INTRODUCTION

Kinship and Care across Kosovo's Borders

❧

THE STUDY

For decades, many families in Kosovo, especially in rural areas, regularly received remittances from immediate family members and relatives who had migrated abroad. These remittances were not just sign of strong ties with family members in the diaspora, they were also their prime source of social security and care. After the fall of the Iron Curtain, however, which was followed by a string of political and social conflicts, in which former socialist Yugoslavia had been violently dissolved, families in Kosovo faced tightened restrictions on mobility across EU borders, such as the need for a visa and limitations to Western European labour markets. But many fled to Western Europe nevertheless, not least because, in 1998, the ethnopolitical conflict in Kosovo escalated to war.

When NATO intervention ended the war in 1999, these restrictions on the mobility of citizens from Kosovo remained in place and were maintained even after the Kosovo government declared independence in 2008. This had severe consequences. While many migrants from abroad either returned to Kosovo or chose to bring over their spouses and children, remittances were at risk of drying up for residents living in Kosovo who did not have the option of sending family members abroad. Thus, the European Stability Initiative (Hockenoes 2006, 2010) warned that further steps to tighten the EU migration regime and limit mobility options for people in Kosovo wishing to emigrate to Western Europe would amount to cutting the 'lifeline' that transnational family relations provide and further exacerbate the poverty situation in the country.

This study undertakes a fine-grained analysis of the transnational family relations that link villagers in the rural region of Opoja in Southern Kosovo,

about 1,000 meters above sea level, to relatives in urban centres in West-
ern Europe and vice versa, to understand how family relations and care ar-
rangements in the family and among kin, both 'at home' and abroad, are
performed, managed, sustained as well as transformed across the Kosovo
borders. While labour migration to Western European countries, especially
to Germany, Switzerland and Austria, had been the source of family care and
social security in Kosovo over decades and establishes the basis of a 'culture
of migration', the study shows in which way care arrangements were affected
when increasingly family reunification and marriage migration became the
only available options for migration. About 70 per cent of all Kosovars who
migrated after the war in 1999 sought recourse to these options (Kosovo
Agency of Statistics 2014: 26).

By examining the continuing importance of migration in light of changing
migration trajectories and, in particular, the new importance of the family
within them, I explore the linkages among family and kin members dis-
persed between different countries and the continuities and changes that
occur within these networks, including in terms of family care. These con-
tinuities and changes will be read against the meaning of the Opoja region
as the locus of the family, and certain kinship patterns such as patrilocality,
patrilineal family organization and the cooperation among brothers, but
also emancipatory processes, which receive a new meaning in the translo-
cal field. At the centre of this study are the transformative family relations
within the translocal field that link Opoja to migration destinations, where
various gender and generational views are challenged and partly collide, and
which serve as the basis for changing care arrangements across state borders.

'Translocality' was first introduced as a conceptual framework by Arjun
Appadurai (1995), who defined it as a space of experience and agency cre-
ated through social relations among people residing at different locations
but who gravitate towards a specific place that they call home. For the pur-
poses of this study, that place is referred to as locality and is a prime point
of departure to understand translocal environs (see also Klute and Hahn
2007: 12). As such, locality is not synonymous with cultural rootedness, fix-
ity and sedentariness but signifies a fluid, evolving entity that remains open
to the outside world and is constantly reconstituted by multiple translocal,
border-spanning relations and transactions (see Peleikis 2003: 16; Leutloff-
Grandits and Pichler 2014). In this study, the term 'locality' refers to the re-
gion of Opoja as the place from where migrants originate and to which they
relate, even from a distance, and the significance of this locality is systemat-
ically examined in relation to family and care. In doing so, it ties in with sev-
eral studies that emphasize the importance that the locality 'back home' has
for migrants abroad. As demonstrated by Peggy Levitt (2001) in her seminal
book on transnational villagers, linking a village in the Dominican Republic

to migrant destinations in Boston; by Anja Peleikis (2003), linking a village in Lebanon to Côte d'Ivoire; and by Robert Pichler (2016) on the links between locality and migration in Northern Macedonia, migrants continue to exert influence on their home village even if they might have migrated decades ago.

With the focus on the translocal, the aim is to generate cross-cutting and multidimensional perspectives highlighting not only the significance of the European migration regimes and the state as a constitutive frame for border-spanning family solidarity but also the meaning of a rural locality in Kosovo as an important link between the diverse positionings villagers and migrants occupy (Anthias 2006). By tracing individual trajectories of family members in and from Opoja and their divergent social positionings and relating them to wider family dynamics in Kosovo's south and abroad, I present a more nuanced and in-depth understanding of the gendered and generational notions of family, family-provided care and family solidarity across borders. As such, this perspective also allows 'theorising from the South' (Comaroff and Claudio 2015), or also from the 'margins' of Europe (Römhild 2010), as Kosovo is often seen as an underdeveloped periphery of the European centre in relation to global – and more specifically European – processes and entanglements. This feeds into the West-centric and Eurocentric bias that views certain countries and populations as on the fringes of the EU – not just geographically but also culturally (Balibar 2004).

While from a hegemonic Western perspective Kosovo is often regarded as backward, as juxtaposed with the so-perceived modern and emancipated West, and this backwardness is precisely linked to the notion of the strong, patriarchal family structures of Kosovo-Albanians (for Poland, see Pine 2007), this study challenges this binary by showing that the investment in kinship relations and patrilocality is not just a recollection of traditional patriarchal practices. It is also a reaction to limited state support and meagre economic and social opportunities for citizens in Kosovo, which goes together with the precariousness of the relationship between citizen and state (Römhild 2010) as much as an answer to the exclusionary mechanisms against migrants in Western European states and a very modern phenomenon. Moreover, kinship practices have also diversified and transformed. Migrants and villagers invest in 'traditional' family unity along patrilocal kinship notions as much as in romantic and gender-equalitarian partnership relations and expressions of individuality. Within the translocal realm of Opoja, these investments enable a certain continuity of family relations and create notions of care that serve individual as well as collective goals and that renegotiate the boundaries between the two (Gardner and Osella 2003: ix). More broadly, various potential meanings and practices can be subsumed under the terms 'modernity' and 'tradition', which are often contradictory and ambiguous, and the

interrelations between the two terms are far from uniform (Appadurai 1995; Gardner and Osella 2003: xii). While it makes sense to use the term 'modernization' to describe actual processes of change that take place, like urbanization, changing employment forms, new technologies of communication and travel, 'modernity' and 'tradition' rather refer to 'socially located discourses which try to apprehend and direct such processes' and 'a set of imaginings and beliefs about the way life should be, as well as a host of associated practices' (Gardner and Osella 2003: xi). In Kosovo, being modern might mean leaving 'traditional' patriarchal family forms behind, but it can also emphasize the importance of patriarchal structures and family collectively – and as such an investment into what is broadly regarded as tradition (ibid.: xii). As family relations change in the face of new societal conditions and hardening border regimes, they can also become strained or even fragment. This can also open up gaps in family care.

The region of Opoja, which is my point of departure for this study, is located in the southern 'tail' of Kosovo. It borders the Republic of Northern Macedonia to the east and south, and Albania to the west, which was sealed off during socialism. In 2011, the region comprised of twenty-one villages, each with a population ranging from 300 to 3,000, mainly Albanian-speaking and of Muslim faith (UNDP Municipal report 2012: 26). Like Kosovo in general, this region is characterized by a young population, and as mentioned, its reliance on migration for family care continues even today. By taking the geographic and geopolitical 'margins' as the centre of my study, I account for the fact that many migrants who move from so-called 'third countries' to the EU originate from rural areas and seek to maintain and develop close links with their home regions. This local perspective, which is largely unknown in Western Europe and lacks scholarly attention (Glick-Schiller 2010), is necessarily expanded beyond the regional and national borders to include the views and realities of migrants from the region who live mainly in urban settings in different European states, such as Germany, Austria and Switzerland. More generally, the translocal approach highlights the subjectivities of the protagonists, their experiences and biographies as well as the cultural imaginaries and agency within these border-spanning family networks and their links to the region in Southern Kosovo and the co-creation of this locality.

My decision to study the Opoja region was not accidental. I had read the Ph.D. thesis of the American anthropologist Janet Reineck (1991), whose fieldwork in Opoja in the late 1980s focused on the links between family, gender and migration from the perspective of villagers. In her Ph.D. thesis, 'The Past as Refuge: Gender, Migration, and Ideology among the Kosova Albanians' (1991: 14–16 and 135–63), Janet Reineck argues that the labour migration of men resulted in the reinforcement of patriarchal family relations and values in Kosovar villages. Owing to long absences of the men,

the joint, patrilocally organized family households remained largely intact. Reineck (1991: 14) even argued that 'a reliance on out-migration brought about by Opoja's weak economy has had a profoundly negative impact [on] the accommodation of social change in the area' and led to a 'freezing' of patriarchal family relations. I was convinced that restudying the same locality nearly twenty-five years later enabled me to take a historically informed view that would allow me to unearth transformations in family relations. This perspective would not just help me to link these transformations to the major political and societal changes of the times but also help explain the historical rootedness of present-day migrations and family-based care and to grasp the changes that had occurred along gendered and generational lines.

Following up on the impact of migration on family relations would entail giving voice to women and men from various generations living in different localities – in Opoja and abroad – by scrutinizing their practices and their relations to other family members. Here, the relations between partners and siblings as well as between the generations are equally important to explore. Individual biographies, and the family's impact on them, connect with the structure of social organization and the materialization of kinship and status in this translocal realm – such as the organization of households, the building of houses and the celebrating of weddings – as well as the selection of marriage partners and the organization of marital life of cross-border couples. These realms are central to family and kinship in Opoja in a translocal perspective and give a nuanced insight into very transformative – and yet stable – family networks, which serve as a basis for care and social security for villagers as well as migrants.

I argue that the combination of globalization and migration, as well as the profound neoliberal transformations in Kosovo but also in Western European countries, have affected families both at home and abroad, leading to a diversification of family roles and models – from patriarchal to more emancipated, and from more collectively oriented to individualized forms. At the same time, through rituals and the building of houses, family members symbolically re-establish patrilocal kinship ties across borders, creating security in a world they perceive as increasingly – or at least partially – insecure. Translocal family networks, which partly hark back to the 1960s when the first villagers left for Western European states as labour migrants, in Albanian called *gurbetgji*, create the semblance of constancy of family relations and patrilocal notions of family and gender, and with this established forms of family-based care.

At the same time, however, translocal family networks involve complex renegotiations of family and gender roles and with this question established forms of family-based care and create new ones (Dahinden 2005a, 2005b; Fouron and Glick-Schiller 2010). The reliance on family networks for care

correlates with the limited access to legal immigration, which has increasingly given rise to undocumented or irregular migration. Family members largely finance these travels and – once the EU border is crossed successfully – provide other forms of support, such as access to employment networks in the receiving country (Moulier-Boutang 2002). But legal pathways to immigration are also increasingly provided by the family: since the new millennium, 'marriage migration' and more broadly 'family reunification' is one of the few remaining possibilities for legal migration into the EU. This is the case despite family migration being highly politicized and increasingly subject to legal restrictions, not least because 'cross-border marriages' are associated with negative and gendered stereotypes in dominant discourses within the immigration countries (Block and Bonjour 2013; Block 2014; Pellander 2015). For many migrants, however, 'cross-border marriages' do not just follow or re-establish patriarchal family relations. They also transform family networks and the care practices within them, and they fulfil personal dreams of building a better life abroad.

In the following, I will briefly look at the enormous societal and geopolitical transformations that unfolded in post-socialist, post-war Kosovo as well as within immigration countries in order to provide a nuanced understanding of the broader context of translocal family relations and family-based care arrangements across time. I will then outline the scholarship in the relevant theoretical fields – namely, kinship, family and care in a translocal framework – before I shortly summarize the content of the chapters and outline the methods used.

MIGRATION, FAMILY AND CARE WITHIN NATIONAL AND GLOBAL DYNAMICS

Statistical data underscore Kosovo's reliance on migration: Kosovo happens to be among Europe's poorest countries, with a poverty rate of 18 per cent in 2017 (Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Kosovo 2019: 113). In rural areas, the percentage of the population living in poverty is higher than in urban areas, and in 2015 the portion of the population living in extreme poverty in the countryside was nearly double compared to urban areas (6.2 per cent compared to 3.6 per cent, see Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Kosovo 2019: 113). This goes hand in hand with a high average unemployment rate of 29.5 per cent in 2018, which is especially severe in the 15–24 age group, in which 55.4 per cent are unemployed (Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Kosovo 2019: 100–1). At the same time, Kosovo also has the youngest population of Europe,[1] with 34 per cent under the age of twenty according to the census in 2011 (UNDP Municipal Devel-

opment Plan 2012: 28–31). For women of working age, the employment number was only 18.4 per cent in 2018 (Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Kosovo 2019: 98). Furthermore, only 29.5 per cent of employed persons have permanent employment contracts, while 70.5 per cent have a temporary contract.[2]

The high youth unemployment number is a particularly burning issue and a reason why many young people aim to migrate abroad. More generally, migration ranges high in Kosovo, which is also reflected in statistical data. According to Kosovo's complete population census, in 2011, 21.4 per cent of those born in Kosovo live abroad, which means that of the total population of 1.78 million, approximately 380,000 migrated and live abroad. If children born abroad with at least one parent of Kosovan origin and naturalized citizens of Kosovo were to be included, the 2011 median estimate of persons of Kosovan origin living abroad would rise to around 700,000 (Kosovo Agency of Statistics 2012: 75). According to the Kosovo Agency of Statistics (2014: 21), approximately 180,000 Kosovars born in Kosovo, or 35 per cent of all Kosovar emigrants, migrated to Germany. Following, at some distance, are Switzerland, with approximately 118,000 or 22.94 per cent of all Kosovar emigrants, and Austria (in the range of 50–60,000), Italy (approx. 37,000) and Sweden (25,000). By including those born outside Kosovo, with at least one parent born in Kosovo, the estimated number of Kosovo Albanians is double or triple as high in Germany (350–500,000 persons) and also considerably higher in Switzerland (200,000) (Behar and Wählisch 2012: 14) and other immigration countries.[3] Correlating with the enormous size of the migrant population relative to the total population in Kosovo, migrants' family remittances between 2010–2019 are estimated to account for about 17 per cent of GDP, which is nearly double the international donor assistance (approximately 10 per cent of GDP) and is mainly used for general consumption (UNDP 2010; Behar and Wählisch 2012: 16). This shows not only the tight relations between migrants and their families in Kosovo, but, given the dire situation in Kosovo, especially in rural Kosovo, also the high level of dependence of Kosovo families on regular remittances (Korovilas 2002). Any changes in the EU border regime, as well as a further decline of cross-border family cooperation and solidarity, could further exacerbate the situation.

In Opoja and more broadly in Kosovo, migration to Western Europe and dependence on family remittances are not recent phenomena (Mustafa et al. 2007). As early as in the 1960s, when socialist Yugoslavia signed formal labour migration treaties with various Western European states, many residents of Kosovo worked temporarily abroad to provide for their families. In Opoja, almost all of them were men who left behind their spouses and children in their parental households, which included the father as nominal

head, the mother, unmarried siblings and often also married brothers and their respective families.

In the 1990s, when the Serbian-dominated political leadership, military and police forces suppressed Albanian inhabitants, who constituted the numerical majority within Kosovo, women and children also started to migrate – albeit in smaller numbers. The ethnopolitical conflict later evolved into a fully-fledged war that led to the expulsion of large parts of the Albanian population from Kosovo to neighbouring Macedonia (FYROM) and Albania, where they found shelter, and from where they were partly temporarily relocated to Germany. Others fled individually to Western European states – often already before the full outbreak of war in 1998. Due to the NATO intervention in the war in March 1999, however, the Serbian regime was terminated within weeks, and the war was ended in June 1999. This was enthusiastically celebrated by Kosovo-Albanians, who hoped for a better future. Serbs and other minorities, on the other hand, were now partly persecuted and began to leave Kosovo in massive numbers.[4]

Given this historical trajectory, during my fieldwork in 2011 to 2013, villagers from Opoja, not unlike vast segments of the Albanian population in Kosovo, saw their life course distinctly divided into the time before and after the war (*para luftës, mas luftës*), between 'now' and 'then'. However, the end of the war did not solve care-related problems, and the post-war reality fell short of the hopes and expectations of many Kosovo-Albanians for economic betterment. While Kosovo had 'always' lagged behind other republics of socialist Yugoslavia in terms of economic development, the post-socialist transformations at the end of war did not necessarily bring about the anticipated improvements.[5] As Stef Jansen (2015: 40–44) observed in post-Dayton Bosnia-Herzegovina, many inhabitants of Kosovo perceived the reforms in their own society as too slow-moving, or as not necessarily moving in the right direction. In fact, for more than a decade after the war, Kosovo continued to suffer from the breakdown of the socialist economy and the dissolution of socialist Yugoslavia, the collapse of the domestic market and a near cessation of production and manufacturing activities, as well as high levels of corruption and generally a weak rule of law. This changed only slowly with the proclamation of an independent Kosovo state in 2008, which received full recognition as a sovereign state by only 115 out of 193 countries worldwide, and by 24 of the 27 EU member countries until 2019.

The Kosovo state has remained a fairly weak provider of social security. After decades of socialism and following the end of war along ethnic lines, Kosovo's government introduced a liberal social welfare system (Sauer 2002; Cocozelli 2009; Latifi 2016), which was marked by nationalism. This means that while so-called families of martyrs and victims of the 'war of liberation' in 1999 have privileged access to social security and pensions (Ströhle 2013),

basic pension payments are only 75 euros a month (Kosovo Agency of Statistics 2016b). Apart from this basic support, there are market-based pension payments following a (neo-)liberal logic, which, however, reach only a small segment of the population (Sauer 2002). Generally, social security provisions for most citizens are meagre, with a minimal amount counting as unemployment insurance and social assistance to the poor (Lafiti 2015: 200–17). Given that public health care is also largely missing or inadequately covered, most people are forced to dip into private funds to pay for medical treatment (ibid.: 204–6). This situation has strengthened the need for family-based support, and especially from family members living abroad, who can provide remittances, which again spurs the need for migration (Schwandner-Sievers 2022).[6]

Simultaneously, until Germany introduced the Western Balkans regulation in 2016, the general prospects for emigration continued to deteriorate. The residents of Kosovo, who once benefited from socialist Yugoslavia's bloc-free status and could enter Western European states visa-free (Jansen 2009), lost this privilege in the early 1990s. While Bulgaria and Romania, as well as Slovenia and Croatia, which were a part of Yugoslavia until 1990, became new EU Member states in the new millennium and received expanded mobility rights, Kosovo along with Serbia, Northern Macedonia (then called FYROM), Bosnia-Herzegovina and Albania remained outside the EU, which severely limited their travel privileges. In 2010, Kosovo citizens could travel visa-free only to Albania, Montenegro, Macedonia, Turkey and Haiti (Kacarska 2012: 15). In 2011, when citizens of Serbia as well as other Western Balkan states were finally allowed visa-free entry to EU countries, Kosovo was left out. Not recognized by Serbia and single EU member states like France, it was literally 'cut off' from the Western world. As observed by Stef Jansen (2009) for post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo's citizens perceived this downgrading by the European Union as a setback, a falling behind in the spatial-temporal 'ranking' of the various societies in the hierarchy of progress and modernization.

At the time of my fieldwork in 2011–2013, many Opoja villagers were forced to rely on family members abroad for their social security and, in the absence of other options, saw family and marriage migration to a Western European country as the most viable long-term prospect (Kosovo Agency of Statistics 2014: 26). Marriage migration will thus be presented in detail in this book, not least because it changed family, gender and generational relations but also served family care as well as the creation of individual futures.

Family-based care within Kosovo was put under increasing pressure owing to the neoliberal transformation towards individualism and competition that developed rapidly after the war – which was also taking place in other post-socialist countries – as well as to neoliberal trends worldwide. Some of

my interlocutors, for example, were critical of the fact that, after the war, the family structures and the underlying household economy, and with them relations between the generations and the sexes, had enormously diversified. One elderly woman remarked on the diversity within Kosovo's society: 'Since the end of the war, not one hair is like the other any more.' As in other post-socialist countries that underwent neoliberal reforms, the economic reconstructions and societal transformations heightened competition and gave rise to a growing demand for personal accountability and responsibility (Ther 2014; for Poland, see Buchowski 2006). Affirming changes in family conceptions, one young university-educated man explained that lack of time and 'independent lifestyles' had led to a so-called ice age in family relations, where relatives 'no longer care for one another' but rather concentrate on their individual well-being and future. However, family relations were often revitalized by migrants through their visits to their home regions despite prevailing discourses indicating that care and 'age-old' gestures of respect within the family and towards the elderly were on the decline (Leutloff-Grandits 2010). One villager said: 'Migrants keep us together, because as soon as they come, we pay each other visits and celebrate jointly.'

It can be assumed that the interests of migrants from rural parts of Kosovo to remain in touch with those 'at home' and to uphold a connection with their places of origin also depend on their social positionings and prospects in Western European states (Gardner and Osella 2003). Until the 1980s, the translocal household was firmly based in Kosovo, with most labour migrants having no intention of remaining abroad, and they were also the sole mobile members in the family. From the 1990s onwards, with the escalating ethno-political conflict in Kosovo, many Kosovo migrants tried to settle abroad with their families but faced various internal boundaries within the receiving society.

When refugees began arriving in Western European states with the outbreak of war in the various successor countries of former Yugoslavia, immigration was increasingly viewed as a burden on public welfare and a threat to a perceived homogeneity in Western European states. Migrants in general experienced higher levels of hostility and multiple forms of 'othering' and exclusion (Blumi 2003; Schierup et al. 2006: 1–20; Kaschuba 2008; Green 2009; Schwell 2010). Western 'othering' discourses (e.g. Strasser 2008; Scheibelhofer 2011) also ascribed certain cultural markers to refugees arriving from the so-perceived 'periphery' or the 'margins' of Europe (Dahinden 2009). Within these discourses, refugees and migrants from outside the EU were often regarded as having a 'patriarchal' and 'backward' culture, which they 'imported' into the receiving countries in the European Union,[7] and as such as threatening the stability of 'modern' and 'emancipated' families and nations in the European Union. Especially migrants labelled as 'Muslim',

as well as those labelled as 'marriage migrants', and thus the large majority of Kosovar migrants,[8] were seen as a menace to a politically and culturally 'advanced' sphere. These notions were used to justify tighter entry hurdles for migrants from non-Western states and restrictions to the rights of the migrants in the European Union (Block and Bonjour 2013; Pellander 2015; Bonjour and Block 2016). These re-bordering tendencies thus do not only frame the life worlds of people in the so-perceived 'margins of Europe'; they also frame the life worlds of those who have moved from the 'peripheries' to the so-perceived European 'centre', as migrants meet inner boundaries, even when they have established themselves abroad successfully (Blumi 2003).

In analysing translocal family relations and family-based care across borders, it is therefore crucial to link these relations to larger trends within Europe and beyond. This book aims to critically address 'family culture' and 'family-based care' beyond the binaries of 'Western' and 'Eastern', 'Albanian' and 'German', 'Muslim' and 'Christian', 'patriarchal' and 'emancipated', or 'modern' and 'traditional', as well as 'mobility' and 'rootedness' by giving attention to different subject positionings and entanglements between local structures, values and practices within a system of cross-border negotiation. More specifically, the European border and migration regime and the dynamics in contemporary Europe have contributed to family-based migration and family-based care networks. This may lead to a creative recourse to the 'traditional' patriarchal family culture prevalent in rural Kosovo. However, with the need for family, family members do not necessarily maintain patriarchal family structures. Rather, they also transform them into more emancipated family roles.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMES

Towards a Translocal Approach to Family and Kinship

In this study, the terms 'kinship' and 'family' are partly used interchangeably. With this, I take an emic standpoint, which blurs the line between first-grade relatives, considered family in Western notions, and more distant family members regarded as kin. In the Albanian language, male cousins may also be referred to as brothers (*vëllezërit*) and female ones as sisters (*motrat*), especially when raised in a common household, and all relatives are considered 'family' in narrow and broader terms (*familja e ngushtë – familja e madhe*) (see also Backer 2003 [1979]: 193). Following Albanian conceptions of kinship, I also differentiate between patrilocal, descent-based or so-perceived consanguinal kin (*fis* and *farefis*) and affinal kin (*mik*, plural *miqësi*) (gained through marriage), which is also expressed in different terms for maternal and paternal relatives – for example, for the siblings of father and mother.

The study of kinship was at the very heart of social anthropology in the early days of the discipline, but it was then dismissed, as kinship studies were largely based on evolutionist ideas about the hierarchical ordering of family and kinship forms along a West-centric developmental taxonomy of 'modernity' and 'backwardness'. In this reading, kinship, understood as based on so-perceived universal categories of blood and descent, was relevant as a unit of social organization only in 'pre-modern', 'non-state' and implicitly non-Western societies (Kuper 1988), with the justification that modern societies are defined by state structures and civil society and not by kinship, which remained influential only in its reduced version of the (nuclear) family.

With rising criticism of this evolutionist, West-centric and binary notion of kinship and family, kinship studies were largely abandoned in social anthropology from the Second World War onwards. An exception were some British and American sociologists and social anthropologists who explored the meaning of kinship in Europe in the 1950s and who moved away from the idea that only 'pre-modern', non-European societies have 'kinship' and not European societies. Notable is the innovative study of Elisabeth Bott (1971 [1957]) on urban kinship networks in London, following the work of Max Gluckman (1950). Still, this was not the start of a new research paradigm, and kinship studies remained a marginalized field of social anthropological research. Critics of kinship studies, most prominently the American anthropologist David M. Schneider (1980 [1968], 1984), furthermore questioned the universality of blood and descent as main markers of kinship.

In contrast to the marginalization of kinship studies in social anthropology, historians further explored kinship and family formation and distinguished between kinship and family models according to geographical areas and political organization. They placed Eastern and Southeastern Europe – where Kosovo is located – in a 'transitional zone' between Western and non-Western societies (Hajnal 1965; Mitterauer 1980).

Since the early 1990s, historians and ethnologists, especially from Southeastern Europe, have criticized the binaries that these studies produced and the implicit insistence on the 'backwardness' of Southeastern Europe, calling for a more reflexive and inclusive perspective on the region that includes an analysis of power relations and a critical examination of conceptual frameworks (see Čapo Žmegač 1996; Todorova 1997, 2003; see also L. Wolff 1995).

The family historian Karl Kaser (1992, 1995, 2000 and 2008), who undertook extensive historical-anthropological research in Southeastern Europe, systematically elaborated the distinct characteristics of family organization in Southeastern European countries and their entanglements with power relations. Karl Kaser argued that family and household formation in many (rural and mountainous) regions of 'the Balkans', including Kosovo, is his-

torically rooted in customary laws, called *kanun* in Albanian, prevalent during the century-long Ottoman rule within the region. While the Ottoman rule focused on tax collections and forced labour and rarely interfered in family affairs, the *kanun* regulated family and community life. The most influential *kanun*, which Albanians still refer to today, is the *kanun* of Lekë Dukagjini, who lived in the mountainous region of Northern Albania in the fifteenth century.

The rules laid out in the *kanun* and passed down orally for centuries by family and village elders formed the foundation of patriarchal family relationships in which the power of women was severely limited and their positions were seen as serving and re-creating the male- dominated family (Basha et al. 2001; Voell 2004). Across ethnicities and religious affiliations, these customary laws were based on patrilinearity, the notion that men descended from a common (genealogical) ancestor and accordingly women who married in could not pass on kinship. Customary laws also regulated patri- and fratrilocality – that is, the cohabitation of a father with several sons and their families in a joint household, also referred to as the 'joint family' (*familja e bashkuar*) or the 'large house' in Kosovo (*shtëpia e madhe*), or only 'the house' (*shtëpia*). Once the joint households became too complex, brothers customarily founded a new household in close proximity, which built the foundation of patri- and fratrilocally organized *mahallas* (neighbourhoods) (Reineck 1991: 46). In general, social positions were assigned not only by gender (male over female) but also by generation and age, with elders having more power and commanding more respect. The 'Balkan family', to use the term coined by Kal Kaser, was thus fundamentally patriarchally organized (Kaser 1995, 2000; King and Vullnetari 2011).

Studies on the historical pattern of the 'Western' family system, on the other hand, link it to state involvement, also in jurisdictional matters, characterizing it as offering a higher scope of individualization, alluding especially to the importance of individual property rights as the basis of economic progress and 'modernization'. Historians explain the ongoing dissolution of patriarchal family structures within Southeastern Europe and their adjustment to the Western family model, which started with the end of the Ottoman rule within the region, with the increasing integration of the region into the world economy and the rise of modern nation states, and more generally with the attempts to catch up with Western modernization (Kaser 1995, 2000). A certain tendency of historical research to rely on modernization theories in kinship studies can therefore not be overlooked.

Different from the larger trends in social anthropology, in the socioanthropological research in socialist Yugoslavia, family and kinship studies remained influential into the 1980s and provided the conceptual frame for an in-depth analysis of society in the context of modernization and histori-

cal changes. The American social anthropologists Joel Halpern (1967 [1956], 1968) and Eugene Hammel (1972, 1984), who highlighted the uneven transformations in family relations and household formation in the context of urbanization and industrialization from the 1950s to 1970s, showed, for example, that young villagers established a neolocal nuclear household in the town while still cooperating and associating with the patrilocal household in the village. Apart from these social anthropologists who came from Western countries to socialist Yugoslavia, various ethnologists and sociologists from Yugoslavia also studied the continuity and transformation of the patrilocal, complex – or joint – family structures and households under socialism. Among them, Kadri Halimi (1994) and Mark Krasniqi (1960, 1975, 1979)[9] as well as Gjergi Rrapi (2003) explored the economic basis of complex households and the position of single members within them, as well as the role of religion and family values in several regions of Kosovo in the 1980s. Gjergi Rrapi (2003) argued that the 'Albanian joint family' had already been partly transformed into more modern (and less complex) family forms in the course of urbanization and industrialization.

Two studies based on long-term fieldwork within a village offer a remarkable in-depth analysis of family and kinship in Kosovo and are of particular value to this study. The first was conducted by Berit Backer (2003 [1979]), a Norwegian social anthropologist, who studied family and kinship in the village setting of Isniq in the western part of Kosovo in the 1970s. While arguing that the complex household structures based on the notion of common male descent were under severe pressure owing to greater dependence on wage work, the spread of girls' education and growing emancipation of women as well as the decline of agriculture, she also directed her attention to maternal kinship and stressed the role of female agency within the kinship framework, especially in the creation of exogamous marriage alliances (Backer 2003 [1979]: 195 ff.). As such, she followed the French, post-structuralist kinship and family studies led by Claude Lévi-Strauss (1969 [1949], 2004), and later Martine Segalen (2003), which did not limit kinship to consanguinity but also included affinal ties and alliances and integrated their impact on the social, political and religious life. The abovementioned Ph.D. thesis by Janet Reineck (1991) on the links between kinship, gender relations and male labour migration in the region of Opoja in the late 1980s is the most important basis of this study. It advanced the argument that male labour migration had prevented social change 'back home' and led to the freezing of patriarchal relations.

In recent times the study of kinship and family relations of Kosovo Albanians has again become an important field of exploration. The very instructive study of Lumnije Kadriu (2017) concentrates on first-generation migrants from Kosovo who spend their family vacation in Kosovo and partly

also at Albania's seaside, and their ways of linking their lives to their home-land. The dissertations of Tahir Latifi (2015) and Eli Krasniqi (2017), who conducted research at the same time as me under a joint research grant from the Austrian Science Fund and with whom I had many collaborations and lively discussions, also provide historically informed insights into family life, social security and social change in the Dukagjin region and the Opoja region. Last but not least, the research of Robert Pichler (2016) on Albanian translocal ethnic and family networks between Northern Macedonia and Western Europe emphasizes the importance of the home locality in trans-national fields and the historically evolved social conditions in which the locality is embedded.

While these studies provide an important backdrop for my analysis of family forms and care among family members living in Opoja and various Western European states, my research is also informed by the 'new kinship studies' (Schweitzer 2000; Schnegg et al. 2010: 10; Alber, Coe and Thelen 2013; Drotbohm and Alber 2015) that have emerged in response to critiques of Western-centred anthropological conceptions of kinship. According to the 'new kinship studies', family and kinship are not given relationships but relationships constituted, produced or affirmed through active social rela-tions and subjective interpretations of interactions, especially those that in-volve caring practices such as feeding, nurturing or co-habiting or acting as an economic unit (Carsten 1995, 2000; see also Weismantel 1995).

This, however, does not mean a discounting of the differentiation be-tween so-perceived consanguineal and affinal relations as an important emic differentiation in Albanian kinship. The work of the Norwegian social an-thropologist Signe Howell (2006: 9), who distinguishes between 'nature, nurture, and law' as notions through which kin relations are created, is foun-dational to this study. She understands nature as biological, genetic or gene-alogical relations – that is, the sharing of genes as a basis of 'blood relations' (consanguinity) and descent, while nurture refers to 'kinning' – that is, care and support involving sharing of food, experiences and palpable attention. Law, on the other hand, is the (formal, nation state or international) recog-nition of relatedness on bonds created through marriage.

This book studies the emic meanings of the so-called patrilineal descent group of agnatic or so-perceived consanguineal kin (*fis*) (see Backer 2003 [1979]: 143) – which is regarded as based on 'blood relations' (*gjak*) among the male members of the family – as well as the meaning of matrilineal and affinal relations (*mik*, *miq*). The book aims to explore the normative no-tions of kinship that may differentiate between genders and, in particular, between matrilineal and patrilineal kinship, as well as the – sometimes di-vergent – practices of care within such family networks that are rooted in a specific locality in rural Kosovo but also extend across borders (see also

Leutloff-Grandits and Pina Cabral 2012). By outlining such family and kinship practices in a translocal, cross-border realm, I highlight the perspectives of both villagers and migrants from a gendered and generational perspective and their entanglement with the political, socio-economic and cultural contexts. I want to furthermore relate the different notions of family and kin to – emic as well as etic – conceptions of 'modernity' and 'tradition'.

To that end, I propose an entangled perspective on family and kinship that takes into account different scales – not only local, regional and state but also translocal and transnational. Rather than taking kinship relations for granted or glossing over them, I undertake a nuanced analysis of family and kinship relations that traces both patriarchal relations and the changing nature of family roles by relating them not only to tradition and culture but also to the positioning of family members within the current social environs that reach beyond state borders. Such an approach allows the blurring of the binarity of the categories of 'patriarchal' and 'emancipated', which are often linked to imaginations of 'tradition' and 'modernity', located at different geographical and temporal poles. I show that migrants and villagers from different places invest in patrilocal kinship relations not least because it creates notions of home and security in an increasingly insecure world but also integrates emancipated relations into this form. They simultaneously invest in what they perceive as 'tradition' and 'modernity' in order to secure their livelihoods.

Towards a Translocal Approach to Care

For the conceptualization of family-provided care in the context of this study, I refer to recent studies that emphasize that family care is based on personal relationships involving emotions and concrete care practices within the family and the household (see Keebet and Franz von Benda-Beckmann 1994; Thelen 2014: 23; Drotbohm 2014: 184). Instead of operating within a narrow concept of care that defines it as hands-on and mainly directed at children and the elderly, I refer to a broad concept of care that includes efforts to provide food and shelter, health, education, employment, or even finding a spouse or the opportunity to migrate, as well as material and financial transfers during the life course and through inheritance from one generation to another.

More generally, family care, as understood in this study, includes all forms of care by family members for the well-being and prospects of other family members, as well as for the well-being, continuity and unity of the family as a whole. This wide notion of care is more in line with what my interlocutors consider important in order to achieve social security for themselves and their families. The family care practices described in this study are furthermore not limited to parents and children but can also take place among

siblings and other relatives, and thus relate to the emic concept of family. Nevertheless, they are often gendered and based on a general, time-delayed reciprocity that spans generations. Moreover, my study goes beyond the instrumental and material provision of family or kinship care and also highlights the emotional and moral dimensions of care, in terms of the quality of relationships and the fulfilment of social or familial expectations (Keebet and Franz von Benda-Beckmann 1994; see also Baldassar 2007a: 276). In this context, particular attention should be paid to the processual understanding of care as the production, reproduction and dissolution of meaningful relationships. The latter also highlights the conflictive potential of family care, which can unfold as soon as expectations are not met and as soon as care gaps evolve, which can lead to family members distancing themselves from one another.

While in Western societies the state is often seen as the main provider of social security, relying on welfare policies such as housing assistance, health care and social assistance for the elderly and children, the poor, and the unemployed, several scholars have emphasized the role of the family and family care in the provision of social security and care. Keebet and Franz von Benda-Beckmann's (1994) conceptualization of social security, for example, focuses on the various institutions that provide social security, particularly 'the state' and 'the family', and the modalities of social security provision within these institutions.[10] They stress that the *actual social relationships* – formal, informal or virtual – between social security recipients and providers matter. Others also emphasize that the state and the family are interrelated and can complement each other in the provision of social security, creating a particular mix or bricolage (Kohli 1999; Phillimore et al. 2016). Tatjana Thelen (2014: 245–47) elaborates in her study on caregiving the complex interrelations between the so-called 'private' practices of care and the 'public' conditions. Following this approach, family caregiving in the present study is therefore not only examined in terms of how it contributes to the social security of a family, but also how it is embedded in the social environment.

Furthermore, I also relate family care to the concept of 'solidarity' to highlight normative dimensions of care provisions among people who define themselves as belonging together for various reasons, and who are willing to prioritize collective interests and support the needs of others in the group without expecting quid pro quo, but with the expectation of being supported if the situation was reversed (Hondrich and Koch-Arzberger 1992: 14). However, the basis of such solidarity is debated. Emile Durkheim (1977 [1893]) ascribed kinship-based solidarity to 'traditional', 'non-modern', 'non-state', 'segmentary societies' and conceived of it as being rooted in the collective consciousness of its members, and in strong social control that would 'force' its members to commit to certain (often hierarchi-

cal) roles and thus a 'mechanical' response, leaving little space for individualist decisions or identities. Durkheim's 'organic solidarity', on the other hand, is based on rather individualistic groups and 'modern', highly diversified, industrialized and individualized societies. Despite possible differences in the life worlds and strained kinship relations, Durkheim assumes that strong, shared moral values underpin the distribution and assumption of roles, while at the same time being also effective only under particular circumstances.

Sociologists Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens and Scott Lash (Beck et al. 1996) have coined the term 'reflexive modernization', moving beyond a taxonomy based on the interrelationships between forms of solidarity and the level of modernization achieved by society. They argue that contemporary societies are characterized by a co-existence of 'old' and 'new' forms of social organization and solidarity that may be rooted in both mechanical and organic forms, which may converge and/or exist alongside one other as complex assemblages (Ong 2006). I find this conceptualization of reflexive modernization helpful in relation to translocal family caregiving because it emphasizes that modernization occurs in different contexts and relates to both local conditions and global processes. Following this line of conceptualization, family care within modern societies is not seen as a contradictory. At the same time, it stresses the selectivity of family care relations based on non-traditional forms of family and kin solidarity, which do not necessarily exclude self-interest or self-care and the realization of individual goals but can be harmonized with them. As requests for solidarity are diverse and unpredictable, and (at least subjectively) the energy and motivation to act is limited, people have to decide where and how to show solidarity (e.g. Hondrich and Koch-Arzberger 1992: 25).

The interdisciplinary research project 'Kinship and Social Security in Europe' (KASS) represents a recent comparative, historical and socio-anthropological study on the notion of social security and the interrelatedness of its main providers, the state and kinship networks, in eight European countries (Grandits 2010; Heady 2010a, 2010b; Heady and Schweitzer 2010; Heady and Kohli 2010). Against the 'evolutionist' thesis that views 'kin care' as 'non-modern' and 'backward', linked to 'non-Western' societies and weak states, and opposed to forms of care and social security provided by the state, the project showed that throughout Europe – and despite the very diverse welfare state models (see Esping-Andersen 1990) and kin models – state and family/kinship were not competing social security providers where relatives withdrew or limited care provision when the state assumed care responsibilities but that they supplemented and supported each other (Segalen 2010).

Within the comparative framework of the KASS research, in which I was personally involved as a lead researcher for the field contexts in Croatia, it

became clear that family and kin care ranged from daily childcare, wide-spread in Croatia (Leutloff-Grandits, Birt and Rubić 2010; Leutloff-Grandits 2012; Rubić and Leutloff-Grandits 2015) and Italy (Ghezzi 2010), to crisis intervention and to the ritualization of joint holidays in a 'family house' at the countryside (more common in Sweden) (Gaunt and Marks 2010; see also Heady and Schweitzer 2010). In fact, family and kinship were re-created and transformed palpably by everyday or ritualized activities and performances, material manifestations, symbols and, last but not least, care. With state-provided social security, family and kin care was partly even strengthened (Kohli 1999). It is, however, questionable whether the reverse argument can also be derived from this, namely that the lack of state-provided social security also weakens kin care, and what role migration plays here. In reference to post-socialist Albania, Ermina Danaj (2014: 117) has pointed to the flexibility of family-based care, which for many was the main source of social security in a collapsing state. But as not all members are treated equally within a family, this also led to an unequal distribution of support – and also to deficits.

In the discourses and practices of my interlocutors in the Opoja region, the Kosovo state remained largely absent as a social security provider, with the family as the main provider and, within the family, migration across state borders became an important strategy of social security. That is why the main focus in this study is on cross-border family relations and their impact on care and social security, but it still explores how family care relates to the states in question. For considering translocal family and kin care between rural Kosovo and migration destinations in the post-industrial, globalized world, I move beyond notions of 'mechanical mechanisms' based on strict kinship norms by linking them to notions of modernity and agency, and to contexts of limited state social security and persistent migration in times of tightening border regimes and xenophobia.

Towards an Approach to Translocal Family Care

Sociologist Deborah Fahy Bryceson and the social anthropologist Ulla Vuorela (2002) undertook a more systematic study of the family in so-called transnational, border-crossing social fields. They stress that caring is the essence of transnational families, as these families 'live some or most of the time separated from each other, yet hold together and create something that can be seen as a feeling of collective welfare and unity, namely "familyhood", even across national borders' (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002: 3). Without care practices, they will cease to exist, as neither spatial closeness nor perceived 'blood ties' automatically create social relatedness (Drotbohm 2009: 133, 147; 2014: 185–86). And yet, the balance within a transnational family, as

Bryceson and Vuorela (2002: 7) so vividly characterize, is hard to achieve: 'Like other families, transnational families have to mediate inequality amongst its members. Within transnational families, differences in access to mobility, resource, various types of capital and lifestyle emerge in striking ways.' As Carling (2008) has stressed, the logics and effects of transnational caring relations may be based on asymmetries in various fields, such as practices, information and imagination, and which enable, but also question, transnational kinship relations. Financial support in transnational family networks may, for example, be rather one-sided, provided by migrants to relatives at home in the form of remittances. Furthermore, its contribution to the reduction of poverty in home communities or to the development of local economies has been evaluated both positively and negatively. The logics and effects of translocal caring relations are thus often far from clear.

Various social scientists researching transnational families (e.g. Fog Olwig 2007; Drotbohm 2014) have argued that transnational family solidarity is related to restrictive immigration policies of a nation state. Tighter border regimes have had an impact on family relations. The family network spanning across borders has become a predominant solidarity structure on which migrants rely and which at the same time promotes translocal family relations.

The diverse legal positions that migrants hold in immigration countries, or what Anthias (2006) and Mezzadra and Neilson (2013) call 'differential exclusion' and 'differential inclusion' of migrants within receiving societies 'along the lines of gender, ethnicity, class, age and so on' (Anthias 2006: 22), impact family relations and family-based care – not only among those family members 'back home', who have not migrated (yet), but also among migrants. While families are reconstituted through migration and translocal care relations, migration is also channelled and sustained through translocal family structures. Under the umbrella of mobility, migrants may, for example, maintain close contacts with their family members, and thus their home region, as they return to the same locality recurrently to foster and maintain family relations.

In her work on Cape Verdean family networks, Heike Drotbohm (2014) looks at the interplay between border-crossing families and family-based immigration politics. She shows that residence rights or citizenship is a resource in transnational family networks, in that it enables individuals to enter Western labour markets via family reunification (including marriage) or even adoption. At the same time, it strengthens border-crossing support networks and, to that extent, possibly also emotional ties. She argues that the normative categories of administrative decisions on migration have an impact on the social practices within families. In this study, I stress the dif-

ferent legal and social positionings migrants hold in their countries of immigration and ask how this affects practices of translocal care across borders. Especially in a translocal context, family is an institution that links its members not only across state borders but also across legal and social positionings. The family may serve to balance out inequalities among its members and to empower them in the face of restrictive immigration policies.

In my analysis, I go beyond the differential legal and social positionings of family members and emphasize the importance of locality within transnational kinship and family relations. As already highlighted by Doreen Massey (1991: 28), the local also retains its importance as a place that is 'constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus'. As Nina Glick Schiller and Ayşe Çağlar (2009; Çağlar 2013a, 2013b) have pointed out in relation to migrant incorporation in receiving societies, it is important to bring different scales into the analysis. In addition to the sending and receiving countries being scales of analysis, the place from which migrants origin and the place where they have settled also play a role. Indeed, life in a metropolis may be very different from life in a village or in a small or medium-sized town. In regard to Kosovo-Albanians, Janine Dahinden (2010) has argued that Kosovo-Albanians in Switzerland show high levels of physical mobility, as they move back and forth across state borders. At the same time, they stay connected to their 'home' locality in Kosovo, and they do so mainly via family networks. In relation to migrants from Croatia in Germany, Jasna Čapo Žmegač (2009: 267) has highlighted the 'bi-locality' or even 'bi-focality' of migrants, in that

> they live in one place and look what is going on in the other, exchanging one for the other for periods of time, striving for betterment in one so that it can have effect on the other. . . . Moving, going back and forth, living in and commuting between two and more places in two and more states appears to be the central theme of the existence of migrant families whose members are divided across borders.

Many migrants create a seemingly seamless connection with family members who reside in their home village, to the extent that the boundaries are blurred, and home localities come to represent an extension of the self. Thus, instead of losing its significance or even disappearing, local connections may be deepened, widened and globalized, with the meaning of locality stretching beyond the bounds of its physical borders. However, that is not a one-way street. Not only migrants but also those who live in the village actively re-envision the meaning of a home locality and what it means to globalize it – not least through social media and virtual communication, which are fashioning the power of social imagination (Appadurai 1996). That means that people everywhere live in a complex and multilayered locality, within which

different spaces of experience and expectations coexist and the relations between these imagined and experienced spaces are renegotiated.

In this study of translocal family care, the region of Opoja in Southern Kosovo provides a common frame of reference to which migrants and villagers 'back home' relate. In translocal family networks composed of migrants and their relatives in the home region of Opoja, the modalities of 'globalization of the local' are central. The specific translocal relationships affirm belonging to a common place and family, thus inserting Opoja into the globalization processes.

These relationships are traced in terms of support received or provided, visits made and received, house building activities, and the location of – translocal – household constellations, wedding ceremonies and other family celebrations. It emerges that the Opoja region in Southern Kosovo is a place where multiple kinship relations cluster, where kinship is localized in the form of households, houses, neighbourhoods and wedding celebrations, and where translocal kinship relations serve as a form of care – both for individuals and for the collective.

Next to the translocal perspective, this study also includes a temporal perspective. It accounts not only for historical changes on a macro- and meso-level but also for changes within inter- and intragenerational as well as gendered roles within the family and within life courses. As shown by Loretta Baldassar (2007a) in relation to Italian migrants in Australia, the different times of arrival within the receiving society influence migrant perspectives and attitudes with respect to families. Furthermore, the time of migration may also differ in regard to the life stage. Persons who migrated as adults, who are commonly referred to as 'first-generation migrants', and those who are born in the receiving country or arrived as children, commonly referred to as 'second-generation migrants' (or as 'one-and-a-half-generation migrants', depending on age at arrival), regard the challenges of 'integration'[11] in different ways (Al-Ali 2002: 92; Vathi 2015), and each generation may also relate differently to their home communities and their relatives at home (see also Bielenin-Lenczowska 2014a).

Time also plays a role on another level. For all migrants, relations with those 'at home' may change during their life course, as they are not just bound to past experiences, but also to future plans and personal needs as well as political, economic and social circumstances that may change. In this context, the increasing feminization of migration from Kosovo to Western Europe cannot be ignored. Different from studies that focus on a specific 'generation' of migrants, this study offers a multipositional and diachronic view of translocal family and kin networks that span generations and state borders in order to trace kinship and family forms and new care demands that have emerged, not least through cross-border marriages, and which link

back to a specific locality in Kosovo. As I argue in this book, there are shifts in gender and generational relations and forms of family-based care, as well as new challenges and sometimes gaps in care.

Kinship practices and kinship care are highly dynamic and reconfiguring, even if on the surface they seem predictably rooted in patriarchal traditions or in conformity with images culturally fed to us. The formation of translocal family networks demonstrates the importance of locality while being embedded in, but also exposed to, larger geopolitical trends and the spread of a neoliberal consumer culture across state borders.

OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS AND METHODS

The first chapter describes Opoja as a translocal region that has developed into a unique locality in a country with minimal state social security and increasing migration of villagers to Western European countries. The diverse ties that villagers have maintained with family members in these Western European countries, as well as progressive modernization and globalization, have led to a mixture of old and new concepts of life – with all their ambivalent internal dynamics. In addition to the diversification of gender and family roles, in which patriarchal roles coexist with increasingly more emancipated ones, it leads to an even greater dependence on, but also desire for, migration.

The second chapter highlights the different migratory paths that Opoja villagers have taken to EU countries since the 1990s, relating to labour migration, flight or family reunification, and the diversity of migrants' legal positioning abroad, from full citizenship to undocumented status. This shows that the category of 'Kosovar Albanian migrants' does not represent a unified collective. At the same time, migrants have used family ties to assert themselves in response to ever-tightening legal and social conditions. Recourse to the family partially mitigates differences between family members across geographic and social spaces, but family-based migration also brings with it a set of peculiarities and problems between family members that develop along gender and generational lines.

Chapter 3 focuses on the translocal household and analyses how gendered and generational positions within such households across borders affect care relationships between migrants and their relatives in rural Kosovo. Despite the persistence of patriarchal norms of care, care relations between migrants and their relatives in the village have diversified. This is due in no small part to the fact that the legal rights and socio-economic positions of migrants abroad are not homogeneous, and in addition more women have migrated. Even if it is difficult to meet the norms of care under these circum-

stances and gaps open up, as in the case of care for the elderly, for example, it is not possible to speak of an absence of care relationships. Rather, established care practices are being challenged and other forms of care relationships are being created in which individual family members – and especially females – are taking on new roles.

Chapter 4 explores the symbolic and emotional meanings of migrants' house building activities in Opoja and other social and material investments migrants make in rural Kosovo to strengthen ties with relatives and within the family and to create a proxy presence in the local village community. This is especially true for male migrants. Such investments are signs of belonging and tradition, of care for the village and family, especially if they are realized along patrilocal norms. At the same time, they symbolize the status of migrants and the desire to bring modernity to the village. However, the investments in the village also highlight gender and social differentiations as well as the stratification of the village community and are therefore not free of ambivalences. This chapter analyses different positions of family members on these investments, pointing to antagonisms within family and gender and generational relations.

Chapter 5 addresses the issue of spousal choice in translocal family networks and discusses two interrelated areas: the importance of 'family-framed' marriages in relation to 'individually framed' marriages, on the one hand, and the practice of cross-border marriages between migrants and partners from Southern Kosovo who then migrate abroad. Young people who want to leave their village to build a brighter future see this possibility in a cross-border marriage. Migrants may choose a spouse 'from home' to improve their position and the degree of freedom they enjoy in society and/or to meet perceived cultural and family norms while reshaping them. For both villagers and migrants, relatives are a rich, more secure and familiar source for finding the right mate across geographic distances, but this does not impede free choice.

Chapter 6 focuses on weddings in the Opoja region as a culmination of community and family life, in which migrants take a prominent role – as guests but also as family who finance the wedding festivities, or as bride or groom. As this chapter shows, wedding celebrations often serve contradictory patterns of social organization: wedding celebrations strengthen kinship ties across state borders, not least because the traditional rituals also help to reconstitute patrilineal kinship and restore patriarchal gender relations. At the same time, migrants and villagers are introducing 'Western' notions of marriage that emphasize romantic love relationships between the couple and greater gender equality, reshaping gender and family relations in ways that offer greater opportunities for emancipation and individualization. Costly wedding celebrations also reinforce existing social stratification

within the village and translocal network and increase pressure on young male villagers to move abroad and take up wage employment as soon as possible – in part hindering further education and the social advancement that education affords.

Chapter 7 deals with the realities of cross-border marriages. It looks at gendered family and partnership constellations and critically addresses mainstream Western discourses that disdainfully categorize such marriages as 'ethnic', 'patriarchal' and partly even 'forced' as a way to legitimize restrictions on marriage migration. The chapter traces such marriages from the moment the couples have to overcome the administrative hurdles of marriage migration to the practices of married life in receiving societies. It shows that cross-border marriages often cannot rely on traditional gender and family roles. Apart from the risks they entail, which especially burden the migrating partner – male as well as female – they may bring about upward social mobility and allow more emancipated gender roles – often with the help of family members. The book ends with further reflections and perspectives on translocality, kinship and care relations along gendered and generational lines and in regard to current transformations of the EU border regime.

Studying translocal care practices in kin and family networks between the Opoja region and various migration locations entailed tracking mobilities, interactions and exchanges (Clifford 1997: 23–27). Starting in Opoja in the south of Kosovo, participant observation of the everyday life, as well as narrative, family-centred and biographical interviews offered rich perspectives on values and habits and the interrelations of life worlds in their more global environments, as well as on the strategies and capacity of my interlocutors to actively shape their own life and future despite structural constraints. The contextualization of these different perspectives within a translocal social field, where different (nation) states build an important but not the sole frame, was a paramount goal of this translocal ethnography (Lauser 2005).

My study draws on the stories of generations of villagers and migrants from the Opoja region who have faced different circumstances in Kosovo as well as diverse migration regimes. These women and men of different ages and family stages, hailing from diverse social milieus, live in or are linked to the Opoja region because they have family and kin members there. During participant observation and in my interviews, I took into account their gendered and social positions both within the economic and legal spheres and within the family setup and tried to analyse them in respect to their intersectional entanglements (Anthias 2006; Yuval-Davis 2006; Clarke 2011; Bürkner 2012). Instead of regarding gender as an essentialist category, I took account of the everyday practices and discourses of migrants and villagers and linked them to the widely accepted gender norms and state policies that shape gender roles within translocal family networks (Kligman and Gal 2000). This en-

abled me to take care of power relations that co-constitute gender relations (Butler 1991; Yuval-Davis 2006; Scheibelhofer 2011: 154–55).

My fieldwork in the Opoja region began in early March 2011, at that time together with Eli Krasniqi, one of the two Ph.D. students of our project, who took a deeper historical perspective on transformations within the region from the 1950s onwards, and who later moved to another village in the Opoja region. The decision to undertake seven consecutive fieldwork stays in Kosovo between 2011 and 2013 (each lasting about three to four weeks) allowed me to observe and grasp changes within the family and society as they were happening. Young people, whom I first met as teens, were getting engaged or married, others were moving abroad or returning, children were being born, houses built, and households were being divided.

My fieldwork was assisted by Blerina Leka, a student of philosophy from the University of Prishtina, who provided me with interpretive support, as my Albanian was quite basic when I arrived. During our stays in Opoja, Blerina and I were taken in by a family that was an extended household (*shtëpia e madhe*, *familja e bashkuar*) comprised of a middle-aged couple with two married sons and a couple of grandchildren as well as an unmarried son abroad. Thanks to their openness and hospitality, we not only joined them during their meals but were also introduced to their network of relatives. They invited us to join them for various visits to their relatives living in the immediate neighbourhood or in neighbouring villages, and even generously allowed us to accompany them to numerous communal activities and weddings, including the farewell parties (*kënagjegji*) before marriage of the girls of the *mahalla* (neighbourhood), which consisted mainly of agnatically related families. The wedding celebrations were an occasion to meet many family members and villagers (again) and understand the structure and meaning of family and kinship as well as marriage connections.

Furthermore, I made acquaintance with several migrants during their visit to the village, and in between my field visits to Opoja, I accepted invitations to their homes in Germany and in Austria. Getting acquainted with the everyday realities of migrants from Opoja in Western European countries, and looking at village life 'back home' from their point of view, helped me to contextualize their actions, attitudes and discursive positionings towards their relatives in Opoja and relate these views and practices to their legal status and social milieus as well as family relations. By following a multisited ethnographic approach (Marcus 1998) and documenting the views of villagers living in Opoja, as well as of family members living abroad, I could crosscut perspectives about the translocal family relations. This opened up new insights into the positionings of different family members and into the social grid of family relations, and it also unfolded new ambiguities and complexi-

ties. In my analysis, I contextualize these emic perspectives within the larger societal dynamics and the power relations they entail.

Notwithstanding, there are also limitations to my study. Focussing my fieldwork on the Opoja region, the migrants I included in my study were those who regularly came home, while it was difficult to establish contact with those who had disrupted connections to their relatives in Kosovo. Their voices are therefore largely absent in this study. Because I already knew many members of the family in Opoja, conversations with migrants, furthermore, easily focused on their relations with those in Opoja as well as other family members, while relations to non-family members, especially in the migration context, could not be addressed as easily, even if I also asked in our conversations about non-kin-related persons who were important to them and had helped them.

Writing an ethnography, furthermore, means homogenizing different voices not least through the body of theory I used, which set the analytical frame and which I outlined earlier (see Clifford and Marcus 1986; Abu-Lughod 1990; Rosaldo 1993). A reflexive approach also entails reflecting on my own roles and positionings in the fieldwork at the intersections of gender, age, education, location and nationality. Rather than stable, these positionings were relational and shifting – as they depended on my interlocutors' roles and positions, too – and created various forms of possibilities and limitations. Given the patriarchal norms widespread in the Opoja region, according to which the house is not only synonymous with the patrilineal family but also a protective space for women from which non-kin-related men are largely kept away, being a woman in the field enabled me – most importantly – to be taken into a family.

The hospitality and openness of my host family allowed me to develop a certain 'cultural intimacy', to use a term coined by Herzfeld (1997), which is paramount to the study of family care. At the same time, it is clear that being hosted by a family also sheds special light on their perspective, as well as their social and family network. Given the gendered nature of the social space in rural Kosovo, conversations with men beyond the close family circle often took place in the local coffee houses – where women were largely absent – and assumed a more formal character; talks with women took place in their homes and in a more informal manner. Blerina's company also contributed to the establishing of deeper relations with women of various ages, as we had complementary roles with respect to our interlocutors.

As a scientist from Germany, I was often also met with a certain degree of familiarity, as Germany is the number one migration destination for villagers migrating to Western Europe, and a considerable number of the older, male villagers had already been migrants in Germany before returning to

Opoja. Simultaneously, my interlocutors were often especially open to ex-plaining certain practices to me, as they assumed that I was not familiar with the local customs. Blerina, on the other hand, was one of 'them', as she was a Kosovo-Albanian woman to whom they did not have to explain the basics of social conduct and who acted as a bridge of sorts between the families and individuals in Opoja and me, although she was not from the same region and Catholic. Due to her young age, younger, unmarried women tended to see Blerina as their acquaintance and shared with us their views on entering marriage and other life plans. The fact that we both were guests of a well-respected family in Opoja, however, was the main basis for the openness of villagers towards us, as their status and the historically rooted trust relations they had in Opoja was extended to us during the fieldwork.

When my husband, Hannes, and our children visited at an early stage of my fieldwork, I also became aware that my ability to shift gendered bound-aries while talking to my interlocutors was limited. I realized this soon after their arrival, when the men in the family and Hannes found themselves in deep discussions about politics and other topics that had been only margin-ally addressed when talking to me. In fact, I had already wondered about the lack of political conversations in this region, and I was reminded again that the information I received (and did not receive) was also bound to my gen-dered positioning. However, their visit also enhanced the prospects of my being accepted there, as it created relations not only between individuals but also between families. It became clear to me that my position as a 'Western scholar' interested in their region had granted me a special social status, but I was, somehow, also perceived as a satellite from nowhere. That it became graspable that I also had family roles as a wife and mother, and thus seemed more 'down to earth' and accessible to the people there, improved my stand-ing within the local parameters. One of the host family's relatives said he could see I had achieved a lot in my life, that I was an esteemed scholar and that he wished me a lot of success in my career but that the biggest success of my life was my family.

Next to my gendered and professional position in the village, my social position was also framed by the power hierarchies of the nation states and the supranational entity of the EU, of which Kosovo was not – and is still not – a member. This became clear to me when I visited a female relative of my host family in Opoja, who, during a light-hearted conversation, un-expectedly asked me how it was possible that I visited them and they could not visit me, thus highlighting the fact that they as Kosovo Albanian citizens could not cross EU borders without a visa, which was difficult to get, while my possibilities to travel across EU borders were much more privileged. She then continued by stating that 'we' (likely meaning me and my co-nationals and EU fellows) depended on 'their' presence in Europe and not the other

way around. With this, she had managed to overcome her possible degradation as a 'second-class European', particularly under the European immigration laws, reversing the hierarchy and empowering herself. Within my fieldwork, I became aware of the various power asymmetries and their situational reversals between migrants and those in Opoja, as well as in gender and family relations.

   In my case, I very much relied on the hospitality of my hosts and the families in Opoja to conduct my research and also for my personal well-being, and in our conversations, my interlocutors easily took it upon themselves to introduce me to their family and kin networks in the Opoja region – while it was not so easy to reciprocate this hospitality appropriately. Following social science research ethics, and owing to my position as a guest of my host family and the deep respect and gratitude I have for this family and all my interlocutors who shaped this research, my thinking and the manuscript, it is paramount that this book explains the – diverse – positionings in translocal family networks while not having any negative effects on my interlocutors. In order to protect the identities of the villagers and migrants, names, including place names in the destination countries, as well as various other personal details of the persons mentioned in the book have been omitted or changed.

NOTES

1. The average age was 30.2 years in 2012, and 28 per cent of the total population was younger than 15 years, and half of the population was younger than 28.2 years (Kosovo Agency of Statistics 2013: 26; Latifi 2015: 199).
2. See for a good analysis of the labour market also Latifi (2016).
3. However, as Kosovo is internationally not fully recognized as an independent state, it is often not listed as a country of origin in the statistics but subsumed under Serbia. Similar difficulties appear when stating Albanian nationality as migrant origin, as Albanian nationality is not restricted to Kosovo but also includes migrants from Albania, Montenegro and Macedonia.
4. Due to the boycott of many Serbs and other minorities of the Kosovo Census of 2011, the exact numbers of non-Albanian inhabitants cannot be given in detail (UNDP 2012: 135).
5. As all this happened despite the strong international engagement (in 2008, UNMIK was replaced by the European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX)), Kosovo's citizens started to regard the international presence as a reason for Kosovo's slow progress in many realms. The negative attitude towards the international engagement with Kosovo finds expression in the political movement Vetëvendosje (self-determination), which came into being in 2005. Led by Albin Kurti, a former student leader, it aimed to end the international mission and to achieve independence for Kosovo. In 2021, Vetëvendosje received most of the votes and thus established

the government, and Albin Kurti became prime minister. See Calic (2008) for more information about the precarious legal, political and social situation in Kosovo after the war in 1999. See also Roth (2008) for a reflection on the critical attitudes towards the engagement of the European Union in Southeastern Europe.

6. See Danaj (2014) for similar observations in neighbouring Albania in the 1990s, where the situation was even more problematic.

7. See Green (2005) for an in-depth discussion on the relational meaning of 'margins' of Europe and its link to notions of movement.

8. According to the 2011 census, 95.6 per cent of Kosovo's population identifies as Muslim, 2.2 per cent as Roman Catholic, and 1.4 per cent as Serbian Orthodox. Census categories for 'Other', 'None' or 'No Response' each constitute less than 1 per cent. See United States Department of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (2012).

9. See also Popovci (1973) and Sylejmani (1985); for newer studies on the Albanian family see also Xhemaj (2005).

10. More generally, providers of social security may be manifold and pluri-agent and may be private, state, or religious institutions (Thelen, Leutloff-Grandits and Peleikis 2009) as well as friends and colleagues.

11. The concept of integration is highly controversial in social science and public discourses. In the latter, the onus of integration is often solely on the migrants, in terms of language, economy and education, as well as in taking up 'sociocultural' values and practices of the majority society, and finally in cultivating feelings of belonging. This process could last decades or even generations. However, such a one-dimensional concept of integration has long been criticized in scholarly discussion. Instead, scholars call for the interaction and participation of migrants within various sub-groups within the majority society and not at the expense of their own identity, and thus they regard integration as an achievement that must also be accomplished on the part of society (Pries 2015: 27; Bommes 2002).