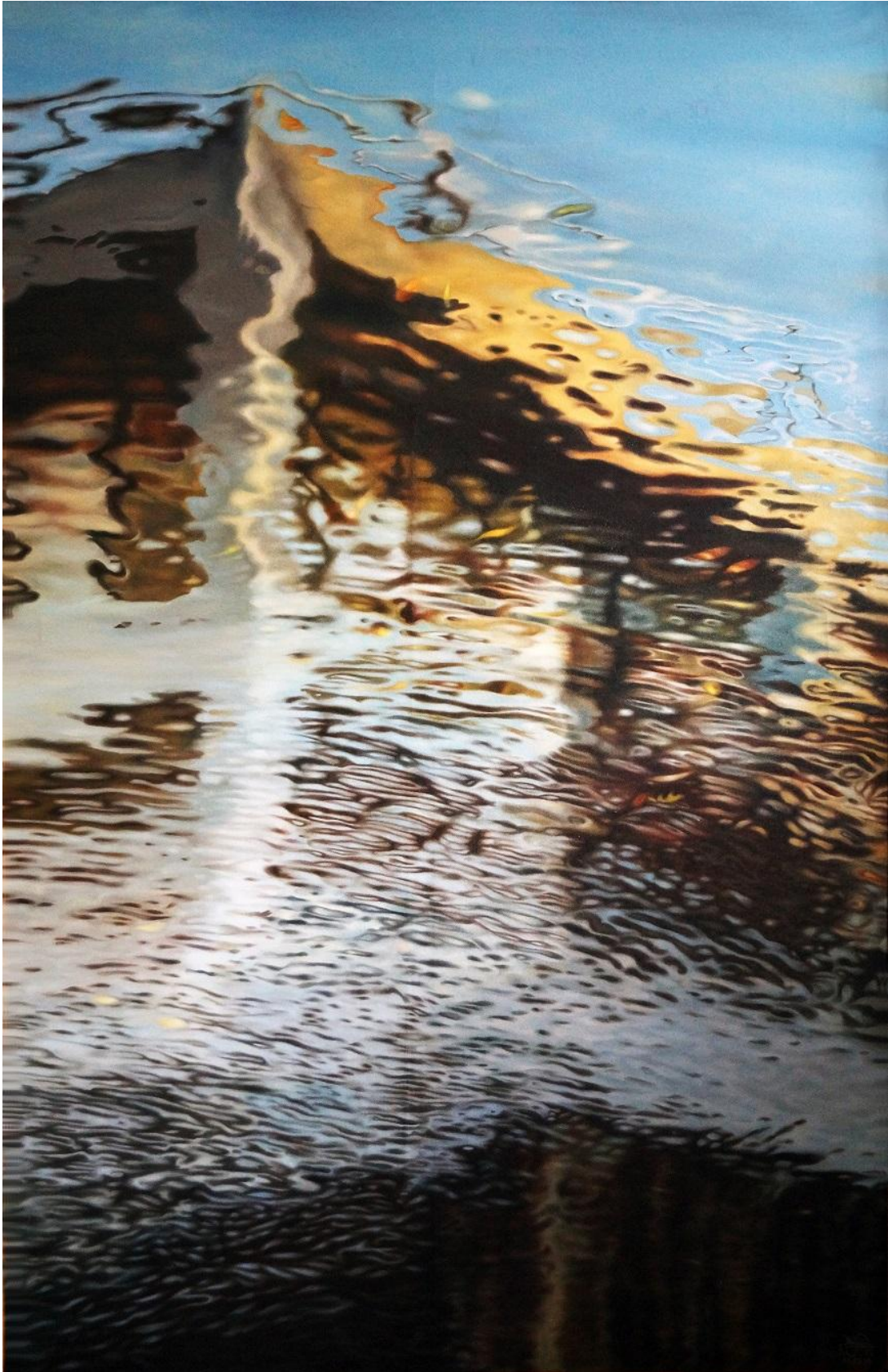
Figure 4.2.1.2. Dashamir Vaqari. *Reflection on the University of Regensburg,* 2016.

Oil on Canvas, 76 x 118 cm. Photograph the Author.

between memory and identity, where the past follows a person throughout life in different ways and, similarly, some periods are remembered clearly while others are less sharp. By returning to those particular moments of the past through memory it can also affect the formation of our identity (Albert, 1977). Thus the reflected forms may produce and embody the meaning of a particular place.

The blurred and unclear nature of our past memory is suggested through the transformation of irregular abstract shapes, where some appear melted and overlap each other, while others are more clearly defined. If the image is observed through half-closed eyes, these pieces merge and appear closer to each other, leaving a clearer sense of this reflection of a building in the water. Where the shapes appear indistinctly in the reflection, the intention is to allow different images to appear to the viewer, for example the foreground of this work could appear as a pillar of the building; alternatively, it might give the impression of a road. In turn, the audience will bring their own understanding of these images – a pillar might represent the foundation that university study brings, or the image of a student being led along a road. Similarly, where the vertical and horizontal reflections meet, there are various interpretations. For example, this could represent a metaphorical crossroads where many students may find themselves when they complete their studies and must move on from this transitional home. The intention is to reflect the questions, difficulties, and chances associated with creating a new life in a particular place. In this way, the painting attempts to convey the nature of our past and future perspectives, which are formed in our past as individual, irregular pieces to support different types of memories, but can be combined in the future to create a clear image and the perspectives this brings.

In my personal experience as an international student I had to develop a new home and life in Regensburg, although my feelings of national identity and the links with my country of origin grew stronger. The transnational aspects of these situations entail many contrasts, which may be evoked in this painting through the use of light and dark contrasts. As a

transnational student, I was often confronted by an internal conflict of belonging through my memories and lived experiences. In this work, I wanted to integrate the changing, disjointed yet harmonious internal feeling of transnationalism, whereby only parts of the building are reflected in the water yet they interlink to create the image of the place. The individual elements unite yet are transient to give the image of a home connected to a process of movement and space rather than its physical presence. This idea led to the exploration of the multiple spaces of transnational home.

4.2.2 Multiple homes

Home may be linked to particular places as a "trace maker" (Anderson, 2015:21) in a person's memory, and, through these places, transnational migrants develop multiple homes in a relationship of being and belonging, where their imagination settled simultaneously in different places. *Images of Place Traces* (Fig. 4.2.2.1) examines the idea of longing and travelling as one of the main aspects of transnational life. It conceptualises a journey, during which a transnational migrant ponders the accumulated images of a place, which have influenced them and inevitably left traces in their life. A major role in our memory is played by the architecture of places we have lived. Thus, *Images of Place Traces* is intended as a lifetime travel narrative created through the impression of an imaginary film running through the memory. I intended to suggest the experiences of emplacement and displacement in life, and represent the past, present or thoughts towards a future life. The double-sided view from the window attempts to evoke the effect and image of seeing and thinking as part of the chronology of life as a self-reflection.

The content of this work also aims to address the consideration of gender in Albanian migration, through the image of a free woman independent from the old social restrictions and customs and her mirrored reflection in the window. According to Albanian statistics

Figure 4.2.2.1. Dashamir Vaqari. *Images of Place Traces,* 2017.
Oil on Canvas, 80 x 120 cm. Photograph the Author.

during the 1990s, there were more male refugees than female - 70 percent were young males aged to 20-30 years (Sokoli and Axhemi, 2000). However, the rate of female Albanian migration has recently grown rapidly (Mendola, and Carletto, 2012). Her solitary image is intended to suggest empowerment, emancipation and independence, which may result from transnationalism beyond the conservative rural environment of the sending state. The duality in the image can be seen as a metaphor for multiple homes as experienced by transnational migrants. The image of a person looking through a window dates back to the Romantic period in the 19th century (Sala, 2001) to suggest longing, and is, for example, one of the central themes of Caspar David Friedrich's paintings (Koerner, 2009). Although the dual focus and the view from behind in *Images of Place Traces* are intended to refer to this Romantic idea of looking into the distance, here it is with a sense of belonging to these places, rather than longing for them.

In the centre of the composition, a bunker is ironically referenced as the Albanian symbol of power and well-being during the Communist period and is also seen in Isufi's and Lubonja's installation *Post Bloc* (2013) (Fig. 2.3.2.4) or Rubiku's *Bunker Mentality/Landscape Legacy* (2012) (Fig. 2.3.1.2). Isufi and Lubonja use the bunker to symbolise collective memory, while Rubiku uses it to conceptualise the mentality that the Albanian society inherited from the Communist period. My work shows that bunkerisation has transformed the home for Albanian migrants into a stereotypical form in the eyes of the host country society. Their homeland is still nowadays considered as a land covered in bunkers (Dowling, 2018), despite the younger generation having no connection to their construction.

The visual calm emanating from the window leads to the city, which transforms into an evaporated image. The shapes and silhouettes of buildings are treated line by line and detail by detail, smoothly and blurred, purposefully in warm colours to suggest a sense of security and symbolize the warm feeling of the original homeland alongside cold colours in the sky scene in the background to evoke the feeling of spatial distance. The images in the

background are intended to evoke a spiritual dimension to how the memory of places is formed and reproduced in our brain, through daily activities and experiences. On the right edge of the painting, there is another window with a house appearing through its transparent curtain, suggesting some kind of linkage or virtual connection or spiritual vision of multiple homes. These differently presented aspects intend to investigate the link or networks between different places through belonging and travelling. The sense of networks across different places as a significant part of contemporary transnationalism is also suggested in the idea of a road that transparently melts into part of the reflection of the protagonist from the window. My intention was not to represent this image as a nostalgic home-coming journey, but as an example of our belonging, being here and there throughout a lifetime, reflecting the multiple relationships that transnational migrants develop (see Chapter 3).

In behavioural science, Stedman breaks these relationships down into three strands - "the physical setting, human activities, and human social processes, and considers each in terms of "dependence and attachment" (2006:188). With regard to these human processes, it has been found that place identity is formed in part through the interactions that occur at a certain place (Wester-Herber, 2004; Bernardo and Palma, 2005). It is clear that transnational migrants are involved in such identity shaping interactions in both the original and the new home. Being physically abroad and far away from the homeland, attempting to begin a new life and to create a new home, transnational migrants might connect to their homeland through their memories. Feelings for the original home may become stronger when a person does not feel completely safe or secure in the host country; but through the memories of home, a migrant may begin to feel more comfortable. It becomes difficult for these people to become accustomed to the new place; instead they attempt to create a multiple home.

Attachment Place of Identity (Fig. 4.2.2.2) concentrates on the phenomenon of migrants' multiple homes, conceptualized as a double image reflected in water. The image reflected in this work might be seen as a reflection of a building as a single body, dispersed in water,

Figure 4.2.2.2. Dashamir Vaqari. *Attachment Place of Identity,* 2017.

Oil on Canvas, 80 x 120 cm. Photograph the Author.

similar to *Reflection on the University of Regensburg* (Figure 4.2.1.2), where the reflected image is a metaphor for the unclear, blurred nature of transnational memories.

In *Attachment Place of Identity*, the shapes are displaced, transforming or taking on different forms in the water, which alludes to diverse meanings through their relation to other symbols of national identity. In this regard, one might understand these displaced shapes more as a metaphor of location and dislocation than a specific geographical place through the passage of time. Ideas of the past, present and future perspectives can be suggested through such reflected shapes, as they become intertwined and express emotional feelings, fostering the sense of multiple place identity.

In this painting, I have attempted to suggest a multidimensional construct of the meaning of the place. In addition to the mirrored shape of the building on both sides of the canvas, there is an abstract suggestion of a double headed eagle – a traditional symbol of Albanian national identity. These two images employ the symbolic meaning of shape with the intention of conveying a sense of multiple transnational dwellings. Reflection is used to divide the composition into two equal parts, and this is repeated again in different areas of the work to highlight the notion of space in distance and time. This can be seen as an overlap between two different places through the reflection of the different climatic images with the use of warm and cold colours.

The idea of multiplicity explored through space and time forms the conceptual idea of *A Multiple Attachment* (Fig. 4.2.2.3). Altman and Low (1992:6) explain that "the term *place attachment* implies that the primary target of affective bonding of people is to environmental settings themselves."

Therefore, through a combination of different images, I refer to the process of how the transnational image of home may take the form of a travel environment. I wanted to convey the impression of networks across different locations as a process of homemaking, through a

Figure 4.2.2.3. Dashamir Vaqari. *A Multiple Attachment,* 2018.

Oil on Canvas, 80 x 120 cm. Photograph the Author.

collage of memory images. These movements between different locations interact with each other in the form of multiple attachments through the merging of paints. Moreover, these attachment places may appear in a transnational form for migrants, "as a positive place-bound affection by which people maintain closeness to a place" (Hidalgo and Hernandez, 2001:274).

The notion of home and its physical location is entwined with a set of feelings (Blunt and Dowling, 2006:22), which, as memories are recalled, can transmit a form of belonging rather than leaving a nostalgic space. In this painting, the separated images signify the layers of memory that migrants develop. Moreover, these different visual aspects of places are formed and take on particular meaning as migrants move between their multiple homes. In the centre of this composition, the bunker takes the form of a political memorial to the past, as a replaying memory, and suggests the feeling of fear and isolation. The reflection of the bunker in a car mirror is intended to symbolise the stereotypical identity of Albanian migrants as a large number of bunkers were built across Albania during the Communist period. This might conjure greater awareness of that period, but also as an allegory for the causes of the dramatic mass migration of Albanians.

The wish or future plan to return to the original home is represented at the lower left of the canvas as a male figure sitting on a bench at his former home. Whereas in Dervishi's work *Ija* (2008) (Fig. 2.3.3.6), the warm colour of the background suggests an emotional attachment, stimulating the imagination and nostalgic memories of home, in my work, the warm colour and the turbulent atmosphere represent a kind of unclear situation that may prevail among transnational migrants, being spiritually and physically in both sending and host countries. The man posing in the front of the house brings the idea of belonging, which fosters the sense of place, to the foreground. This is in contrast to Paci's *Back Home* (2001) (Fig. 2.3.3.1), which shows a sense of longing for home. At the upper right edge of the composition, sky scenes are shown using a thinly painted surreal dark transparent red colour. This suggests the social and economic remittances from migration, symbolically

referred to in an Albanian expression, as money earned abroad by migrants as 'blood money' (para gjaku). This expression implies the challenging life that emigrants often face in the host country, frequently taking on low-skilled and low-paid jobs to build a safer life. At the lower edge of canvas some cars are shown in nebulous shapes, suggesting the repetitive transnational movement across national borders.

This repetitive movement inherent in transnationalism is explored in *Here and There* (Fig. 4.2.2.4). Within the image, which could convey a cross-border-travelling space, there is the translucent shape of stairs, presented in a strong perspective. The stairs contain an image suggesting two feet in motion, referring to the duality and mobility of transnational life. This painting also concentrates on the creation of multiple homes from the shapes of images, which can be seen as a transnational link between "here" and "there" (Waldinger and Fitzgerald, 2004:1117). It has been argued that a sense of place creates a personal identity formed through the activities, relationships and memories, which happen across multiple places (Low and Lawrence-Zumiga, 2003; Stedman, 2002). The painting attempts to show the appearance of a particular place both "here and there," in the form of a symbolic attachment as a multiple linkage between different places.

The house, shown at the upper right of the canvas, may have multiple interpretations. First, the idea of an abandoned home; Hall and Du Gay (1996:3) describe abandoned objects as the connection to "mourning and melancholia." However, from a transnational perspective, an abandoned home may also entail the notion of care from a distance in meeting the financial need for its upkeep or restoration. In this way, the house may stimulate the impression of overcoming physical distance to create a spiritual link between places. Similarly, the British telephone box suggests the idea of a dual life, symbolizing contact across national borders (Vertovec, 2004) as a way to reduce transnational migrants' sense of mourning. From another perspective, the shape and colour of the telephone box may evoke symbols of British identity due to its specific architectural style. The combination of these two images implies the idea of different places in one, suggesting a global and transnational

Figure 4.2.2.4. Dashamir Vaqari. *Here and There,* 2018.
Oil on Canvas, 80 x 120 cm. Photograph the Author.

space. The prevalence of warm colour may also stimulate an environment of interconnected places, and a warm feeling of attachment to memories of home.

This attachment has manifested in the Albanian context with many migrants having invested in a home in Albania in the hope of returning one day. However, it has been argued that emigrant investment in the construction of a new house in the country of origin, with the aim of permanent return, can result in unfulfilled expectations from this unstable, weak economic situation (King et al, 2014). Therefore, many studies view this phenomenon of migrant investment in multiple homes as a non-productive aspect of transnationalism, seeing it more as a vacation investment than a permanent residency (Kule, 2002; Carletto, 2004; Germenji, 2004). On the other hand, this building of a home can take on a different transnational economic significance, in the sense of providing for the family, although from a distance, a kind of transnational care.

I constructed *Spiritual Traces* (Fig. 4.2.2.5) to explore this important aspect of Albanian migration, and to consider the visibility of this phenomenon with the construction of new dwellings. Such buildings often contain a transnational message through the form of a transnational architectural style, where many of these buildings have been designed by the emigrants themselves, bringing the impact of the shapes and styles applied in the host countries (Çaro, Bailey and Van Wissen, 2013). The centre of this composition is conceived as a view from a window looking through bars upon two houses. The presentation of both houses may suggest the impression of construction at different times. In this instance, the visual appearance of the two houses is separated by the window frame, which entails various implications. The bars could stimulate the feeling of isolation during the Communist period and its consequences; alternatively, they may evoke the separation from reality experienced by transnational migrants, which often results in a desired, virtual or imagined return. In contrast, the perception of the continuity of this house might permit a reference to belonging. I have tried to highlight the multiple attachments beyond space through the use of different

Figure 4.2.2.5. Dashamir Vaqari. *Spiritual Traces,* 2017.

Oil on Canvas, 80 x 120 cm. Photograph the Author.

colours. The multi-coloured oils, painted thinly in nebulous and translucent rounded shapes may be seen as a metaphor or be interpreted as the turbulent situation that can prevail among transnational migrants. Alternatively, these nebulous shapes could symbolically suggest the idea of a vision into depth, implying the perpetuation of the unstable situation of not being able to settle in a place, perhaps, over time, unconsciously leading to loss of home.

4.2.3 Loss of home

The consequences of dislocation can shape the lived experience of home as a link between a physical place and self identity. The reasons for leaving the homeland may be economic, socio-cultural or political. Emigration for political reasons may occur in countries with a dictatorial system or due to war, which inevitably leave lasting traces in the memory of the people. As noted above, throughout history, the Albanians have suffered a dramatic experience of ethnic cleansing, especially during the 20th century (see section 1.4.3).

Location and Dislocation (Fig. 4.2.3.1) deals with the historical precedent of the Kosovo war of 1999 (see section 1.4.3) and focuses more on the transnational politics of loss of home. It also allows me to bring a further dimension to this work by suggesting a visual cognition of the forced dislocation of home. From this perspective, I wanted to base *Location and Dislocation* on the memory of home as might be experienced during a war, as well the future consequences of dislocation as a fact of life in contemporary transnationalism.

This work features a house badly damaged when the Kosovo-Albanians were forced to abandon their homes. Massive numbers of Kosovo-Albanians crossed the border into Albania, and were voluntarily welcomed into the homes of Albanian families (in my own family we hosted twelve refugees). Considering the emotional aspect of this topic, I have used colour with equal intensity by using strong contrasts of light and darkness, which intend to evoke a sense of the dramatised situation. This may result in a negative perception of the
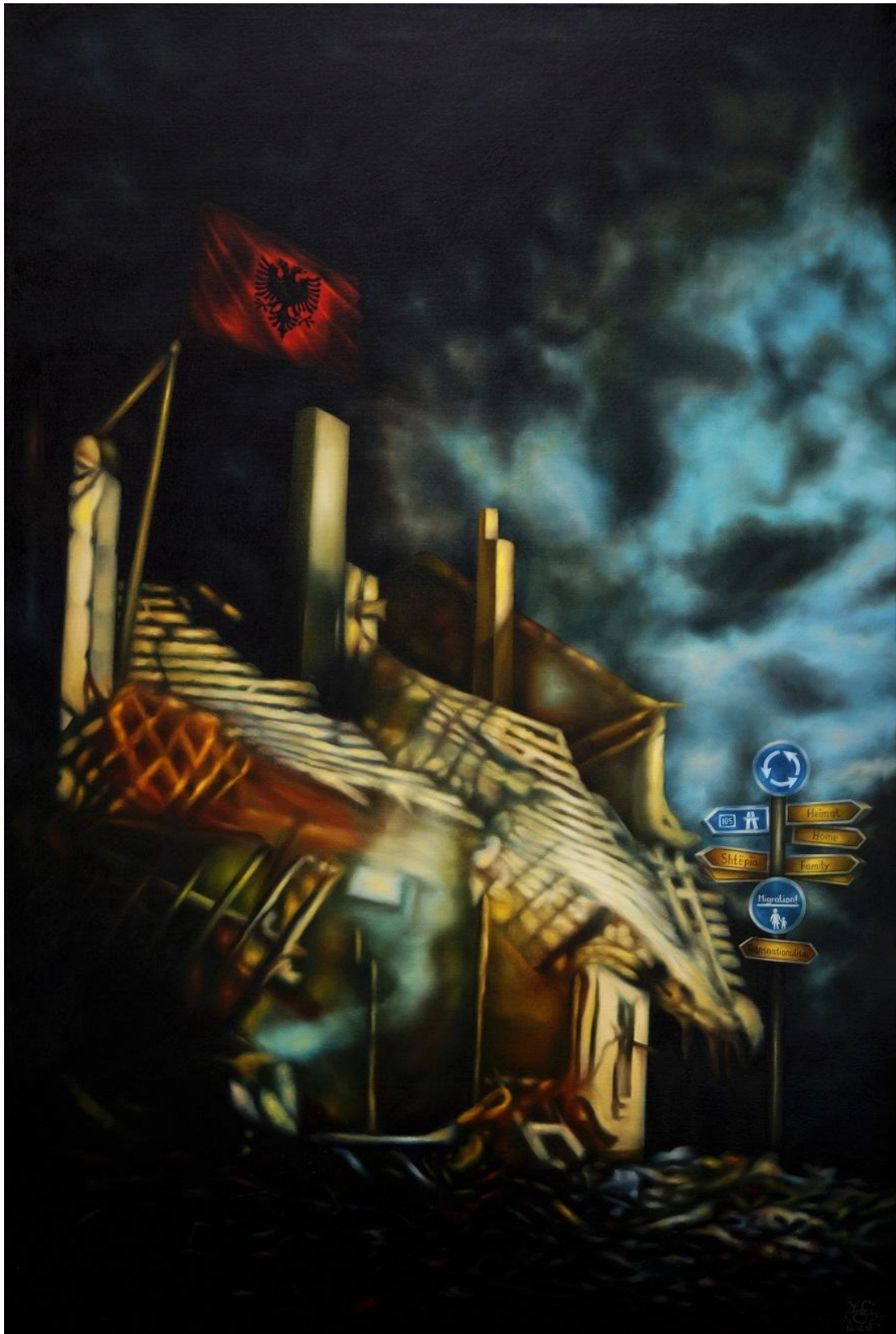
Figure 4.2.3.1. Dashamir Vaqari. *Location and Dislocation,* 2017.
Oil on Canvas, 80 x 120 cm. Photograph the Author.

home, where due to memories of the war this home can be transformed into a danger zone and destruction that perpetuates fear and violent attacks.

The sense of destruction in this image might evoke the impression of a nostalgic conception of a cherished home leading to feelings of loss. Alternatively, this can be understood as a cause of externally motivated migration, which leads to seeking or creating a new home elsewhere. To suggest this I have used a road sign, which may superficially be understood as a symbol of distance for travellers. The image of the road sign may attract viewers' attention and invite them to consider which direction they would take in this kind of situation. The distance is shown as the multi-conceptual number 105, which symbolises the number of years since the separation of Albania and Kosovo, as well as the independence of Albania, and thus could suggest the idea of the national identity. Furthermore, the writing on the sign shows the three different languages of the countries where my practical research is based. Tuan (1991) argues that language is one of the facts that connects people to a place of identification and correspondingly forms a part of our identity which is seemingly impossible to avoid in life. Hall also mentions language as a "resource" in forming identity, but argues that:

> Not "who we are" or "where we came from," so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves. Identities are therefore constituted within, not outside representation (Hall, 1996:4).

This was particularly relevant in the historical context of strengthening the national identity of Albanians in Kosovo in comparison to Albanians living within Albania (see Section 1.4.3).

Albanian national symbols feature in several paintings by Albanian artists. The Albanian flag appears in Dervishi's *Legitimate pride* (2012) (Fig. 2.3.1.3) in the sense of building national awareness of the Albanian younger generation. The importance of national identity to Albanian migrants is suggested in *Location and Dislocation* in the image of the Albanian

national flag still flying on the damaged rooftop. Symbolically, the survival of the flag could be interpreted as the everlasting homeland as a place of belonging throughout difficult times, or the perpetuation of national identity despite these difficult circumstances. In a different media, in her work *Home Sweet Home* (1999-2000) (Fig. 2.3.1.4) Kastrati has addressed the issue of the fear of losing identity among Albanian migrants.

The Collective Memory (Fig. 4.2.3.2) also considers the perpetuation of national identity despite loss of places. It intends to explore the distance and differences between interrelated places of identity as can be experienced by transnational migrants, with all aspects of the image interacting with the aim of creating a sense of warmth, contentment and security. The work does not aim to simply illustrate the architectural style of a lost home, as Sullivan explains in the process of making art "not imitation but creation is the aim" (2010:13); rather the focus is to what extent and in which form and meaning these buildings leave traces in our minds. Therefore it is necessary to understand not only the impact of the attachment developed through buildings and places in the reality of daily life, but also the role they play in the collective memory of the people, and how they become an inseparable part of our socio-cultural transnational life.

I used lighter orange and yellow colours to imply a contrast between the lights in the foreground and the darker building in the background, and suggest the effect of a global space between two different countries. This could convey the physical realities of emplacement in a new home yet being spiritually attached to the country of origin, whereby collective memories may form a kind of psychological support for Albanian diaspora.

In the centre of this composition, globe-shaped lamp shades are shown reflected in a window, which suggests an image of gazing through a window in meditation. The memories that flow, particularly if concerning attachment places, evoke warm emotions. Enclosed within each of the lamp shades a building is depicted as an allegory of the memories it

Figure 4.2.3.2. Dashamir Vaqari. *The Collective Memory,* 2017.

Oil on Canvas, 76 x 118 cm. Photograph the Author.

represents. These buildings are intended to present the historical context and arouse the collective memory of the Albanian people. Belonging to different historical periods, they all had a significant role in forming the Albanian national identity, and thus may carry different meanings in creating the imagined home for transnational Albanian migrants. Alternatively, they might suggest both the enduring Albanian migration and the transformation of the home over time and across governments. They may also signify interrelated places that have a spiritual and emotional dimension and leave traces in our memory. First, on the left is the former City Hall, which was located in the central Scanderbeg Square. This was one of the city's most exceptional buildings, and became a symbol of the capital due to its architectural style, see Bakiu's *Scanderbeg Square* (1933) (Fig 2.3.2.2). This building was demolished by the Communist regime in 1981 (Fig. 2.3.2.3) to be replaced by a national museum in typical Socialist Realist architecture, which changed the perception of this urban space (Bakiu, 2017). In the spherical lamp to the right, the National Museum of Scanderbeg is presented, which was built in 1982 in Kruja Castle in honour of the national hero of Albania. Due to its historical significance (see section 1.1), this building is closely related to the collective memory of all Albanians being strongly associated with the national identity. The next globe shows a traditional house whose distinctive architectural style is a part of the identity of Tirana. Fifty years ago this unique style of architecture could be seen in Tirana and the surroundings areas. However, the Communist regime began a putrefaction of this identity and nowadays it is difficult to find such buildings still intact. The identity and the rich architectural history of Tirana was changed significantly with the Communists' arrival to power and their obsession with putting their stamp everywhere and making people believe that history began with them (Bakiu, 2017). Such actions may lead to the feeling of loss of home, even within the same city. The building in the sphere on the right edge of the canvas is The Tomb of Kaplan Pasha, the ruler of Tirana during the Ottoman Empire, built in 19th century, and is a cultural monument and an important part of the historical context.

Old and demolished or ruined buildings such as those in this painting are kept alive nowadays through photography. This allows the recollection of past phenomena, objects that do not exist anymore, or the changed appearance of cities, such as the architectural and cultural destruction experienced in many cities following the First and Second World Wars. Such destruction may negatively affect the people's "collective memory" (Halbwachs, (1950) 1982). Following the two World Wars, photography began to play a significant role in image research in the field of visual culture analysis in Germany (Brednich, 2011) and retention of the collective memory. However, historically, cities have always evolved and their appearance changed as contemporary buildings stand alongside the remaining historic centre of the city. This intertwining of the old and new architecture could gradually become a part of our life and our memory.

4.2.4 How an old home transfers to a new home

In order to maintain links with their original home and perhaps also to create a feeling of security, transnational migrants often attempt to retain a part of their original home in the new home. Influences, such as photographic images and momentoes, from the past may be created in childhood and remain throughout life (Reese and Fivush, 2008). As Berger noted, "seeing comes before words … the child looks and recognizes before it can speak" (Berger, 1972:5). Later, important images from childhood may bring happiness or hope, and can appear as a memory of a home in a completely different reality but remain constant despite frequent movements in life. Furthermore, the way in which these images appear to us, in reality or in a surreal form, can affect and change the way we see and think. Thus, the memories and photos of home as a medium of communication almost become an antidote to homesickness for transnational migrants, bringing a feeling of security. *Emplacement and Displacement* (Fig. 4.2.4.1) explores the idea of space and place but from the perspective of the transformation of home. The most difficult part of this work was to visualize this

Figure 4.2.4.1. Dashamir Vaqari. *Emplacement and Displacement,* 2017.

Oil on Canvas, 76 x 118 cm. Photograph the Author.

transformation as a process of emplacement and displacement, and I ultimately decided on a transparent form.

On one level, this work is part of a cityscape, which could be located anywhere in Western Europe. In reality, it is a view of Regensburg, where the unusual historical architecture led to the German city gaining the status of a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2006. An historic water well dominates this work. I have chosen the subject partly because of its similarity to a place in my country of origin, and also because water wells were formerly a symbol of Tirana. Alongside their practical function, they were used as a place of orientation or a meeting point for the community. Due to their number and the beauty of their design, if they still existed, they would be a cultural and historical asset for the city. Nowadays they form a part of the collective memory and identity of the city (Bakiu, 2017). The well is also symbolically represented as a nostalgic architectural space in Dervishi's work *Ija* (2008) (Fig. 2.3.3.6), stimulating the idea of losing his home (Dervishi, 2016).

In *Emplacement and Displacement,* the well is intended to stimulate a warm feeling of home, and, in allegorical form, to compare human dependence on water with the need for social contact with home. At the place where the buckets to draw water from the well should be located hangs an almost transparent picture of the city hall of Tirana. Behind the picture is the historical city wall of Regensburg, which by way of its construction is very similar to the surrounding wall of Tirana's castle. The transparency of this image is intended to create the impression of a process of developing a photograph; a process which allows an image to slowly take on its appearance, suggesting a kind of transformation of home. Bengu's work *Stroll on the Boulevard* (1986) (Fig. 2.3.2.1) nostalgically refers to the old home that is transformed leading to a loss of home (Bengu, 2017). In my work, I attempted to suggest the idea of transformation through a translucent filtering process, where the shapes of the building overlap each other, arousing a sense of motion. This can be seen as an image of the emplacement and displacement of home as a place that might bring intimacy, trust and

familiarity (Walters, 2004:241). Also, similar to the process of developing a photo, people may face their memories in a transparent or blurred form, which might give the impression of emplacement and images of displacement among migrants.

The oil painting techniques used in this work enabled me to achieve transparency through the layers by allowing shapes to merge and hidden objects to be seen. Using a warm ochre yellow colour in the foreground, focusing directly on the well and the hanging image, intends to suggest a spiritual connection, imagined or aspired, to the continuity of this place as a reference to the warm climate of the country of origin.

A Relocated Home (Fig. 4.2.4.2) also focuses on the role of memory in transferring parts of an old home to a new home, transnationally through architectural style. A significant social aspect in the formation of our memory is our birthplace or where we spent our childhood, and this has a great impact and influence in building our sense of place identity and homeland. Thus, the birthplace is an important part of the concept of the transnational home, and the country, culture and the architecture of that place "become a part of ideas of place and sense of place" in people's lives (Ratter and Gee, 2012:127). So important is this in our memory that Umberto Eco describes its influence in this way: "Memories are built as a city is built" (1986:89). In Vasari's description of the Italian Renaissance, one focus of his argument was the architectural style, which developed its foundation by returning to the historical memory of buildings during the Roman Empire (Vasari and Bull, 1993). This style developed strongly and its influence spread across Europe. Thus it could be suggested that architecture has also functioned in a kind of transnational way through its cultural impact, especially in Europe. Global development and the free movement of people across Europe brought various architectural and cultural influences. Modern buildings have risen in historic centres and it could be argued that they have often been built without consideration for the surrounding architecture, with the result of diminishing the appearance of these historic buildings that have a great significance in the memory of many generations and have

Figure 4.2.4.2. Dashamir Vaqari. *A Relocated Home,* 2017.

Oil on Canvas, 76 x 118 cm. Photograph the Author.

become an integral part of the city's history. This phenomenon began to appear in Albania when the Communist regime came to power, particularly with the Eastern bloc architecture influencing construction of the cities. Bakiu (2017) observed that Tirana was the first victim of this transformation, especially the historical centre. Transnational emigrants who return to their country of origin as visitors may face and sense these differences and transformation more acutely in the perception of their original home. Focusing on this, I conceived this work to include both groups - migrants and locals. In Albania, after the collapse of Communism the transformation of urban spaces continued to occur, often quite wildly, assisting the destruction of the collective memory. Geographers have discussed the loss of place identity in many modern societies (Relph, 1976; Seamon, 1989; Buttimer, 1980); with Relph (1976) suggesting industrialization leads to "placelessness." Research on Albania has discussed specifically the era of concretization (Aliaj, Lulo and Myftiu, 2004) and the anarchy of "unplanned development" in Tirana (Pojani, 2014:91). Although concrete was first used as a material by the Romans in the first century BC to construct many famous buildings all around Europe (Wilkinson, 2013) it has been used throughout history to create structures and places that arouse a sense of fear and insecurity. Nowadays these buildings are part of the history and national identity of Albania, and form part of the collective memory of a city, transferring an old home to a new home in the same location.

In the centre of *A Relocated Home* there is a window with a transparent curtain, beyond which two objects fill the space symbolically very close to each other and to the viewer's eyes. The transparent curtain and the light in the background are intended to make the atmosphere more sensual and bring together in sharp contrast these two objects built at different times, which suggest a union of the two different homes. The Clock Tower, built in 1822, is a symbolic and historical part of Tirana's identity. On its left is a contemporary concrete tower block, which can symbolically suggest a modernist architectural form that is slowly beginning to transform our home. Echoing Dervishi's work *Ija* (2008) (Fig. 2.3.3.6), contemporary buildings can sometimes appear in quite a frightening way, and perhaps leave

the past architectural style to memory. The appearance of such transnational constructions might evoke different perceptions of the image of home, which varies from individual to individual, yet inevitably leaves traces and can thus be adopted and integrated in a transnational way.

An example of how home can be transformed not only by changing forms of architecture but also by the use of colour can be seen the transformation of Tirana's architectural facades, as referenced in Sala's artwork *Dammi I Colori* (2003) (Fig. 2.3.3.3). Such transformations may change the perception of home and provide a good example to support the question of how an old home can transfer to a new home. In this painting I used colours symbolically: warm in the foreground and cold in background, which might be interpreted as an adaptation of a feeling of warmth, yet insecurity. Metaphorically, this may also embody the perception of home with its warm feelings as an adaptation to a new unknown environment.

4.2.5 New home

As migrants create their new transnational homes, symbolically new windows may be opened, creating new chances, and others along the way may be closed in different life phases. There are some moments that decide the fate and progress of our life, when we create a new home for whatever reason; in these moments we may feel warm, comfortable and safe. Despite this, there remain some places that are connected to a history, which determine experience in our life and cannot be forgotten (Relph, 1976). Hall (1990:226) observes that, even in a new location, "the past continues to speak to us and it is always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth"; this feeling also pursued me after my relocation from Regensburg to Halifax. Particular places are emotionally significant and embedded in our memories with their connections to an original home. De Certau (1990:163) highlights the significance of place in our memories, explaining that adults use particular

related spaces and places to recall their past memories. In my experience, I would say that we can find a new home in a place similar to a place from our past, where we can make strong connections and be able to say "here feels like home." Douglas describes this concept of home as a "kind of space" which is a "located but not fixed space" (Douglas, 1991:287). The painting *Space and Place* (Fig. 4.2.5.1) intends to suggest a home that is a reconstruction of a kind of space, and based on the similarities of a space and place in my past memory.

The interior architecture of the historic Thon Dittmer Palais in Regensburg dominates. The palace was built in 14th century and now serves as a higher education institution, where I spent several years of my life teaching Fine Art. Thus this building took an important place in my memory and became a part of my idea of home (Bauer, 1997). *Space and Place* is concerned with finding an aspect of home in my present life by drawing similarities between this building from the past and an equally historic building, The Piece Hall (built 1779) (Smithes,1988), in Halifax where I am trying to create a new home.

In this painting, the strong perspective created by the loggia dominates, which gives a sense of space, also suggested by the perspective of the windows on the left and the column on the right. Through this perspective I was attempting to create a sense of space and place as a part of memory, and to pull the viewer to focus on the mysteriously lit window at the centre, which suggests the opportunities of a new home. To the right of this window, there is another, which is shown in darkness attempting to convey a sense of belonging that is located in the past. These two windows are symbolically differentiated by the light and dark colours used, and separated by the columns to evoke different situations that we might face in life, metaphorically transmitting a division in space and time, that of the past and the future perspectives of home. This image involves the viewer emotionally and critically in the work in order to reach their own individual understanding.

Figure 4.2.5.1. Dashamir Vaqari. *Space and Place,* 2016.
Oil on Canvas, 76 x 118 cm. Photograph the Author.

Each Albanian migrant will have an individual perception of home, and therefore my intention through this series of paintings was not to achieve or confirm a collective definition of home.

This chapter has described the works in relation to five aspects of home – linking home to particular places, multiple homes, loss of home, how an old home may transfer to a new home, and the creation of a new home. I have also described and discussed the technical and formal methodological processes I have applied in creating this body of work to suggest the visual cognition of home in post-Communist Albanian migration. My research has questioned, challenged and highlighted images of the transnational home in order to better understand the phenomenon and thus contribute to knowledge, as discussed in the Conclusion below.

5. Conclusion

Summary

There are a range of historical contexts which have contributed to the current situation of Albanian transnationalism, as described in Chapter 1. First, over five hundred years spent under the Ottoman Empire and its resulting diaspora in Italy and Greece; followed later by pre-Communist period movements to the USA; thirdly the consequences of the particularly strict Communism practised for forty-five years in Albania; and finally the fall of this regime, leading to three major waves of emigration. This historical background has led to strong and deep-rooted feelings of national identity among Albanians, which are symbolically explored in my body of work.

The role of art in forming perceptions of home and national identity in the Albanian context was explored in Chapter 2. The Communist regime recognised the importance of art to its ideology and advocated the practice of Socialist Realist art, while those who resisted this kind of artistic practice were persecuted. The consequences of Communism were far reaching, and even now, in contemporary Albanian art research processes are undervalued. This is exemplified through the lack of theoretical and critical discussions or a doctoral research programme in visual arts practice (either practice-based or practice-led) in Albanian higher education. The analysis of Albanian art showed that there is a small number of creative works in Albanian art that deal with the concept of home. However, they are quite fragmented and have less potential to construct or share new knowledge, due to the lack of a structured research process, or methodology (Candy, 2006; Nelson, 2009). The artwork considered in Chapter 2 suggests a sense of nostalgia, longing for home, or loss of home and identity, rather than considering the transnational context.

In Chapter 3, through an analysis of the literature and previous creative works, it is clear that, in this time of globalisation, transnationalism is taking on greater importance, which constantly questions the concept of home and the relationship between these phenomena. Yet there is still debate around the definition of the term. Current theory relating to Albanian transnationalism focuses on the political dimensions, economic data and socio-cultural remittances. Placing an image in a research text is a means of representing the perceptions surrounding transnationalism more clearly and potentially in a more meaningful way to the reader. However, this still may provide only an illustration or at best a partial understanding of the subject as images used in this way may be fragmented and are unlikely to reveal the depths of transnationalism. Accordingly, the concept of home has been considered as an aspect of transnationalism but, again, different perceptions of the concept emerge from the theoretical literature. In the Albanian context, the idea of fatherland, the social environment, and the new socialist home are particularly relevant.

Analysis of the historical context and the existing literature and artworks has shown that visual research on Albanian transnationalism is lacking, especially among those who do not have personal experience of transnationalism. This has strongly influenced my quest to do something different in my research, bearing in mind Goodman's remarks on human understanding: "conception without perception is merely empty, perception without conception is blind (totally inoperative)" (1978:6).

This practice-based research project has shown that art, and in particular painting, can visually communicate the phenomena of the transnational home in new ways as a result of the methodology applied. Within the wider context of practice-based research, theory informs practice by "making–meaning" and the outcomes of that practice through "meaning–making," which in turn then also informs theory through reflexive processes (Sullivan, 2010:99-106). However, through the critical investigation conducted in my art practice, the visual form is not intended and should not be seen as a theoretical illustration of Albanian migration, rather as

creating the possibility to communicate with the audience. For these reasons, it was necessary to follow a structured process for this project, which also allows this creative work to be shared and become a subject of discourse for academia and the wider public (Candy, 2006).

With this goal in mind, and in order to make my creative process more comprehensible, I have given a detailed description in this thesis of each painting in Chapter 4. This includes the documentation of the methodological process, explaining and reflecting on the outcomes of my creative artefacts (Nelson, 2009; Leavy, 2015). These methodical processes provide a clear distinction for this investigation and allow it to be identified as research. In the creation of my body of work, the nature of painting as a medium, more specifically oil painting, provided the platform to engage with and to emotionally interpret the various views and understandings of the transnational home. The technical and formal aspects of oil painting such as choice of colour, contrast, and clarity have allowed the merging of the objects presented, combined with their intentional foregrounding or backgrounding, with the overriding goal of conceptualising the internal turmoil of transnationalism, as a direct response to my research questions. It is, however, necessary to acknowledge that these images of home developed as a result of my reflection on theory and practice, attempting to analyse critically rather than illustrate literally, thereby leaving the audience space to interpret the image in different ways (Berger, 1972). As such, this body of work explores how the concept of home among Albanian migrants can be researched in oil painting, as well as the role of the process and form of creative work, which involves selecting, adapting and constructing an image of home in order to contest and support the questions being asked in this research. This enabled me to demonstrate an interaction between theory and practice, applying these ideas and issues to support the position of my paintings, yet allowing the creative outcomes of my practice to be seen from various perspectives. An example of these perspectives is revealed in that the representation of transnational home in my works is

mostly manifested in a form of mobility and social interaction of being here and there. Thus I intended to show different forms of home and place identity of Albanian transnationalism, with the series of works incorporating and complementing each other, focussing on linking home to particular places, multiple homes, loss of home, how an old home transfers to a new home, and new home.

Considering all these aspects of home addressed in my paintings, in response to the research question of what constitutes home in post-Communist Albanian diasporas, there appears to be a sense of doubt of the concept of home. This is because the Communist regime intended to form a new identity, creating the "New Socialist Man" (Hoxha, 2017; Nikolla, 2012; Sollaku et al., 2016), which, by the early 1990s had been successful in altering the national identity and concept of home. In response to the second research question of how these aspects of home can be addressed and interpreted in a body of painting, this uncertainty about national identity and perception of home has developed through treating the images in a metaphoric, allegorical and symbolic way, attempting to convey an unclear situation for Albanian migrants, where living between sending and receiving countries may also result in an involuntary development of fear, potentially leading to a loss of home. Despite all this, the investigation was not intended to achieve a final definition of transnationalism or the concept of home, but to leave space, to provoke a debate, and to influence the advancement of other studies on this subject. The following section discusses the impact and importance of the research.

Impact and importance of research

This section draws on the project as a whole to respond to the final research question concerning how this project can contribute new knowledge to the field of transnationalism and the concept of home. Clearly, the dialogue around migration, transnationalism, and the concept of home is much wider than the Albanian context, and stretches beyond research in

the visual arts. Nevertheless, the lessons learnt from the Albanian historical context and its resulting transnationalism remain significant, particularly with respect to the current migrant crisis in Europe, which could be explored in future research. This project has used the medium and process of oil painting to contribute new knowledge in the metaphoric, allegorical and symbolic treatment of images of home as well as using reflected, blurred layers of images and transparency to address the inner turmoil of transnational migrants as they build multiple home relationships. This effect has been achieved through the combination of different styles in a rational mix in my painting.

The process of publishing and exhibiting my work within institutional settings has been an essential element in opening up my research to discourses within academia and the wider arena (Candy, 2006). The dissemination of knowledge through publications and exhibitions allows not only academic researchers in the field of transnationalism, but also practice-based artistic researchers to enter the debate so that their research findings "can be challenged, tested or evaluated" (Candy and Edmonds, 2010:5). Therefore, throughout the research project, I have disseminated my research: twice taking part in the THEOREM (Cambridge School of Art) conference, exhibition and publication for practical research in the visual arts (Fig. 5.1) and (Fig. 5.2) (Vaqari, 2017a; Vaqari, 2019a).

I have presented papers at two conferences on visual arts and migration at European University of Tirana (Vaqari, 2017b) and Coventry University (Vaqari, 2018a), and attended others at the University of East Anglia and Manchester Metropolitan University; I have published in the journal of the Albanian communication institute *Medius* (Vaqarri, 2019b); and I have presented my entire body of work in a culminating exhibition at Dean Clough Galleries in Halifax (Fig. 5.3). The exhibition was contextualised with a short written description of the themes investigated, attempting to lead the audience to reach a better understanding of the issues and engage in critical discourse (Vaqari, 2018b).

Figure 5.1. Dashamir Vaqari. *Photograph of Dashamir Vaqari exhibition at Anglia Ruskin Gallery, Cambridge,* 6 – 20 July 2017. Photograph the Author.

Figure 5.2. Dashamir Vaqari *Photograph of Dashamir Vaqari exhibition at Anglia Ruskin Gallery, Cambridge,* 5 – 20 July 2018. Photograph the Author.

Figure 5.3. Dashamir Vaqari. *Photograph of Dashamir Vaqari exhibition at*
Dean Clough Galleries, Halifax, 27 October 2018 – 20 January 2019. Photograph Vic Allen.

Future perspectives

The process of exhibiting the work and the resulting discussions have led to a number of
interesting possibilities for future research, for example in the curatorial brief, Vic Allen,
Executive Art Director of the gallery writes:

> Dashamir Vaqari's large, thoughtful oil paintings simultaneously display past and present
> iconography and are intended to work both symbolically and sensually. Perhaps the most
> striking feature of the work is its continental styling and emphasis on traditional skills;
> something that itself raises questions about the gulf that lies between the West and East
> Europe (2018b).

A question resulting from discussion among the audience during the exhibition at Dean
Clough concerns how the investigation of transnationalism can be developed and further

enriched not only in the Albanian context of migration, but especially within the European community, where the differences in the concept of home are still noticeable between the former Eastern bloc and Western countries. Furthermore, the concept of home is continually changing, for example through the current migrant crisis in Europe, or the UK's likely exit from the European Union. Such phenomena can raise questions around national identity between host and sending countries, and perhaps even lead to a new conceptualization of home.

Due to the personal and emotional nature of the concept of home, this project has shown that practice-based research in the visual arts, in particular painting, is well-placed to respond to such contemporary issues. Oil painting, through its transformative nature and the technical approaches it enables, communicates a visual language of thoughts, emotions and feelings of different aspects of transnational home. Moreover, throughout this thesis the examples of visual artists using painting as a medium clearly show the considerable value of painting as a research methodology in the art world. The various perspectives opened through the use of art practice and painting as a research methodology may become a point of reference to advance knowledge of the concept of home and the medium of painting, through which scholars can elaborate and problematise this topic further and contribute to new perceptions and understanding in both practice-based research and the area of transnational studies. However, while a doctoral program in visual art practice is available in some countries, particularly in the English-speaking world (Sullivan, 2010), there are no such research programmes widely available across European universities. Consequently, practice-based research is lacking and this project may be the first practice-based artistic research in the transnational field of Albanian migration after the fall of Communism. Therefore, it is important to continue to disseminate the findings of the research through exhibiting my body of work in artistic and academic institutions, as well as in the significant historical buildings which are represented in the works. Furthermore, it is important to continue to undertake practice-based research on the subject matter in academia.

While I cannot claim that through this project I have investigated all the problems and phenomena of transnationalism, or even post-Communist Albanian transnationalism, the findings of this research could be valuable and useful to researchers in migration studies and authorities on integration in both host and source countries. Finally, as we celebrate almost thirty years of democracy and its consequences in Albania, it seems more appropriate than ever to address such questions.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Interview with Shpend Bengu

Shpend Bengu Professor of Graphic Design, Albanian University. Interviewed by Dashamir Vaqari. [face to face] Tiranë, Albania, 15 August 2016. (Translated from Albanian by Dashamir Vaqari).

DV: I would like to talk about your two creative works, and especially *Xhiro në bulevard* (*Stroll on the boulevard)* (1986) (Fig. 2.3.2.1) and *Hyrja në ambasada* (Entering the Embassies) (1990) (Fig. 2.3.3.5). You deal with social topics in your works, which are topics that are missing nowadays in Tirana.

SHB: *Stroll on the Boulevard* has a special meaning for me. It transforms my memories and nostalgia into my childhood, which also evokes the collective memory of the citizens of Tirana. At first glance it seems to link to a kind of romanticism, or better to say with the sense of home.

DV: Why you have titled it *Stroll on the Boulevard*?

SHB: Each society has its own rites, as in other societies these rites were conditioned by the context and inheritance of these communities. When I was a little child together with my parents, in a kind of tradition that was created, we had to go together on to take a stroll on the Boulevard every evening. Even when I was very small, my parents took me by the hand, I speak of age from 7 to 10 years old, I have very good memories of these walks, where I never wanted it to end. With the passage of time, the stroll on the Boulevard was and remained the only place, where people had the opportunity to see, meet and to talk to each other.

DV: So you tied it directly to the social aspect?

SHB: Yes, that was the only opportunity as a meeting point after the end of the 8 working hours of the day people went home, rested a little, ate something, and then in the evening was the stroll ritual. This was like a kind of *peripatus*, and now I think about meetings and greetings in different strolls. Then the parents explained to us in detail who was the person they had just met or greeted, and I memorized all these over time.
We had two meeting points where we focused on this Boulevard. The first was the Bridge, and the other in front of the the Dajti Hotel, where different groups of young people from all parts of Tirana gathered. These meetings were comprehensive where we shared our different experiences. Among closest and more trusted friends, we surpassed this kind of communication and we secretly discussed the political situation of the time. There was also fear of civilian spies, who tried to identify those with tendencies towards western fashions in western clothing or having slightly long hair.

DV: Here I would like to ask how you considered *Stroll on the Boulevard* in terms of fashion? Was this important with the way how people must be dressed?

SHB: Yes, that included this aspect. It was like a parade or fashion show. We all knew each other, where every kerb or pavement had different groups sitting or walking. If someone was wearing a different style from others, it would fall immediately into the eye and become a subject for discussion between different youth groups, where it was seen as a form of rebellion against the system. I belong to the group of adolescents from 1971-74 where there was a kind of liberty at this time but after the 4th plenum of the Communist Party a dictatorship was placed over culture. This is why, at the Boulevard Bridge, if you look carefully, there is some kind of dark blue colour, mysteriously used.

DV: A kind of cold color used in the background?

SHB: Because the situation at that time was quite cold.

DV: What about the lights that are used around the boulevard, can they be seen in a form that evokes some safety?

SHB: There was no security at all, and if you see them there is a kind of lightening around blue, they are cold in the treatment, where the stroll was always under the control of the regime.

DV: Still on the topic of the Boulevard, was this perhaps seen as a form of metaphor, which was the only hope people could feel a little at liberty?

SHB: We felt free when we talked to each other.

DV: So was this Boulevard stroll seen as a point of expression and dissatisfaction with the Communist regime?

SHB: Definitely yes, people spoke against the dictator and his politics, but always in small groups, in a narrow circle. There have been cases where people were spied on and arrested by the regime.

DV: So, a long time has passed, Tirana has been transformed and this stroll does not exist anymore. It is replaced by the mobility of cars, as a glaring global phenomenon. What is your critical reflection on this transformation of your home? Do you see it in a nostalgic or belonging form, like something missing or a kind of collective memory?

SHB: In personal terms I had a very nice childhood as I grew up in a house with green garden and flowers, where red roses dominated. This transformation began when my house was demolished by the Communist regime to leave space for the building of the block apartments that we have nowadays. The most frustrating and exhausting moment of my life was when I saw the bulldozer demolishing my garden and the house. Then we were forced as a family to live in those apartment blocks. From that period until now I have lived in this apartment which is like a bunker, as a metaphor in the prison's form, and the worst is also that here in this apartment have raised my children. My children do not know this house with garden and flowers. I think Tirana nowadays does not belong to me, it belongs to the others; my Tirana has died... I have attempted through my artworks to document these periods that were beautiful to me in my memories of Tirana, which appear nowadays to me in both a nostalgic form and in a sense of belonging.

DV: Why did you pick oil techniques for this picture? Is it necessary to serve your image?

SHB: It was the period of the oil technique and also I did not own a camera at this time.

DV: So, your use of oil paint is not because there is a specific role in image transmission?

SHB: The dream of my life was always to be a painter. It was one of the motives that I liked a lot. However, even if I had a camera I could not interpret it in the same way as painting does. If you look at it, there is an old man nearby where two young people are cycling, which symbolizes the movement of time and development through new generations.
DV: Your next work is quite interesting and is directly related to a topic that is still current, which is immigration. As far as I can see your artwork dates back *to* July 1, 1990, where there was an explosion of a migration wave to abandon the country …

SHB: Forgive me, but I am against using the term "to abandon".

DV: I understood.

SHB: I am totally against the use of the term abandonment. They were forced to leave, and not in the sense to abandon it. The regime pushed them away. The same thing is happening today.

DV: So, forced emigration …

SHB: Do not think that I want to leave my country, but I will think about my children to have a better future. If my children do not have this future here, it is not discussed that they should find their homeland where they think they will be better for them.

D. Let's go back to the graphic composition of this work, where people are represented from behind, why?

SHB: The first version of this work was in tempera. That night I was coming back home ...

DV: Here I would like to ask where you got your motivation?
SHB: Usually the streets of Tirana were very quiet at this time, but that day, when I was returning home from work I saw large crowds of people running with luggage in their hands, all heading in a hurry towards Tirana's centre.

DV: Where?

SHB: All heading to the foreign embassies in Tirana. It was a situation as real as well as surreal. As I explained earlier, from these blocks of apartments, which to be honest in this work I've adjusted a bit, but from these 'bunkers' or 'prisons' they were looking for another light for their lives.

DV: So, do you see these buildings as bunkers, prisons as a representation of the home?
SHB: Yes, open prisons …

DV: So, this is why you have represented them in a dark colour …

SHB: Yes, they are terrible. Living in those blocks of apartments is terrible. The way that they have been built reminds me of the Rome Empire, how they built houses for their slaves…

DV: I understand you very clearly.

SHB: So that's why these people were looking for a new light. At that time, in the roofs of these apartment blocks they put a powerful light on an apartment terrace, because the regime was expecting this situation, maybe to better control the people, even placing cameras in these apartment blocks. If you look closely at the right edge of the graphics, a large eye-shaped lighthouse appears, suggesting the eye of the regime that wants to control all the movements. It was intended to be more than enough, but the light that was set by the regime was far weaker than the light that these people sought. So the regime's light could not cope with the light of freedom where these people wanted to go.

DV: Once again, why exactly did you decide to present them from behind?

SHB: Because they left me behind as I did not take that decision to migrate" for other reasons...

DV: Did you choose the subject for your work in discussion with other artists in a project co-operation, or is it individual?

SHB: Not at all, it was just an individual choice

DV: Do you think the artist can undertake research through artwork, and thereby have an impact on the society?

SHB: Yes, and perhaps even more through the image, because an image says more than 1000 words, which is an English saying.

DV: Do you think this image needs a description?

SHB: It depends on what and how you see it. It reminds me Hemingway, when he received the Nobel Prize with *The Elder and The Sea* he said "I did not write *The Elder and The Sea* to be understood as others understood, I just got it from the news in a newspaper" but the way he used those elements of expression, then it got a universal character.
So even a work may not be understood today, but later, if we look at it carefully, it can take extraordinary value, and be understood differently. For example, I can only mention a case in medieval art in the illustrations of the books. There are some pearls of wisdom that are extraordinary today. So we do not see it, as the monk of that time could see, who simply copied books, or the one who illustrated it was based on the Bible. So I look at it in my own way today, where many of the current elements, that I find in medieval books. That is why in my recent activity I am researching medieval images.
DV: The last question. How do you differentiate your work from other contemporary artists in Albania?

SHB: I do not try to differentiate my work from the others. My point of view is that every man is free to do his art, and I do not even want to give suggestions or opinions about the art of others. My mission in life is to do what I feel, and how someone can understand it, is a matter

of perception. There have been instances where a so-called art historian, but indeed was not, analysed my work in an Albanian newspaper, I was scandalized by his reference to my art as a realistic work. How can it be called a realistic work, where my work does not have any real basis, not anything alive, but only representing stones, yet he called it realistic art. So, I was disappointed when this pseudo-art critic wants to get into my emotion that I wanted to express there. And if he did not understand it, he would never ever understand it. I agree with the expression of Goettes, when he says "even from the unnatural there is natural". So, a viewer, who does not see this image, will never see it.

DV: Thank you very much.

Appendix 2 – Interview with Bashkim Dervishi

Bashkim Dervishi, Freelance teacher of fine art in Tiranë. Interviewed by Dashamir Vaqari.
[face to face] Tiranë, Albania 20 August 2016. (Translated from Albanian by Dashamir Vaqari).

DV: Professor Dervishi, you are a fusion of contemporary artists. Your body of work belongs to two periods at the same time, one of socialist realism period and the other of contemporary art.
Your practice has changed over time and your art after the fall of communism deals with the problems of globalization, home and spaces, concerning relationships between people and cultural, social, architectural and national identity changes.
Why do you treat these topics in your creativity and can you talk specifically about what has inspired you?

BD: My work *Ija* (2008) (Figure 2.3.3.6) is one of my most beloved works. The problem of globalization has always preoccupied me as it comes with characteristics and great speed which often flatten tradition and culture. It aims to form a person without nation and identity. This relationship between these two philosophies that exclude each other is the essence of this picture.

DV: In my point of view in the foreground of your composition I see a typical Albanian Grandmother. Who is this figure and what does she represent for you?

BD: *Ija* is a traditional Tirana grandmother who lives in harmony with her house, clothing, flowers, and colours between architectural space and the future of reality which together express its poetic soul.

DV: What is the idea of this composition and what is the meaning of the colour used in this work?

BD: The idea of this work is that this city is slowly losing its identity. Around this *Ija* dominates a warmth and peace, which is emphasized even more by the colours used. This soft orange colour which gradually passes into ocher is reminiscent of tranquility and it reminds me of the sunlight which Tirana has had before with low houses and buildings.

Different shades of this colour affect many parts of her figure, the courtyard, wall and flowers which were a symbol of Tirana before. In the background, I have used a heavy gray bullet, which is introduced symbolically, to highlight and further highlight that contrast and warm colors and orange and ochers which Tirana is losing day by day. High buildings, beautiful and bright from one side but on the other hand scary, where space is measured in centimeters, where air and space are limited and narrowed more and beyond this boundary to create the feeling of an attack that this city cannot be saved without being alienated, and step by step we are losing our home, creating another without our desire.

DV: Did you choose the subject for your work in collaboration with other artists for a common project, or is it your individual decision?

BD: The second painting, which I would like to describe, was done specially for the exhibition on 28th November 2012, for the 100th anniversary of Albanian independence, which was opened in the National Art Gallery in Tirana, and called *Krenaria legjitime (Legitimate Pride)* (2012) (Fig. 2.3.1.3). On the occasion of this great jubilee and especially for this exhibition I have found my inspiration for my creative work.

DV: You have included in this composition a boy and a girl, which in themselves are two different compositions and are placed in harmony in a single creative work. What exactly do these symbolize for you?

BD: I conceived this creative work placing two compositions in one, which reside in harmony and complement each other. Introducing in this painting two different schools in two different times, represented by a boy and girl, which symbolically give us an idea and a feeling full of hope from that younger generation, for the present and the future of this country. The figures of each of these two children, being themselves symbols, accompanied by other symbols in the background known and quite typical of the history and identity of Albania.

DV: Can you describe each composition more specifically?

BD: In the first composition "Eagle with a blue shirt," a little schoolgirl is holding a book, the poetry of the great poet of the Albanian renaissance, Naim Frasheri, "Nightingale of the Albanian language," as the people in Albania called him. The inspiration for her national identity may come from his well-known poem from his work *Bagëti e Bujqësi* (Herds and Crops), also inspiring visitors to think and to read these verses written by him by themselves, like this one:

"Oh mountains of Albania and you, oh trees so lofty,
Broad plains with all your flowers, day and night I contemplate you,
Your highlands so exquisite, and your streams and rivers sparkling,
Oh peaks and promontories, and your slopes, cliffs, verdant forests,
Of the herds and flocks I'll sing out which you hold and which you nourish.
Oh you blessed, sacred places, you inspire and delight me!
You, Albania, give me honour, and you name me as Albanian,
And my heart you have replenished both with ardour and desire.
Albania! Oh my mother! Though in exile I am longing,
My heart has ne'er forgotten all the love you've given to me".

Naim Frashëri's poems have been and are still part of permanent Albanian school programs across the country, which has an impact on the national identity. In the background, the figure of this girl has the Albanian red flag, with a silhouetted black double-headed eagle in the centre.

The second composition is "Albani." The meaning of this name is more significant. Albani holds the book of the famous chronicler in Albania, titled "The History of Scanderbeg" from Marin Barleti, who was a contemporary of the legendary Scanderbeg, the national hero of Albania. It is clear that this second composition again symbolically describes the history and glory of this small country in size, but which played an extraordinary role in the whole of Europe in the 15th century. It was this Albanian national hero, a warrior Albanian prince from the Kastrioti tribe, who, along with his warriors, revolted against the Turks for 25 years. This

hero and his nation was an insurmountable barricade for the Ottoman Empire, who defended their own country and at the same time European culture and civilization. It was only 10 years after his death that the Sultan finally conquered this small country and legendary city called Kruja, which at this time was the centre of the Albanian resistance. In the background of the little schoolboy, Albani, rise majestic statues of the national hero Gjergj Kastrioti Scanderbeg, presented in grand fashion riding his horse in battle, unique act of the Albanian prominent sculptor Janaq Paco. This statue is located in the centre of the little town of Kruje, a town that is known in history for its legendary castle. This castle still exists nowadays with its superb museum dedicated to the history and wars of Scanderbeg.

DV: Do you think you can have an impact in society through your art?

BD: As noted, I have included these two compositions in one, by purposely keeping to a strict rule of putting the symbols that serve with the best composition, as well as one picture to another. This deliberate placement is done in order not to avoid and not consume the attention of the spectator in motion or other accessories to one or the other picture. I'm trying to influence the viewer to focus entirely only on these components of my compositions that he wants, namely the symbols that supplement and complement both compositions. It must become much easier for the viewer to understand clearly that all visual, pictorial and graphic elements are included in the service of the central idea of these two compositions in a rational way and without exaggeration.

Perhaps in this time of globalization that we are living in it is good for the younger generation to grow up with these symbols and never lose the national identity. Keeping our national identity especially for the young generation is very important, because it represents our large homeland that we call Albania.

Appendix 3 – Interview with Gazmend Bakiu

Gazmend Bakiu, photographer and historian. Interviewed by Dashamir Vaqari. [face to face] Tiranë, Albania 23 August 2017. (Translated from Albanian by Dashamir Vaqari).

DV: Mr. Bakiu, you come from a family of Tirana, which is well known for its contribution to Tirana and the history of this city. Is it the reason that your research in this book focuses precisely on the old Tirana?

GB: For an author in any work he does there is certainly an internal drive, which in some cases is different. In the case of the book "Old Tirana, an illustrated history," I was influenced by the strong connection to the city of my ancestors, and also my love for the city, as a citizen living in Tirana.

DV: The book is extensively illustrated with photos from Old Tirana. What do these pictures symbolize to you through their content?

GB: I think that history should definitely be illustrated with photographs. Thus, it becomes more tangible, more reliable and "affordable" to the audience. In the case of this book, the pictures were more necessary than ever, because many of the buildings that appear in this book do not exist anymore. The reader can see, and not only read, what Tirana was like before, and what we have lost.

DV: How would you describe the centre of Tirana, *Scanderbeg Square*, in the form it was before?

GB: The work on shaping *Scanderbeg Square* began in 1928, with the return of the Clock Tower from a tower of oriental type, into the Venetian type. The Square was positioned in such a way that historic buildings in Tirana, including the Ethem Bey Mosque (1794), Old Bazaar and Vangjelizmoit Church (1874) could be preserved and brought to the foreground. In the '20s the famous coffee bar called "Kursal" was built in the square, while in the years 1929-31 six ministries holding national symbols were built. The cherry on the cake was the City Hall (inaugurated on September 1, 1931), which dominated the square. In 1935, the central park was finished between the ministries; this was planned to accommodate the Scanderbeg monument. On 26 November 1937, the Prime Minister Pandeli Evangjeli officially named it *Scanderbeg Square* (1933) (Figure 2.3.2.2). It was, without doubt, one of the most beautiful squares of Europe that no one else had around these buildings, which I mentioned earlier. You can see the pictures of that time.

DV: Why did the communist regime focus exactly on the center of Tirana to eradicate every trace of the identity of this square, which was itself contained in the architecture and national symbols?

GB: Architecture is the best witness of the history and identity of a country or a city; it will suffice for us to know how to read and understand it. However, the Communist regime wanted people to "read" only the "history" which was written and created by them, thus as far as possible they eliminated everything that had been done before. It seems incredible, but it happened like this. They wanted to say that history began with them. Since Tirana was (and

is) the capital, she suffered from this "vision" more than any other city of Albania. In Tirana, the main victim became *Scanderbeg Square* (2018) (Figure 2.3.2.3). Thus they demolished the Old Bazaar, the Vangjelizmoit Church, the city hall, the cafe "Kursal" one after another and built the Palace of Culture, hotel "Tirana," and the National Museum. The Square was increased and the beautiful symmetry was destroyed; it was transformed into a cold socialist square, for manifestations of the regime. Meanwhile, the new socialist buildings, which replaced the old, in any sense can never be compared with them.

DV: How did the residents react and experience the destruction of the central square of Tirana, and its conversion to typical socialist realism architecture?

GB: Of course, the residents of Tirana experienced the destruction of the square with great pain and lost a part of their identity. But they couldn't speak and protest against the Communist regime, because living in a dictatorship does not allow freedom of expression for all trivial things, nor can it lead the mind to protest about the the transformation of the square.

DV: Tirana never experienced any war, but its transformation during the Communist period creates the image of a capital city that has experienced war and was rebuilt again. Might you say that Tirana is a city of lost identity?

GB: The Communist regime always talked about permanent revolution, and the life of Albanians was as hoarding or open prisons. These are not far from war, or a war situation. But it was worse than a war, because when the war has ended, many buildings will be rebuilt, and while here was quite the opposite as I said above, the goal was the loss of identity. They wanted to undo the city and its historic center, and a good part unfortunately they did it with a great success.

DV: Thank you very much.

Appendix 4 – Interview with Venera Kastrati

Venera Kastrati, artist. Interviewed by Dashamir Vaqari. [face to face] Tiranë, Albania 29 August 2017. (Translated from Albanian by Dashamir Vaqari).

DV: Ms. Kastrati, your art has changed over time, and in this interview I would like to focus especially on your artwork *Home Sweet Home* (1999-2000) (Fig. 2.3.1.4), which is also related to my research topic. Your work focuses directly on the concept of 'home' and 'identity' and dates back to your departure from Albania.

DV: Is there any connection with your departure from your birthplace, where does your concept of 'home' begin to transform and take on another meaning for you?

VK: 1999 was the year when I started attending the Academy of Arts (Accademia di Brera) in Milan. I left Albania in September 1997 for Sicily, Italy. I was invited by the association "Figli d'Arte Cuticchio" offering me a three year scholarship to attend the puppet school "Pupi" siciliani, which was headed by the most important heir to the tradition of the locals (cuntista siciliani), simultaneously actor and director of the theater, Mr. Mimmo Cuticchio. At that time, the desire to face the Western world, and the hunger for knowledge could not keep me in the same place. Palermo was too tight and not at all enough for what I wanted. So after finishing the first year, I abandoned Palermo to move directly to Milan. As soon as I was settled in Milan, I started studying and began to adapt to the new environment at the Brera Academy (The Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera), which gave a strong sense to my existence. It was a moment where I wanted to abandon everything from the past. To completely clean up my life "una tabula rasa," where the old would overlap with the new one. Among this inner turmoil was born my artwork "Home Sweet Home".

My academic study from 1993-1997 in Tirana was limited to knowledge and figurative application, that did not go beyond the first half of the 90s art. In these years in Tirana I had my first approach with photography, which left the indelible mark in my art creation, thanks to Lala Meredith Vules who at that time was a "guest professor" from the UK and accompanied me during the last academic year. While in Brera, 1999 was the year that I started experimenting with performance, video and installation. "Home Sweet Home" was my first installation, where I used sugar cubes, and where my interests were first seen for materials that did not last longer, that disappear and bear a poem itself. I do not know whether this work in itself reflected more nostalgia for leaving home or merely beginning to create a full distance between the present and the past. Reflecting now, at a distance, I think I was looking for a new identity. In this installation were still elements, like the painted base (where I supported my house with sugar cubes) referring to my past academic recognitions. These two elements were complemented by several slides representing moments from my childhood, located in the windowspace, and being composed in a new way. Every part, initially meaningless, was composed in a puzzle.

DV: Do you think that your perception in the 'concept of home' is also closely related to the formation of your identity, or vice versa?

VK: The topic of the territory and home has been taken into consideration several times in my work. I think many projects arise through the analysis and perception of the present and the past. I was born in Tirana, but my parents are originally from Kosovo. I have lived the division of the border between Kosovo and Albania through the continuous reporting and letters between my parents and cousins living in former Yugoslavia. In my childhood, this status was special and questioned my identity. The questions I asked myself about the childhood "Who am I"? Where do I come from?" always became more and more important and enigmatic at the moment that I migrated definitively to Italy. So this twisted two-part identity between Albania and Kosovo is shattering like glass into ever smaller parts. The first works in relation to the themes of territory and identity are: my first video performance which I exhibited in Milan was "I heard her voice on the telephone, Kosovo 1999" (http://www.venerakastrati.it/kosovo.html), as well as *Home Sweet Home* http://www.venerakastrati.it/homesweet.html, which I mentioned above, or *Eclipse* a photographic print that I presented for the first time in the curated exhibition by Harald Szeemann *Blood and Honey* in ESSL Wien Museum. Furthermore, one of the latest projects I presented at the National Gallery of Kosovo in Pristina in 2016, which was directly related to the theme of fragmented identity, was *Missing Pictures*. (http://www.venerakastrati.com/missing-pictures-gkk/) (http://www.venerakastrati.com/2016-2/)

In 2009 I was fortunate to be invited to the 25th edition of the biennial of Alexandria in Egypt to introduce the Albanian pavilion. For this event I created a video installation called *The Utopian Blank Slate*. (http://www.venerakastrati.it/The%20Utopian%20Blank%20Slate.html) (http://www.homebaseproject.org/venera-kastrati.html)

DV: Your work *Home Sweet Home* is represented in the form of colour print and installation. Why did you choose to use these two different art media in the realization of this work, and not another media, such as painting, video, photos, or performance?

VK: The media manages to translate a personal idea into a communicative form with the public. It's work that requires a certain medium and not the other way around. In the case of the "Home sweet home" installation, which is one of my first works of this kind, it includes, as I mentioned above, some media (two-dimensional paintings, exactly where the house is built with sugar cubes, light bulbs to illuminate the object, and diapositive). Some of the slides are presented in colour print. Perhaps this work expresses my explicit need to disconnect from the academic rules of Tirana and to experiment with new forms of expression.

DV: Once again, do you think media used in this work has an impact on transforming your idea, or is it just your personal perception in its application?

VK: The media needs to find the most appropriate communication strategy. Considering that this work is related to the beginnings of my studies at the Brèche academy, and of course, has greatly influenced the transformation not only of this work but also of the further following research. So, installation was a fundamental part in my creation.

DV: In the two colour print fragments, there are turbulent forms in representation of the objects, is it perhaps related to a kind of metaphor for the memory or the fragile identity that emigrants experience during the departure from the homeland?

VK: I have always been interested in unclear visible forms that disappear, untraced, unspecified shapes that carry poetry. "Hospital," the bed with sugar cubes that I created in 2000 and exhibited in an abandoned hospital (http://www.venerakastrati.it/hospital.html), clearly shows my interest in unreadable images that are physically present at the moment of exposure, but just like our existence, have a short life. Each element is destined to go unnoticed, decomposing. So arises my interest in the shadow theatre: for the first time in the *7 Steps* project (2004-2005) later on *7 Memories of You*, "*Goodbye, Shadows of Voices*", and then to the latest exhibition of 2016 *Missing Pictures*. The part of this exhibition was the work *Correspondence - sky in Kosovo*. Through an application form that was previously distributed to students at the University of Architecture of Pristina, I asked the students to correct some cards I had supplied with some blank spaces, which corresponded to the silhouette of unmarked houses and without identity. Only heaven, which I had completed in digital drawing, should not be touched. Students in a way followed my application guidelines: they gathered information from the memoirs of relatives about the ruined buildings in Kosovo after the 1999 war broke out and through these stories built their virtual memory city. Finally, these postcards completed by students sent by email built what I called a multi-word project for multi-word project for a phantasmagoric and virtual city. Compulsory abandonment of the homeland often leaves indelible and tragic signs in human memory.

Another video that I realised again during this exhibition was *Renovation.* In 2014, I had the chance to see for the first time the land of origin of my parents, Kosovo. But the mythical paradise imagined in my younger years was suddenly shifted into a sad reality. There had been nothing left of the past except the bases of abandoned ruins. My grandparents' buildings were destroyed by the 1999 war. So I documented through the videos of the reconstruction of this house through drawing and storytelling of my cousin, an architect who had experienced childhood in those places. In the video, my cousin sought to rebuild through the plan every corner of the house, entering in even more detail. But the memory also carries suspicion, entering some moments in conflict with his sisters who remembered other parts of the house, or objected to his drawing.

The individual and collective memory has greatly interested me as a field of inquiry into my work. So those images are difficult to read, in the same way as the memory itself, which is pale and fragmented, often places universal interpretation.

The fragility is part of human nature. Emigration is also a phenomenon that exists since the very first moment that man began to live on Earth.
DV: Does this kind of long-term emigration risk transforming or leading to the formation of a home or a new identity in the host country by leading to loss of home in the country of origin?

VK: This is an interesting question that I'm always faced with. I believe that anyone who is obliged in some way (for various reasons) to abandon the country of birth, which should be integrated into the foreign country, as you call it "host", enters a new phase that can emerge as "a sparse identity" or "unidentified". As I mentioned above, I have lived this dualism (the split identity between the two countries) in my childhood. I think that's a sentiment, which belongs to many. I think that man finds the strength to fit into every new environment, but I do not believe that the country of origin can be forgotten. Without memory, our existence does not make sense. It is exactly the empty memory that makes the bridge between the past and the present. That home of origin remains for me as a form of a shadow, of a flavour

that follows from behind wherever it moves, it never releases you, but it is independent and mostly does not belong to it.

DV: Did this work arise as a result of a joint project with other artists, or is it simply a theme related to your emotional side?

VK: The projects I have created since 1999 to date come as a result of a collection of individual experiences in the artistic and personal field. The historical and iconographic archive also plays an important role in the development of my work. Of course, my artistic stimulation is not lacking. Nowadays in the period of globalization and post-Internet era where we are surrounded by a lot of information, we have the opportunity to choose and broaden the horizons of individual research. Regarding collaboration with other artists: In my recent projects I have often worked in a team (for example in *The Utopian Blank Slate*, *Missing Pictures*). Each co-operator in general has different competencies. Sharing opinions and knowledge for a common goal reinforces the work. Multiple and elastic vision is fundamental to achieving structured and mature communication.

DV: And finally, the methods that artists use are hard to identify and sometimes even comes unconsciously where the intention can change and improve until the creative work is completed. Do you think that the artist, through creative work, can research, contribute and generate new knowledge, which could have an impact on society equally as a researcher in theory?

VK: Research is the basis and the most crucial part of the process of creation. Furthermore, the itinerary that the artist follows allows a clear vision of the interests associated with the artistic creations of all periods of times, but at the same time avoids the risk of repetition. The artist has full consciousness about the research undertaken. The moments of creation apparently derived from "unconsciousness" are simply the result of research and experimentation over the years, which are structured more and more towards the essentials. I think the role of the artist is not the same as that of a theoretical scholar. An art historian seeks to bring as many facts as possible and to analyse by seeking to eliminate doubts. The artist seeks to generate reflection on the audience. The artist provokes the opinion of the masses. Everything safe becomes unsafe in front of the artwork. Impact from outside is the multiform public response, and the movement of consciousness. An artwork is completed when the public does not remain indifferent to it, and the work can be codified in a universal message.

Appendix 5 – Correspondence with Ardian Isufi

Ardian Isufi, Associate Professor and Dean of Faculty of Fine Art, Univeristy of the Arts, Tirana. Correspondence with Dashamir Vaqari. [e-mail] Tiranë, Albania 9 May 2018.

E-mail communication received from Ardian Isufi (written by Isufi in third person):

Ardian Isufi was born in (1973) and graduated from the Academy of Arts in Tirana in 1995 in the Atelier Graphics. He has been a lecturer - Associate Professor since 1996 in the Graphic Studio and now is the dean of the Faculty of Visual Arts, University of Arts, Tirana.
He has participated in many national and international artistic events in Italy, Greece, France, Austria, China, America, etc, where among others is worth mentioning Expo "Parking" in 2008 and Biennale in 2009. Ardian Isufi is the winner of "Onufri" third prize in the International Visual Arts Competitionin in 2005 and second prize winner in 1996. His artistic creativity is collected from many private collectors in Albania, Italy, Greece, Austria, America, etc. His work is part of the Permanent Collection Pavilion after 90s in the National Gallery of Arts in Tirana. Curator of many exhibitions and artistic activities such as "FJALA" Tirana - New Orleans, United States and "Spaç" Objects - Subjects of the writer and publicist Fatos Lubonja.

In 2002, he realized his personal exhibition "Human Sensibility" at the National Gallery of Arts in Tirana, following his creativity with the Cycle "Fragments 2003-2005" to further proceed in 2008 with the "Green Vocabulary" and "Human Sings" at the German Embassy, Tirana, where the author focuses on the artistic researches of the relationship between the human body (the individual) and the absurd reality, also the pressure exerted on the individual in an uncertain and unstable atmosphere in the social context and social-political as well.

"Umbrarum Theatrum" (Theatre of Shadows) comes in 2010 with two presentations: in FAP and ZETA Gallery in Tirana, a presentation where are artistically narrated pieces of history and identity that reflect over periods and events as the metaphor of phantasmagoric "monument" of the myth that represents in the period of dictatorship "the new man. "Death of Artist", the performance realized in Ekspo "Nature" - Small Gallery, takes the opportunity by these initial queries by means of a symbolic gesture of the artist drowning himself. U.O. (Unidentified Object) is the title of an artistic project that this artist presents in the Promenade Gallery, Vlora, 2012. Factory chimney & Mosque minaret: the work is about "transition of faith", which in this case is explained by this historical, political and religion objects' collage to discuss the problems of integrating cultures, religions, freedom and human rights of the individual.

"*ANTI-HOMAGE*" realized in 2015 the solo-show in installation with the death-mask of the communist dictator Enver Hoxha. The contact with the portrait-mask pushes us towards a psychological approach, where the face of visitors, or their emotional body language, will be seen as ANTI-HOMAGE to our history of dictatorship. For this reason the road to see this death mask will take the visitor through a "mental tunnel", installed here as a psychological stream of consciousness in the central hall of the National History Museum.

The plaster fell on his face and the deformed shape of his portrait stunned the security officers who reached for my throat as I was the one to destroy the image of comrade Enver. But while I shivered under the weight of the realization of this technical process the image of the deceased hardened and postponed any dangerous situation. Leaving the chiaroscuro accounts of Muharrem Turkeshi's memories and coming into the present we hear that the National History Museum Archives have in their storage the death mask of Enver Hoxha. This is a very interesting artifact to display for the first time to the public as an artistic installation. Contemporary art nowadays has integrated within itself many elements of history, taking into account many fields of human character, combining also new views on aesthetics with the great opportunities the visual language offers for communication. In this context, to the public it is given a new conceptual approach to face the dictator (his death-mask) and as a result the history of Albanian dictatorship. The public concludes the installation, initially walking into an "isolation tunnel", whilst in the end facing Enver Hoxha's mask for few moments, thus creating an imaginary meeting point, restoring for a brief moment in time the experience of the period's isolation. This contact with the portrait-mask pushes us towards a psychological approach, where the face of visitors, or their emotional body language, will be seen as ANTI-HOMAGE to our history of dictatorship. For this reason the road to see this death mask will go through a "mental tunnel," installed here as a psychological stream of consciousness in the central hall of the National History Museum.

Appendix 6 – Consent forms

Dear Colleague,

As you know, I am currently studying for a PhD in Fine Art at the University of Derby. Through my research I am investigating the concepts of home in post-Communist Albanian Diasporas. As I know you have also investigated the concept of home in your creative practice, I would like to interview you.

Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the research at any time. I will take your agreement to be interviewed as consent to use data obtained for my dissertation. All data and responses you provide may form a part of my written thesis. Your creative work will be fully acknowledged and appropriately referenced as yours. Please read and sign the consent form below.

Once completed, I will provide a copy of the entire thesis for participants to read, should you wish, and you will be more than welcome to attend the culminating exhibition of my creative practice.

Many thanks in advance for your help and participation,

Dashamir Vaqari.

PhD Fine Art Research Consent Form

Name of researcher: Dashamir Vaqari.

Research title: Transnationalism and migration – concepts of home in post-Communist Albanian diasporas

I give the researcher my consent to use data obtained from interview with myself and to reproduce my creative works, and:

- I understand that my creative works may be reproduced in the written thesis and these will be fully acknowledged and referenced as my work;
- I understand that the information I give will be used for this research project only;
- I understand that my participation is voluntary;
- I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time.

Signed:

Date: October 10th 2018

Dear Colleague,

As you know, I am currently studying for a PhD in Fine Art at the University of Derby. Through my research I am investigating the concepts of home in post-Communist Albanian Diasporas. As I know you have also investigated the concept of home in your creative practice, I would like to interview you.

Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the research at any time. I will take your agreement to be interviewed as consent to use data obtained for my dissertation. All data and responses you provide may form a part of my written thesis. Your creative work will be fully acknowledged and appropriately referenced as yours. Please read and sign the consent form below.

Once completed, I will provide a copy of the entire thesis for participants to read, should you wish, and you will be more than welcome to attend the culminating exhibition of my creative practice.

Many thanks in advance for your help and participation,

Dashamir Vaqari.

PhD Fine Art Research Consent Form

Name of researcher: Dashamir Vaqari.

Research title: Transnationalism and migration – concepts of home in post-Communist Albanian diasporas

I give the researcher my consent to use data obtained from interview with myself and to reproduce my creative works, and:

- I understand that my creative works may be reproduced in the written thesis and these will be fully acknowledged and referenced as my work;
- I understand that the information I give will be used for this research project only;
- I understand that my participation is voluntary;
- I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time.

Signed:

Date: October 07ᵗʰ 2018

Dear Colleague,

As you know, I am currently studying for a PhD in Fine Art at the University of Derby. Through my research I am investigating the concepts of home in post-Communist Albanian Diasporas. As I know you have also investigated the concept of home in your creative practice, I would like to interview you.

Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the research at any time. I will take your agreement to be interviewed as consent to use data obtained for my dissertation. All data and responses you provide may form a part of my written thesis. Your creative work will be fully acknowledged and appropriately referenced as yours. Please read and sign the consent form below.

Once completed, I will provide a copy of the entire thesis for participants to read, should you wish, and you will be more than welcome to attend the culminating exhibition of my creative practice.

Many thanks in advance for your help and participation,

Dashamir Vaqari.

PhD Fine Art Research Consent Form

Name of researcher: Dashamir Vaqari.

Research title: Transnationalism and migration – concepts of home in post-Communist Albanian diasporas

I give the researcher my consent to use data obtained from interview with myself and to reproduce my creative works, and:

- I understand that my creative works may be reproduced in the written thesis and these will be fully acknowledged and referenced as my work;
- I understand that the information I give will be used for this research project only;
- I understand that my participation is voluntary;
- I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time.

Signed:

Date: October 11th 2018

Dear Colleague,

As you know, I am currently studying for a PhD in Fine Art at the University of Derby. Through my research I am investigating the concepts of home in post-Communist Albanian Diasporas. As I know you have also investigated the concept of home in your creative practice, I would like to interview you.

Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the research at any time. I will take your agreement to be interviewed as consent to use data obtained for my dissertation. All data and responses you provide may form a part of my written thesis. Your creative work will be fully acknowledged and appropriately referenced as yours. Please read and sign the consent form below.

Once completed, I will provide a copy of the entire thesis for participants to read, should you wish, and you will be more than welcome to attend the culminating exhibition of my creative practice.

Many thanks in advance for your help and participation,

Dashamir Vaqari.

PhD Fine Art Research Consent Form

Name of researcher: Dashamir Vaqari.

Research title: Transnationalism and migration – concepts of home in post-Communist Albanian diasporas

I give the researcher my consent to use data obtained from interview with myself and to reproduce my creative works, and:

- I understand that my creative works may be reproduced in the written thesis and these will be fully acknowledged and referenced as my work;
- I understand that the information I give will be used for this research project only;
- I understand that my participation is voluntary;
- I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time.

Signed:

Date: May 13th 2019

Dear Colleague,

As you know, I am currently studying for a PhD in Fine Art at the University of Derby. Through my research I am investigating the concepts of home in post-Communist Albanian Diasporas. As I know you have also investigated the concept of home in your creative practice, I would like to interview you.

Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the research at any time. I will take your agreement to be interviewed as consent to use data obtained for my dissertation. All data and responses you provide may form a part of my written thesis. Your creative work will be fully acknowledged and appropriately referenced as yours. Please read and sign the consent form below.

Once completed, I will provide a copy of the entire thesis for participants to read, should you wish, and you will be more than welcome to attend the culminating exhibition of my creative practice.

Many thanks in advance for your help and participation,

Dashamir Vaqari.

PhD Fine Art Research Consent Form

Name of researcher: Dashamir Vaqari.

Research title: Transnationalism and migration – concepts of home in post-Communist Albanian diasporas

I give the researcher my consent to use data obtained from interview with myself and to reproduce my creative works, and:

- I understand that my creative works may be reproduced in the written thesis and these will be fully acknowledged and referenced as my work;
- I understand that the information I give will be used for this research project only;
- I understand that my participation is voluntary;
- I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time.

Signed:

Date: October 04th 2018

Appendix 7 – Request for ethical approval

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Request for ethical approval for research undertaken by staff, post-graduate research and post-graduate professional students

Please submit your completed form to the chair of your college research ethics committee (CREC)

Your Name	Dashamir Vaqari
College	College of Art
College Research Ethics Committee	
Staff ID	
Student ID	100405140
Unimail address	d.vaqari@derby.ac.uk
Programme name / code	PhD Fine Art
Name of supervisor(s)	Prof Huw Davies, Dr Robert Burstow

Title of proposed research study

Transnationalism and migration – concepts of home in post-Communist Albanian diasporas

Background information

Has this research been funded by an external organisation (e.g. a research council or public sector body) or internally (such as the RLTF fund)? If yes, please provide details.	No
Have you submitted previous requests for ethical approval to the Committee that relate to this research project? If yes please provide details.	No
Are other research partners involved in the proposed research? If yes please provide details.	No

Signatures

The information supplied is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, accurate. I clearly understand my obligations and the rights of the participants. I agree to act at all times in accordance with University of Derby Policy and Code of Practice on Research Ethics:
http://www.derby.ac.uk/research/uod/ethics/

Signature of applicant	
Date of submission by applicant	16.03.2017
Signature of supervisor (if applicable)	
Date of signature by supervisor (if applicable)	

For Committee Use   Reference Number (Subject area initials/year/ID number)   ....

Date received   ....   Date considered   ....

Committee decision   ....   Signed   ....

Revised November 2013
Updated August 2015

1. What is the aim of your study? What are the objectives for your study?

The project aims to investigate, through practice-based research, the concept of home as a facet of identity after the collapse of communism in Albania and the resulting transformation of the definition, perceptions, memories, and experiences of home arising from the newfound transnationalism. The study will make particular reference to Germany and the UK where I have personal interest and experience of the situation. Therefore the following research questions will be addressed:

- What constitutes home in post-communist Albanian Diasporas in Germany and the UK? Is home linked to a particular place for transnational migrants? Do transnational migrants experience loss of home? Do they develop new homes? Do they develop multiple homes? Does an old home transfer to a new home?
- How can this be interpreted through and visually represented in a body of creative practice?

The objectives of the proposed investigation are:

1. To understand the importance of national identity and transnational symbols relating to the concept of home including images, myths, legends, attitudes, ideas, politics, feelings, emotions, people, and places.
2. To draw similarities or differences between the countries and cultures in question in relation to their role in understanding the concept of transnational home.
3. To find and understand past and future perspectives of this transnationalism.
4. To find ways of merging the home in the three nations for transnational migrants and represent these in a body of creative practice.
5. To understand how the process and form of creative practice influence answers to the research questions.

2. Explain the rationale for this study (refer to relevant research literature in your response).

'Transnationalism' is a relatively new term in the anthropological literature and is used to highlight the "connectivity between source and destination points" (Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004: 1177) as an intrinsic aspect of migration. However, the term is still controversial - various scholars have attempted to define the concept of 'transnationalism' (e.g. Portes et al, 1999), but as Waldinger and Fitzgerald (2004) point out, such definitions are often too simplistic. The concept of home as a facet of identity is just one aspect of transnationalism.

While transnational home is in itself a widely debated issue, and the concept of home has been investigated through a range of media, I am not aware of any research that allows a multi-faceted view of Albanian transnationalism, particularly relating to emigration to Germany and the UK, where most Albanian migration has taken place, and where immigration, including from Albania, has been and continues to be a hugely controversial topic, particularly in the current political situation.

Furthermore, Albania's situation following the fall of Communism is particularly noteworthy. During the communist regime, emigration from Albania had been extremely limited, and under the isolated regime Albanians were raised to believe themselves as "the navel of the world" (Lubonja 2000:15). The fall of Communism not only shattered these illusions, but also led to political instability across Albania, resulting in three major episodes of migration – the first being in 1991-1992, then the collapse of the pyramid bonds schemes in 1997, and thirdly following the arrival of over 1 million refugees from the Kosovo war in 1999 which caused emigration by Albanians (King and Vullnetari 2009). Despite this, research on Albanian transnationalism has been scarce.

Thirdly, the significance of art as a research method for this topic cannot be overlooked. The multi-faceted, emotional, and introspective nature of the topic and concepts means that art practice, more specifically painting, is particularly suited as a medium to explore these issues, whereby technical aspects such as shape, size, composition, and colour may be used and experimented with in order to reach an understanding of the concept of home.

3. Provide an outline of your study design and methods.

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The methodology proposed is to research the topic through a circular process of painting and critical self and/or external reflection, which will develop the project over the course of the study; as well as written documentation of the context in which the work is set to support its position.

The first stage of the methodology is to analyse and evaluate the knowledge in the field, be it literature or practice-based. Secondly, problemmatizing the material, through critique of current or past practice and knowledge followed by formulating research questions, theories, or developing a position from which investigation can begin. Thirdly, the creative stage involves all aspects of practice and the methodology to refine the idea, support the hypothesis, or respond to the research questions. This creative stage will acknowledge that knowledge and understanding continually change, methods are flexible, and outcomes are often unanticipated in visual arts research. Therefore, through the process of creative practice, all aspects and levels contributing to a work such as in painting composition, contrast, colour, and symbolism as well as physical aspects such as shape and size of the work will be experimented, changed, and improved.

Here, data will be drawn from a range of sources, including primarily:
- critical reflection on the painting;
- interviews with contemporary artists and scholars about primary sources and case studies;
- discourse with transnational migrants in the diasporas;
- transnationalism in the specific research context;

In addition, future considerations and perspectives will be considered.

Furthermore, the written thesis will include a range of background information including a review of Albanian transnationalism and transnationalist art in order to contextualize the works produced. At the end of the project, it will be possible to draw conclusions and answer the research questions.

4. If appropriate, please provide a detailed description of the study sample, covering selection, sample profile, recruitment and inclusion and exclusion criteria.

The sample for interview is divided into two groups. Firstly, a selection of 4 Albanian artists who have dealt with the topic of home to some extent in their creative works. They were selected on the basis of their understanding of the specific Albanian context, and that they have considered the concept of home in their creative work. They second group is a selection of Albanian artists who are themselves transnational migrants living and working outside of Albania. They were selected on the basis of their understanding of the Albanian context and due to the fact that they have experienced transnationalism, as well as consideration of the topic in their creative works.

5. Are payments or rewards/incentives going to be made to the participants?   No
If so, please give details.

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of DERBY

6. Please indicate how you intend to address each of the following ethical considerations in your study. If you consider that they do not relate to your study please say so.

Guidance to completing this section of the form is provided at the end of the document.

    a. **Consent** – participants will be required to sign a consent form (attached)

    b. **Deception** – Not relevant to the study

    c. **Debriefing** – Not relevant to the study

    d. **Withdrawal from the investigation** – Participants will be informed of their right to withdraw from the study in the information sheet and consent form (attached).

    e. **Confidentiality** – The Data Protection Act and the University's Good Scientific Practice will be fully complied with. Participants will receive an information sheet containing a fair practice statement informing them of will be used, who will have access to the information and how long the information will be kept for

    f. **Protection of participants** – Participants will be required to give their permission to be indentifies in the informed consent form. They will also be made aware that their work will be fully acknowledged and referenced as theirs.

    g. **Observation research** – Not relevant to the study

    h. **Giving advice** – Not relevant to the study

    i. **Research undertaken in public places** – Not relevant to the study

    j. **Data protection** – The Data Protection Act and the University's Good Scientific Practice will be fully complied with. Where used, particpants' creative work will be fully acknowledged and referenced.

    k. **Animal Rights** – Not relevant to the study

    l. **Environmental protection** – Not relevant to the study

Are there other ethical implications that are additional to this list? No

7. Have / do you intend to request ethical approval from any other body/organisation? No
    If 'Yes' – please give details

8. Do you intend to publish your research? Yes
    If 'Yes', what are your publication plans?
The creative works produced will be shown in a final exhibition.

9. Have you secured access and permissions to use any resources that you may require?
    (e.g. psychometric scales, equipment, software, laboratory space). Yes   If Yes, please provide details.
Access to studio space and interview locations is secured.

10. Have the activities associated with this research project been risk-assessed? Yes

Which of the following have you appended to this application?

❑ Focus group questions	❑ Psychometric scales
❑ Self-completion questionnaire	☑ Interview questions
❑ Other debriefing material	❑ Covering letter for participants
☑ Information sheet about your research study	☑ Informed consent forms for participants

PLEASE SUBMIT THIS APPLICATION WITH ALL APPROPRIATE DOCUMENTATION

Advice on completing the ethical considerations aspects of a programme of research

Consent
Informed consent must be obtained for all participants before they take part in your project. The form should clearly state what they will be doing, drawing attention to anything they could conceivably object to subsequently. It should be in language that the person signing it will understand. It should also state that they can withdraw from the study at any time and the measures you are taking to ensure the confidentiality of data. If children are recruited from schools you will require the permission, depending on the school, of the head teacher, and of parents. Children over 14 years should also sign an individual consent form themselves. If conducting research with children or vulnerable adults you will normally also require Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance. Research to be carried out in any institution (prison, hospital, etc.) will require permission from the appropriate authority.

Covert or Deceptive Research
Research involving any form of deception can be particularly problematical, and you should provide a full explanation of why a covert or deceptive approach is necessary, why there are no acceptable alternative approaches not involving deception, and the scientific justification for deception.

Debriefing
Debriefing is a process of reflection once the research intervention is complete, for example at the end of an interview session. How will participants be debriefed (written or spoken feedback)? If they will not be debriefed, give reasons. Please attach the written debrief or transcript for the oral debrief. This can be particularly important if covert or deceptive research methods are used.

Withdrawal from investigation
Participants should be told explicitly that they are free to leave the study at any time without jeopardy. It is important that you clarify exactly how and when this will be explained to participants. Participants also have the right to withdraw their data in retrospect, after you have received it. You will need to clarify how they will do this and at what point they will not be able to withdraw (i.e. after the data has been analysed and disseminated).

Protection of participants
Are the participants at risk of physical, psychological or emotional harm greater than encountered ordinary life? If yes, describe the nature of the risk and steps taken to minimise it.

Observational research
If observational research is to be conducted without prior consent, please describe the situations in which observations will take place and say how local cultural values and privacy of individuals and/or institutions will be taken into account.

Giving advice
Students should not put themselves in a position of authority from which to provide advice and should in all cases refer participants to suitably qualified and appropriate professionals.

Research in public places
You should pay particular attention to the implications of research undertaken in public places. The impact on the social environment will be a key issue. You must observe the laws of

Revised November 2013
Updated August 2015

Appendix 3 - Interview Questions

Interview questions

- Why do you treat these topics in your creativity and can you talk specifically about what has inspired you?
- What is the idea of this composition and what is the meaning of the colour used in this work?
- What exactly do these symbolize for you?
- Did you choose the subject for your work in collaboration with other artists for a common project, or is it your individual decision?
- Do you think you can have an impact in our society through your art?
- What do these creative works symbolize to you through their content?
- Is your work related to a research project, or is it connected with your memories, or could it be a future prediction?
- What inspired you to treat this topic of home?
- Why did you choose the technique used as the media for your body of work?
- Do you think that through his creative work the artist can explore and have an impact in society in the same way as a scholar?
- How is your creative work differentiated from other contemporary artists?
- Did your art change when you personally experienced transnationalism?
- Does your creative work focus on the historical perspective reflecting the loss of home or does it rather examine the question of what homeland can mean for you today?
- In your creative work, have you researched / do you research the concept of home as a facet of identity or as one aspect of Albanian transnationalism?

Appendix 8 – Ethical approval

Dashamir Vaqari

PhD student

College of Arts, Humanities and Education

University of Derby

cc: Prof Huw Davies, Robert Burstow, Helen Lord;

25th April 2017

Dear Dashamir,

Request for ethical approval of PhD research: Transnationalism and Migration

Thank you for submitting your request for ethical approval of your PhD research, entitled 'Transnationalism and Migration – Concepts of Home in post-Communist Albanian diasporas'.

The research has been re-approved by Chair's Action for the forthcoming year. If your research continues beyond that time please contact the committee secretary, Helen Lord, to request a further extension of the approval.

If any change to the research described in the application is necessary you are required to make a new submission to the Committee.

Many thanks.

Yours sincerely,

Rodger Brown

Acting Chair of the College of Arts Research Ethics Committee

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