

CHAPTER

2

MIGRANT TRAJECTORIES

*Shifting Relations of Translocal Families*



INTRODUCTION

Migration routes and mobility patterns are part of almost every family history in Kosovo. They have also generated rich translocal family networks. As if to reiterate that point, Fatos, aged seventy, who migrated to Austria for work in the 1970s and 1980s while his parents, wife and three children stayed home, introduced me to his extended family through the migration histories of each family member. His children left Kosovo with the intensification of the ethnopolitical conflict in the early 1990s. As at that point, it was no longer possible to enter the EU legally without a visa, as Fatos had done, one son used the family reunification programme, while another took advantage of the support of his extended family to cross the borders without documentation before he applied for asylum in the receiving country. His daughter married an Opoja migrant and moved to Austria through marriage migration. His family history shows that the timing of migration is quintessential, as the border regimes and immigration policies determine the modality of migration. While migration continued to be an important source of livelihood in the 1990s and in the new millennium, migration modalities and experiences have changed enormously. This has given rise to differences between the generations. But, at the same time, these differences in experiences and modalities are, in part, also bridged within the family framework. To that extent, the family emerges as an institution that paves

the way for migration. More generally, migration trajectories in Kosovo are influenced by two factors: the sociopolitical and legal framework and family and kinship relations.

Instead of regarding migrants as a single, homogeneous group based on nationality and ethnicity (for a critical approach, see Glick Schiller 2014: 157–59; Römhild 2014: 259; Vertovec 2015), this chapter sheds light on the interplay between the migration management of Western European states and the border-crossing family network in the construction, regulation and management of different migrant trajectories. It also points to diverse intrafamilial dynamics that unfold in biographical narrations, especially in relation to gendered and generational positionings at different locations and across nation state borders, which also impact on each other – thus also creating translocal positionings (Anthias 2006). Stories of migrants who traversed established migration trajectories and assumed the mantle of responsibility to perform ‘expected’ family roles contrast with those that pursued novel trajectories and family roles abroad.

Among studies highlighting the interlinkages between law and family relations on migrant trajectories, Heike Drotbohm’s (2014) work frames the trajectories of migrants from Cape Verde as a response to immigration policies, which impact the migrants’ potential to enter the workforce and secure residency rights or more generally their capacity to ‘do things, get things, be socially mobile’ (see also Frings et al. 2014; Vertovec 2015). Drotbohm also shows that the migration project is a quintessentially family project that enhances the family’s social security. Who counts as family and can access the right to family migration, however, depends not only on the intrafamilial dynamics and emic notions of family, but often on the legal framing. In Western states, family migration is largely limited to spouses and underage children, and thus generally to the nuclear family. Still, as shown by Karolina Bielenin-Lenczowska (2014b: 517) in her research on migrants from Macedonia in Italy, families can establish a strong border-crossing network, with individual family members occupying different positions of influence in different social contexts and nation states.

‘Family’ is expected to show ‘border-crossing solidarity’ to newly arriving migrants in the form of financial, logistical, physical or informational assistance. Such translocal solidarity mitigates the effects of the pronounced territorialized economic inequalities between the Global North and the Global South and improves the positions of individual migrants in the migration destinations (Moulier-Boutang 2002). Cross-border family networks often counteract the inadequacies of the prevalent migratory legal framework through new forms and systems of family cooperation and communication beyond the migration regime of the single nation states or supranational institutions like the European Union. Family thus contributes to what Manuela

Bojadzijeve and Serhat Karakayali (Bojadzijeve and Karakayali 2006; Bojadzijeve 2006) have called the 'autonomy of migration'. However, migration is not an autonomous process affecting merely the individual but one that relates to the global framework of power relations and reshapes the processes of place making, state making and region making, as Ayşe Çağlar and Nina Glick Schiller (2011a: 149) have pointed out. It is therefore important to contextualize migrant agency and vulnerabilities within global power relations and to point to individual positions of migrants in different localities (ibid.: 150).

While the support family members offer within the migration project is often indispensable, the role of the family is double-edged. The support extended by the family network is based on gender and generational norms and concerns, as well as the community and family histories, beyond the availability of economic and social resources. As various social scientists have shown (e.g. Herzowitz-Emden 2000; Six-Hohenbalken 2009; Fouron and Glick Schiller 2010), family may not only smoothen the migration project but may also pose a barrier by creating pressures and divisions along gender and generational lines.

Building on this literature, this chapter aims at contextualizing migrants' agency and vulnerability within the global framework of power relations to underscore migrants' individual positions and agency in different localities. More specifically, this chapter analyses migrant agency along gendered and generational positionings in translocal family networks. It highlights the importance of family support in the migration project but also the ambivalences that arise from it. In order to discern such differentiations, interrelations, dependencies and agencies, the chapter adopts a diachronic perspective on such positionings in cross-border family networks. It highlights three time frames in which migration options shifted significantly, and with that also the migration channels and family relations (Mustafa et al. 2007). It starts with shifts in labour migration from the 1960s to the 1990s before addressing other migrant trajectories, like family reunification and asylum applications in the 1990s. It then outlines migrant trajectories that have gained in significance in the new millennium, when flight migration ceased to be an option, especially return migration or more permanent resettlement, as well as undocumented and seasonal migration.

## FROM LABOUR MIGRATION TO FAMILY REUNIFICATION AND FLIGHT MIGRATION

In Kosovo, the 'first phase' of international migration started in the 1960s, when socialist Yugoslavia signed labour recruitment agreements with Austria (in 1961, 1964 and 1966), Sweden (1966) and Germany (1968), and with

other Western European countries (Bauböck and Perchinig 2006), seeking industrial labour to support accelerated industrialization. This was seen as a temporary win-win situation for both the sending and receiving countries, as accelerated rates of industrialization in Western European states after the Second World War generated a greater need for industrial labour force, while Yugoslavia – despite mounting industrialization – was struggling with high unemployment rates (Sundhaussen 2012; Grandits 2015). At that time, international labour migration became the central feature of the Yugoslav economy and household (Brunnbauer 2009; Novinščak 2009: 122; Ivanović 2012).

The global economic crisis led to the termination of recruitment agreements for migrants in 1973, but this did not prevent the continuing surge of migrants from Kosovo, where economic development was even slower than in other parts of Yugoslavia, and where a high fertility rate and a subsequent demographic rise of the (mainly Albanian) population led to a spike in unemployment numbers from 12 per cent in 1960 to 20 per cent in 1970, and finally to 27 per cent in 1987 (Reineck 1991: 120). Based on the geopolitical status of socialist Yugoslavia as a block-free country that Western European states and the US were courting, migrants from socialist Yugoslavia could use their Yugoslav ‘red passport’ to travel visa-free to Western Europe (Janzen 2009: 821–23). They found predominantly blue-collar jobs with the support of relatives and acquaintances abroad, who actively provided contacts to prospective employees (Blumi 2003: 960).

In contrast to labour migrants from Turkey or migrants from other constituent republics of socialist Yugoslavia, such as Croatia or Serbia, who either returned to their home country or brought their families into the receiving country from the 1970s onwards (Bauböck and Perchinig 2006), many Kosovo-Albanian labour migrants took a different route. Even after living for decades in Western European countries they remained an active part of a household in a village in Kosovo, normally comprised of their parents and their spouse and children and partly also their brothers’ families (see Reineck 1991; Aarburg and Gretler 2008; Pichler 2016). Without family dependents in the receiving countries at that time, migrants from Kosovo – then an autonomous province within the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) – were often labelled as ‘Yugoslavs’ in the country of immigration, and the fact that many spoke Albanian, not a Slavic language, went largely unnoticed (Blumi 2003: 952; Aarburg and Gretler 2008: 2). This was fostered by the lack of policies and measures to socially integrate the so-called labour migrants (and subsequently their family members) or even grant them permanent residency, let alone citizenship. Instead, the receiving countries assumed that labour migration was temporary. This contributed to the emergence of a new social underclass in Western (European) market

economies, composed of migrants without citizenship, whose prospects for work and social mobility were and are limited (Faist 1993; Szelenyi 2001; Glick Schiller 2014), and the emergence of migrant communities in the receiving countries, whose members largely socialized among themselves, often along village and regional identities based on their places of origin (Blumi 2003: 953).

The fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 brought about the violent dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) and transformed the world map. This also had serious implications for Kosovo and ushered in the 'second phase' of international migration from Kosovo. The empowerment of Slobodan Milošević in Serbia in the second half of the 1980s as the central figure of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) from 1987 to 2000 spurred conflicts between the Serbian minority and the Albanian majority, which made up 77.4 per cent of Kosovo's population according to the 1981 census (see Republic of Kosovo 2015). In addition, changed demographics and a dramatic decline of the Serbian population exacerbated the conflicts. According to the 1948 census, Serbs made up 27.5 per cent of the Kosovo population, while in 1981, the Serbian population stood at 13.2 per cent. This decline was attributed to a higher Albanian birth rate, as well as the Serbs' emigration to Serbia (Schmitt 2008: 300), which was again politically interpreted. From 1989 onwards, the Serbian government annulled Kosovo's autonomous status and fully (re)integrated it into the Republic of Serbia within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In its aftermath, Albanians were systematically excluded from state institutions and public welfare services (including health care and education) (Vickers 1998: 262–63). As a result, increasingly young men left Kosovo to escape a variety of circumstances: persecution and draft into the Serbian-dominated army, discrimination, unemployment – then up to 70 per cent among Albanians – and the generally declining living standards (*ibid.*: 272–78; Clewing 2006: 125). The 'second phase' of international migration from Kosovo thus also greatly impacted family relations as family members in Kosovo became increasingly dependent on relatives abroad and migrants left Kosovo primarily for security reasons, in addition to intensifying economic reasons.

The ethno-political conflict in Kosovo received relatively little attention in Western European media for a long time, mainly because of its nonviolent character. In contrast, the bloody wars in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in the first half of the 1990s, which followed the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1990, garnered much more international attention. Because of these wars, and more broadly because of the post-socialist transformation, Western European states experienced a strong influx of refugees and migrants from post-socialist countries, especially the war-torn successor states of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia –

first of all Bosnia-Herzegovina but also Croatia and the then so-called Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which comprised the former socialist republics of Serbia including the former autonomous province of Kosovo and Montenegro. Compared to other regions in Kosovo, Opoja was never a hotspot of the conflict, likely also because Opoja's Albanian-speaking inhabitants had long maintained good relations with the Gorani, an autochthonous Slavic-speaking group<sup>1</sup> of the neighbouring region of Gora (UNDP 2012: 18–19), with whom they share not only their Muslim faith but historically also their lifestyle – with husbandry, pastoralism and migration forming the economic core for many centuries. Yet, in the 1990s, relations between the two population groups became tense, and the inhabitants of Opoja experienced discrimination on a regular basis and were suspended from their jobs. As violent incidents against them increased (see Meleqi 1994: 119–20, 2009; Reinmüller 2015: 47–48),<sup>2</sup> more and more left Kosovo, joining the refugees from other former Yugoslav republics. In response, especially from 1993 onwards, countries such as Austria, Switzerland and Germany tightened their asylum policy and introduced quota regimes for foreign labour and those seeking family reunification (see Fassmann and Münz 1996: 219–20; Bauböck and Perchinig 2006). For the (former) Yugoslav citizens, among them many Albanians from Kosovo who were fleeing persecution and (violent) attacks, the possibility of travelling to Western Europe without restrictions had vanished.

### *Gendered and Generational Challenges of Migrating Sons in the 1990s*

In the early 1990s, numerous – predominantly male – youngsters, several well educated, joined their fathers and other relatives who worked as 'Gastarbeiter' ('guestworkers') abroad, either via family migration or as undocumented migrants. This severely impacted the gender and generational relations within the families and across locations. At the same time, it shattered some cherished goals, not least because those who had worked abroad since the 1960s had not planned on bringing over their sons and other family members (see Aarburg and Gretler 2008: 281, 287; Pichler 2009a on Albanian migrants from Macedonia). For most migrants from Opoja and the Albanian migrants from other regions in Kosovo and Macedonia, the village remained their 'epicentre' (Dahinden 2010: 64), their 'home' to which they planned to return someday. Their plan to work abroad for years or even decades was aimed at building a better family life back home through their accumulated savings (Von Aarburg and Gretler 2008: 287; Pichler 2009a; Dahinden 2010: 64; Bielenin-Lenczowska 2014b). The remittances of Opoja migrants represented a considerable portion of their salaries, which family heads, commonly their fathers, received with the freedom to use as they

chose – to buy land, build houses and finance wedding celebrations. Simultaneously, migrants sought to improve living conditions so that their sons could be spared the experience of migration and the sacrifices it entailed for the sake of the family (see also Reineck 1991). Instead, they wanted at least one of their sons to succeed in creating a better future in Kosovo through educational and professional achievements (ibid.: 166). Agon, born in the 1960s, whose father had first worked in Belgrade and then moved as a labour migrant to Austria in the early 1970s, while Agon spent his childhood in Opoja, reminisced as follows: ‘He [my father] said that he had worked hard [as a labour migrant abroad]. He had worked in canalization. He said that it was better to stay here [in Opoja], finish the school and find a workplace.’

Labour migrants sought to orient their life purpose towards Opoja, primarily to ensure a better future for their children and other family members in the village. But the practice of sending remittances, and the goal to build a life ‘back home’, sometimes remained unsuccessful if, for example, their sons cultivated different aspirations, which was especially the case in the 1980s, when socialist modernization no longer had a firm grip on how people imagined their futures, and many young villagers started to dream of the ‘Golden West’, where they would have the possibility to own or consume Western products, ranging from sweets to ‘original’ Marlboro cigarettes to televisions (see also Leutloff-Grandits 2017). Ylber, reminiscing about his childhood in the 1980s, explained:

In every third house there was someone abroad. And we went to these houses and asked when they would come home. We wanted to see them. When they came for a visit, we would come to visit them in the evenings. We received biscuits. The one who came from Berlin was like an astronaut for us. A pilot. We thought that Berlin was somewhere outside, in an empty space. Then he came home and brought the first television. And I asked myself how is this possible, how is it possible that humankind is creating something like that?

In the wake of the political crisis in Kosovo in the 1990s, belief in a bright future at home was further undermined, and many young people welcomed the opportunity to join their fathers and travel abroad. However, that posed new intergenerational challenges, mainly as contact between fathers and sons had often been limited to the annual visits lasting a few weeks. During their short visit home, when fathers were also busy meeting with other relatives and working on the farm, their relationship with the sons remained distant, which hindered communication of perspectives and experiences. Thus the ‘coming-of-age’ experiences of sons when they joined their father abroad were not unproblematic (Burri Sharani et al. 2010: 59–61). Murat, for example, remembered that when he joined his father in Hamburg at the age of sixteen, he had to smoke secretly, since smoking in his presence was

considered disrespectful. Upon arriving in Germany, he got up early in the morning to secretly go out and buy some cigarettes. Though this was tricky, to him it was worth it, not least because it brought him what he had dreamed of in his village. He described the experience of being on his own for the first time in this foreign country:

I tried to remember my way, and when arriving at a supermarket I only said ‘cigarettes’, as I did not speak a word of German. Someone then gave me a packet of Marlboros. I wanted to pay, but I did not understand anything. He said something, but I did not know what, I only realized that he had given me the cigarettes and went away. It was a packet of Marlboros. To smoke Marlboro was a dream for me. Everyone [every male in the village] wanted the best.

Murat’s father, like many others who had established themselves abroad, had limited time and resources to support him in his attempt to adjust to the new situation and integrate into the new society, and he showed little understanding of Murat’s needs and problems. What could strain a relationship even further was that many fathers and sons had to manage the household without female members. Cleaning, washing and cooking were (and are) exclusively female tasks in Opoja, and abroad men were thus left to their own devices.

The trajectories of the sons who followed their fathers were diverse. They ranged from settling into a joint household with their father to starting an independent life of their own, or even returning to Kosovo. Some joined the schools in the destination country but had problems passing their exams, predominantly owing to language barriers. Most started to work soon after arrival, often not in well-paid jobs and with limited opportunities for growth and advancement (for the situation in Switzerland, see Burri Sharani et al. 2010: 44–70). That was especially the case where migrants were fifteen or older and had already undergone their school diploma in Kosovo (after eight/nine years), which in most cases was not recognized in the Western European countries. Compared to their fathers, who often had a relatively stable workplace, these young men often dealt with insecure job conditions. Still, their fathers asked them to work harder as ‘they had done themselves’ – advice that sons found inappropriate and that exacerbated intergenerational tensions.

Still, some who managed to move abroad as teens or as young men in the 1990s were economically very successful. In part, this had to do with intra-familial dynamics and proper support from fathers and relatives abroad. In various cases, sons closely cooperated with their fathers and often started work at the same firm, or they went on to establish a firm together. In families with several sons, this could lead to a strong family enterprise, often built on respectful relations with the father and solidarity between brothers.



Based on such experiences, migrants and villagers increasingly came to view family unity as key to success abroad. With this, Opoja migrants were no exception, as in the (neo)liberal market economy, migrant businesses relied on the flexibility of family members to meet the demands of customers (see, for example, Portes, Guarnizo and Haller 2002; Sequeira, Carr and Rash-eed 2009; Portes and Yiu 2013; Selcuk and Suwala 2020). Some younger migrants saw lack of family cohesion as the reason for their failure to succeed financially abroad. They blamed their fathers for not opting for family reunification earlier, for not bringing over all the children (especially the sons) and for not contributing towards their social integration abroad.

### *Asylum Migration, the Duldung Status and the Impact of Family Considerations*

An increasingly large number of teenage boys and young men, but partly also women and girls, went abroad without the legal option of family reunification, because they were already too old to qualify for reunification or their father or spouse had already returned or had never been abroad. As many could not apply for asylum until after arrival – which was often unsuccessful – border-crossing efforts and life abroad were replete with complications, risks and different sorts of insecurities. With tightened immigration and asylum regulations in Western Europe after 1992, asylum seekers were at pains to prove their own persecution in their home country in order to be granted asylum, and most asylum applications were subsequently classified as ‘unfounded’ (*unbegründet*). Within Western European countries during the 1990s, the Kosovo conflict remained largely unnoticed and was only recognized when it turned into a full-scale war in 1998. As a result, most refugees of Kosovo, and generally those from former Yugoslavia, received a ‘temporary suspension of deportation’ or *Duldung*, renewable after six months. This meant that most of them received a chain of such temporary suspensions (*Ketten-Duldungen*), which kept them in limbo with limited prospects.

Unlike the asylum status, which automatically grants refugees the right to work in European states, a ‘temporary suspension of deportation’ comes with more restrictions, and these vary not only between EU countries but also between the decision-making authorities in the German context, namely the federal states. While in Austria refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina and some from Kosovo in the 1990s (Stacher 2000) with a *Duldung* were later granted the right to work, in Germany there was no consensus on this among the individual federal states (Koser 2000: 28–33). A few federal states with greater labour demand – like Bavaria – granted refugees with a *Dul-*

*dung* the right to work in certain professions, based on labour market needs, and bound to a specific employer. Most other federal states – like Berlin and many eastern German federal states – did not.

In Germany, Austria and Switzerland – the main migration destinations since the late 1960s for migrants from Kosovo – those with a *Duldung* or a pending asylum case also did not qualify for family reunification. For those who arrived without their family, family life became practically impossible, as migrants were not allowed to visit Kosovo. From the institutional perspective within the receiving states, family members ‘back home’ were largely simply not taken into account.

Migrants with a *Duldung* and without family in the destination country were not allowed to rent private accommodation and were thus forced to remain in refugee accommodation separated from the receiving society (see, generally, Koser 2000 for Germany; Stacher 2000 and Strasser and Tošić 2014 for Austria; and Aarburg and Gretler 2008 as well as Burri Sharani et al. 2010 for Switzerland). More generally, as a *Duldung* targets a speedy return as soon as circumstances in the country of origin allow, it does not foster ‘integration’ into the receiving country. As Rozita Dimova (2011) has argued in relation to war refugees from war-torn Bosnia-Herzegovina who sought a safe haven and a better future in Germany, refugees often perceived their situation abroad as a second trauma, as high levels of uncertainty and a lack of planning opportunities thwarted individual plans for the future and disrupted family relationships.

Most refugees from Kosovo, however, were either internally displaced within their own country or had to flee to neighbouring states. At the height of the war in spring 1999, about 900,000 Kosovo Albanians had fled mainly to neighbouring Albania and Macedonia; another 600,000 or so were internally displaced (Goeke 2007: 583). Western European states accepted a small percentage of them as *Kontingent-Flüchtlinge* (contingent refugees), a status that gave them temporary asylum rights. In 1999, Germany granted this temporary residence permit to only 14,726 Kosovo refugees (Pro Asyl 2005: 2). But during that same period, the large majority of refugees from Kosovo in Germany, about 180,000 persons who had arrived in Germany individually and often irregularly, had been granted a *Duldung* only.

In the main Western European destination countries such as Germany, Austria and Switzerland, many migrants managed to develop individual strategies to cope with the situation, which included receiving support from relatives abroad and offering support to those back home. Men who migrated in the 1990s stressed the need to send back remittances, as their fathers and other male relatives had done, mainly to mitigate the effects of the escalating ethno-political conflict in Kosovo, which had negatively impacted

the economic possibilities for Albanians in Kosovo. Gazi, who left in October 1998, when the war had already started, said this:

I had thought about outmigration for a long time and always dreamed about it – as I had not experienced it on my own. I always wanted to go abroad. Here you did not have a future. I never imagined living here. It was impossible. One needed to have relatives or acquaintances in order to receive a job, or one needed to pay a lot of money for it. I did not have that kind of money, and the only place one could work here was the textile factory. It could not employ all people in the need of a job, and the salaries were very low. I followed the path of my brother. I did well in the primary school. But as none of my family had enrolled into university, I also did not want to, although my father [who was abroad] always wanted me to go on with higher education. But my friends did not go, and so I did not do it. Once the violence started, I decided to leave.

This quote shows a mix of political and economic considerations as well as the existence of a historically grown culture of migration that affected Gazi's migration decisions and strategies.

The story of Agon, who initially migrated to Austria in 1991 in his mid-twenties and returned for good in 2000, shows that migration motives, trajectories and family situations do change over time, which in turn affects a migrant's decision to come home. The family, however, often ranked highest as a reason for remigration. For Agon, the reason for going to Austria in 1991 was to access his retired father's pension, an important income source for the eight-member household in Opoja. His father had worked as a labour migrant in Austria for decades and returned to Opoja after retirement. However, pensions were no longer transferred to the Yugoslav bank accounts due to a Western embargo on Serbia for its role in the war following the dissolution of socialist Yugoslavia (Vickers 1998: 276). Agon successfully returned with the money, but when the situation worsened in Kosovo and bank accounts remained frozen, Agon left for Austria a second time to collect more of the pension. This time, instead of returning immediately, he stayed on with a cousin and took up undocumented work, even overstaying his visa. He returned to Opoja after seven months upon hearing about his father's death but soon after travelled to Berlin with a relative. Despite applying for asylum, like many other migrants from Kosovo, he was issued only with a *Duldung*, without a work permit (Pro Asyl 2005). In the 1990s, as ample labour opportunities on construction sites opened up in Berlin, especially for migrants, he took up undocumented work at one of the construction sites.

Even if Agon's migration situation was much more fragile than that of his father, who had benefitted from a stable and legal employment that provided him with an old-age pension, this option allowed him to fulfil his family obligations back home. He regularly sent part of his salary to his older brother, who oversaw the joint village household, comprised of Agon's mother, his

wife, his three children as well as his two brothers and their families. However, his *Duldung* did not allow visits to Kosovo or entitle him to use the family reunification programme in Germany. Although Agon knew that he would lose his *Duldung* status, he returned to his family after two years. He said:

I returned in 1995, in May or June. I went home because of my wife. She told me: 'You come home, or I leave, I join you.' But I could not bring her over. . . . They would not give a visa for the whole family – only single persons received a visa. Without a visa, the trip to Germany was very long, expensive and also dangerous. I went home when [my brother] Qerim married. You know. He married in 1995. I went for him. I also contributed financially to the wedding.

Agon's reasons for returning home related to his family: to pressure from his wife, who had not seen him since he left – underlining her influence and the importance of maintaining intimate relations – and to his brother's upcoming wedding, an event at which his presence was symbolically important to cement the patrilineal family bond. The urge to prioritize family relations, in his case, led to his decision to give up his *Duldung* status in Berlin.

Despite the critical political situation, which posed a threat to him and his family, Agon stayed on in the village for about two years before he again migrated because of the further deterioration of the political and economic situation in Kosovo. Agon relied on an invitation letter from the father of his brother's wife, who had gone to Frankfurt as a labour migrant in the early 1980s. He said:

Then my sister-in-law sent me to Germany. She asked her father to arrange for a visa for me. He sent the invitation, and I went to Belgrade for one month to get the visa. Then I took a bus from Belgrade to Frankfurt. [My younger brother] Qerim and [his wife] Ariana did not come along; they sent me instead. I had already been there, and I wanted to go. I already knew the country and the language. I knew that I could earn money, and I also fought for the papers – the right to stay. This was in April 1997.

As exemplified in this quote, Opoja migrants did not necessarily rely on patrilineal kin. Kinship ties established through marriage could prove to be important for being able to work abroad. As Agon was already acquainted with Germany, his chances of success were higher than those of his two brothers and he thus volunteered to return abroad as the breadwinner of the household in Opoja, which encompassed not only his parents, his wife and children, but also his brothers with their wives and children. However, in what was an acutely tense situation with the approaching war in Kosovo, especially from the autumn of 1998 onwards, couples and even entire families crossed the border in great number as undocumented migrants or with fake documents, often paying exorbitant sums (from 2,000 DM per person in the

mid-1990s up to several times more in 1999) to human smugglers with the help of their relatives abroad – partly also maternal ones.

Migrants like Agon, who left the receiving country to finally reunite with family members in Kosovo and then migrated again, could experience racist insults when they applied for refugee status a second time in the host country. Agon reported the following experience with the German authorities: 'A policeman asked me why I returned. He said: "Why did you return, you pig?"' Such experiences with bureaucracy must also be understood in the context of the xenophobic atmosphere in Germany at that time (Plamper 2019: 146ff). Despite Agon's difficult legal positioning and the experiences of xenophobia in Germany, his knowledge and individual agency as well as the support he received from other migrants and his extended family – including affinal relatives – played a role in making his stay easier.

Within Agon's family, Agon's younger brother Qerim and his wife finally left for Germany in autumn 1998, once the Kosovo war reached a new level of violence. Like Agon, they took the help of Qerim's father-in-law in Frankfurt, a labour migrant for many years, who paid 6,000 DM to the human smugglers. Qerim aimed to repay the sum once he began earning. In a rather unusual gesture in the context of the patrilocal norms prevailing in Opoja, Qerim's father-in-law took in Qerim and his wife for a month upon their arrival in Frankfurt. However, this was acceptable in light of the political persecution and violence in Kosovo as well as the strict EU border regime. Qerim's father-in-law supported them beyond that month, but the roles reversed when he suffered a heart attack. Qerim and his wife filed a claim successfully to remain in Frankfurt in order to care for Qerim's father-in-law and were placed in a refugee hostel close to him. Unlike Qerim, many asylum seekers did not have the option of choosing their place of residence; therefore, since the 1990s migrants from Opoja have been more geographically dispersed within the destination countries and throughout Western Europe than at any other time.

Despite having a place to stay, Qerim faced many work challenges. Like many others, Qerim only received a *Duldung*, and without a work permit, he could only work as an undocumented labourer. While this brought him earnings and social contacts, it did not increase his chances of securing residency rights. On the contrary, his undocumented work meant he could have been deported to Kosovo if found out. However, in his view, it was a risk he was willing to take, because he wanted to repay the money his father-in-law had paid to the human smugglers for undocumented border crossings and organize the remittances for his family in Opoja. In short, his family concerns put him at high risk of losing residency abroad. Still, the integrative force of relatives abroad cannot be underestimated. Many new arrivals in the 1990s could rely on family members who had already established themselves

abroad – be they from the maternal or paternal side. That help ranged from financing the border crossings, taking them in for the first days and weeks, or helping them out with the asylum applications. Once the migrants managed to be placed in refugee accommodation close to their relatives, they also helped them get settled or find (undocumented) work.

Migrants often also established ties with other migrants from their home region as well as from other Eastern and Southeastern European countries, among them the successor states of socialist Yugoslavia. Within such networks, migrants shared information about ways to achieve residency and other rights, and about jobs or better accommodations. These contacts were thus often important for improving one's position. Serbian was the official administrative language in Kosovo until the late 1990s, though most Albanians born after 1975 had not learnt it for political reasons. However, outside Kosovo, in the immigration context, mastering the Serbian language could help them to communicate and get along with colleagues or bosses at work.

Janine Dahinden (2005a, 2005b) has argued that for Kosovo migrants in Switzerland, peers across ethnic and family boundaries were often a more important source of social security than family members in Kosovo, as the latter were often too restricted and/or too far away to be able to help. Whenever Agon spoke about his years in Berlin in the 1990s, he stressed how much he liked the place, and particularly the scale of freedom he had experienced there, which according to him had contributed to his personal growth and a greater degree of self-empowerment – despite the legal challenges and the partly xenophobic reactions he faced. This freedom had eluded him in Opoja.

This does not mean that migrants 'forgot' their families back home and the obligations they had towards them. For decades, migration had been a vital means of supporting the family back home, and such values also influenced the mind-set of the migrants of the 1990s. Especially when struggling to maintain contact with family during the grim years of conflict and war some had felt the guilt of having left their nearest and dearest back home to fend for themselves and felt a renewed sense of duty to send remittances. Some also expressed having supported the UÇK (*Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës*, Kosovo Liberation Army), founded in the early nineties. It comprised of Kosovo Albanian underground militia, who opted for violence to fight the political and economic suppression of Albanians in Kosovo. While many made financial contributions to the UÇK, some even returned to Kosovo to join the underground militia.

Due to the dangerous political situation back home and the political organization of Kosovo Albanians abroad, many Kosovo migrants, especially those who migrated in the 1990s, developed a 'diasporic identity', which combined political agitation from afar with a strong sense of solidarity with

those back home (Kretsi 2008; Dahinden 2010, 2014b; Krasniqi 2017). Not least because the family was often seen as equivalent to the nation, conflicts within families were quickly smoothed over. As Nita Luci (2005, 2014) has described for Kosovo in the 1990s, reconciliation took place not just within but also between families, with thousands of 'blood feuds' (*gjjakmarrje*) – long-lasting and sometimes deadly conflicts between families – settled. Various Western scholarly studies (see, for example, Boehm 1984) link blood feuds to archaic forms of justice outside the realm of the state or within a state that did not interfere with family affairs, such as the Ottoman authorities in the era of the Ottoman Empire, to which Kosovo belonged from 1455 to 1912. In contemporary Kosovo, the state's role has changed and so has the meaning and social integration of 'blood feuds', which needs to be critically reflected upon (Schwandner-Sievers 1999 and 2001). Furthermore, it is important to consider the limits and gaps of translocal kinship relations during the 1990s. With a yearlong absence of migrants, kinship relations to those back home could also become strained, especially when expectations concerning the size of the remittances or the question of bringing over family members could not be resolved.

### *The Outmigration of Women and Children within Legal and Family Frameworks*

During the political turbulence of the 1990s and owing to the deteriorating security situation in Kosovo, an increasing number of male migrants departed from the tradition of leaving their wife and children in Opoja and instead brought them over. The re-establishment of family life was often experienced as a blessing, as also observed by Werner Schiffauer (1991: 50–83) in relation to labour migrants from Turkey, who began to bring over their spouses in the 1970s. But it also gave way to new economic and social challenges for families (for Switzerland, see Aarburg and Gretler 2008: 290–93). Saimir, for example, had left the village in 1985 at the age of twenty-four and brought over his wife and two sons in 1995, when his sons were thirteen and fifteen years old, respectively. While he recalled being happy about being reunited with his wife and sons, he confessed to the challenge of having to meet the living expenses of his family in Austria. Saimir also said that, for his sons, the first few months abroad were extremely difficult, as they had to go to school before they had mastered the German language. Saimir was not able to help much, having neither had the time nor the resources to support them in their day-to-day challenges at school.

However, many migrants who wanted to bring over their spouse and children encountered various legal barriers. Especially those with a pending asylum case, or on a *Duldung*, did not have the right to family unification.

Others who might have qualified failed to meet other requirements, such as a job with the requisite level of salary or 'adequate' housing for a family. Many migrants who did not fulfil the criteria thus resorted to irregular ways of bringing their family members across the border, although expensive, dangerous and not always successful. At the beginning of 1999, when the war had already peaked, Agon also tried to bring over his wife and small children. His hard work had allowed him to pay the smugglers, but he could only passively observe as his family embarked on the dangerous border-crossing journey. His wife, who had scarcely travelled out of Opoja and only spoke Albanian, set out with their small children on fake Croatian passports. She was apprehended at the border and imprisoned in Hungary before being returned to war-ridden Kosovo.

Other migrants who had applied for asylum in the 1990s were more successful. They reunited with their family members; however, this was often only after a period of years-long separation, as with Saimir. Furthermore, migrants often did not bring over all their children at once. While sons were given preference, daughters (and often also the wife) were brought over later. The reasons for this gendered differentiation are manifold: in times of escalating ethnopolitical conflict in Kosovo, many families considered male family members at risk of being drafted into the Serbian army, while girls and women could remain within the domestic sphere. Furthermore, many families believed it was easier for male members to cross the borders undocumented, and while abroad, they had a better chance of getting a job and being able to prepare for the arrival of their female family members – if a family reunion was planned at all. Furthermore, the 'migration culture' in Opoja at that time was associated with male household members, especially with their role as economic providers for the translocal family (for Albania, see King and Vullnetari 2011: 213–14). While it was deemed normal and necessary for men to migrate, for women, 'immobility' – that is, remaining in Opoja rather than migrating – was the norm, and the idea of girls and women migrating and living abroad, especially if unmarried, challenged the normative gender order in Opoja. Still, this norm came under increasing pressure owing to the security threat posed by the political situation and dreams of pursuing other modalities of living that the village environs did not allow.<sup>3</sup>

When Emir crossed the border over to Germany, without documents, in 1994, he had left behind his pregnant wife and two daughters, aged four and seven, respectively. In the ensuing five years, not only did they not see one another, they also rarely talked because of a lack of phone lines in the village. It was not until 1999 that Emir finally organized an irregular border crossing for his wife and small son, who had been born in his absence. However, the daughters remained with their grandparents. Emir argued that the trip was



expensive and dangerous and that his flat was too small for a family of five. In another case, before sending for his daughters, a father had felt obliged to bring not only his own sons but also the sons of his brother, who had been part of a joint household in Opoja. This decision was made for safety reasons and in line with traditional gender and generational expectations within a family. In the Opoja region (and more generally in Kosovo), a man – including a migrant – who shares a village household with his brother(s) is supposed to treat the brothers' children (especially the sons) as his own.

However, younger generations were more likely to prioritize female family members, particularly their spouses, in terms of migration. Several male migrants who had married before leaving Kosovo told me they would have brought over their spouses immediately had their parents not obstructed it. The parents had argued that the daughter-in-law had to care for them and that sending her abroad would result in higher living costs and lower remittances or would conflict with the gendered family values (for similar discussions, see Krasniqi 2017). In other cases where the sons had left Kosovo in their teens and been too young to marry before leaving, the families involved themselves in the bridal search in their home region (see Chapter 6). In the 1990s when travelling back to Kosovo was very dangerous and often legally impossible, sometimes marriage decisions were made and even weddings were conducted in the absence of the groom, and the newlywed bride would later join her husband abroad. Marriage migration is, however, not solely a female undertaking. Increasingly, men are also migrating to join their wives abroad. As later chapters describe in greater detail, marriage migration became more widespread among villagers in the rural south of Kosovo, especially after the new millennium, as one of the only options for migrating for the long-term, owing to the tightened European border regime – at least until the so-called Western Balkans Agreement, which came into force in 2016, creating new legal channels for labour migration to Germany. As will be shown, this has also affected gender and generational relations, as well as the caring roles within the family.

## MIGRATION IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

After the end of the Kosovo war in 1999, those who had fled to neighbouring countries of Kosovo soon returned (Goeke 2007: 584). Many Kosovo Albanians who had migrated to Western Europe also returned to Kosovo – however, not always voluntarily. Others managed to obtain residence rights and stay abroad, as well as achieve family reunification, which, however, remained incomplete sometimes. At the same time, legal migration opportunities to Western European countries decreased again, leading to new waves

of ‘undocumented migration’ but also temporary mobility via a Serbian passport and seasonal work. In what follows, I outline these migration paths and link them to family and social security considerations, in particular gender and generational roles.

*Beyond Duldung:  
Between ‘Voluntary’ Return and Permanent Resettlement*

After the end of war in Kosovo in June 1999, about 200,000 Kosovo-Albansians who had received a *Duldung* in the 1990s in Germany were ordered to return with the justification that their lives were no longer under threat in their home region (Koser 2000: 40). In some federal states, German state authorities even started to deport Kosovo migrants. Before 2002, about 96,000 refugees from Kosovo had left Germany again, of which about 11,000 had been deported (*abgeschoben*). But also those who had reportedly returned ‘voluntarily’ did so under considerable pressure from the German authorities (Dünnwald 2008; European Stability Initiative 2015: 4), as those who did not return ‘voluntarily’ could expect a knock on the door from the police in the middle of the night and be escorted out in handcuffs or taken into custody awaiting deportation. After being deported, they were prohibited from entering Germany for up to five years (Pro Asyl 2005: 14). In Austria, migrants with a *Duldung* faced similar conditions, but they could be granted permanent residency by demonstrating adequate housing and presenting employment documentation, which they could partly manage to secure, not least because many already had a work permit.

In Germany, 7,200 refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina and about 12,500 refugees from Yugoslavia (later called Serbia and Montenegro, which included Kosovo at that time), who had entered Germany before the war ended in 1999 and who had a *Duldung*, became eligible for a two-year residence permit,<sup>4</sup> thanks to a new legal amendment in 2001, and some federal states in Germany – but not all – also issued them an employment permit. To be granted a more long-term or permanent residence permit in Germany required refugees to prove they had a stable job and private accommodation to ensure they were not depending on welfare support. However, this was often difficult to achieve. Under the legal framework of their *Duldung*, which restricted them from legal employment options, many were dependent on welfare. Others also fell casualty to the vicious cycle of residency rights being hinged on a work permit and vice-versa, so that neither could be secured (Pro Asyl 2004a: 24).

Migrants from Opoja and Kosovo in general had very different prospects depending on their legal status and the region in which they lived abroad. Agon, who lived in Berlin with a *Duldung* (1993–1995 and 1997–2000), was

among those who left Germany 'voluntarily' in 2000, soon after the war, as he could not obtain a work permit and thus had no prospect of being able to stay. His brother Qerim, who had come to Frankfurt in 1998 and received a *Duldung*, used the help of lawyers to secure a legal work permit a year after the war ended, in 2001, and soon found regular employment at a construction firm led by a Croat. In 2002, when Qerim was informed that Kosovo-Albanians with a regular employment contract and decent accommodation could apply for residency, he desperately began looking for a flat because his *Duldung* status had not provided for subsidized housing, and affordable private housing was scarce. What made the difficult situation even worse was the fact that house owners were reluctant to rent their flat to refugees without residency, as they could be forced to leave the country at short notice. It took Qerim two years to find a small one-room apartment (36 sqm) at a monthly rent of 500 euros, which he considered expensive, but it enabled him to secure the requisite residency rights.

Migrants on a *Duldung* with good education had considerable difficulty finding a job that corresponded to their qualifications or the profession they had practised in Kosovo. Their degree certificates were often not acknowledged, and often many years had passed since they last worked in their respective professions. A case in point are Endrit and his wife Maja, who had jointly fled to Germany in the late 1990s. Although both had university degrees, Endrit worked in construction, while Maja worked for a cleaning service for over ten years after their arrival. Endrit, who had worked as a medical doctor in Kosovo, could not find a job in his sector despite a belated recognition of his medical degree. For teenagers and young adults who had arrived in the 1990s and had not yet finished their education back home, the *Duldung* status often prevented them from participating in higher education or training programmes that required a more stable residency or labour permit (Mielast 2006: 8).

For migrants who had successfully mastered the difficult pathway to a legal residence permit in the receiving country, returning was no longer an option – at least not in the short-term – despite the euphoria linked to the end of war and the withdrawal of Yugoslav and Serb forces from Kosovo. Their decision to stay abroad often felt validated when they returned to Opoja for a visit after many years. Qerim, for example, said he cried when he saw that the household was in such poor condition: what seemed normal when he left now seemed a site of poverty, chaos and underdevelopment. He said: 'I cried a lot, like a child. Today, I am better prepared. Do you understand, [by migrating] I went into another world, into a more organized life.'

Qerim and other migrants stressed that they had better social security abroad, including good access to doctors, health insurance and pension payments. They added that their children also had better prospects abroad than

in Kosovo. Perspectives had shifted: while the former guestworkers, the *gurbetgji*, had envisioned building a future for their family ‘back home’, many migrants who had left during the 1990s now wanted to build a new home abroad – despite the manifold challenges in terms of employment and integration prospects in the receiving country. Various migrants who had come abroad in the 1990s took advantage of the family reunification scheme once they achieved a secure legal status. However, even in the new millennium, family reunification sometimes remained incomplete for reasons similar to those in the 1990s.

### *New Waves of ‘Undocumented Migrants’ and their Translocal Entanglements*

Years after the war, undocumented border crossings of villagers who found themselves in a difficult economic situation increased again. In early 2015, this number peaked when entire families left Kosovo and claimed asylum in Germany and Austria, even though the chances for obtaining asylum were very slim. However, over the years, most of the undocumented border crossers were middle-aged fathers who had returned ‘voluntarily’ in 1999 but had not managed to find a stable job in Opoja, as well as young and unmarried men who lacked prospects in their home country. Some were captured at the border and sent back; those who managed to successfully enter the European Union usually remained undocumented for the entire duration of their stay, sometimes years, as they knew that their asylum claim would be unsuccessful. During that time, migrants took up undocumented jobs and often, at least initially, relied on the help of relatives living abroad to establish themselves.

Florim, for example, lived as an undocumented migrant in Germany for more than ten years. Throughout the 1990s, when Florim was still a teenager, his family was in a very difficult economic situation, which worsened when his father died of an illness. In 1999, at the height of the Kosovo war, sixteen-year-old Florim fled with his mother to Albania. Upon return, their economic situation was even more fragile, as their house had been devastated and the livestock had died or disappeared. Florim then started to work full time, but he was not paid regularly – a new normal after the war, as he said. Faced with this tenuous situation, Florim decided to look for work in Germany. The undocumented border crossing cost him about 2,000 DM – which he borrowed from an uncle living in Germany. His relatives abroad also took him in during the first weeks and found him a job in a German, family-based firm, where he was also provided with boarding and lodging. In our conversations, Florim stressed that he had worked very hard, which enabled him to send remittances home. He also learned fast and had almost

led a normal life. The family that employed him was a surrogate family for him, and he was able to make friends within the community. He was thus able to cultivate stable social relations despite lacking a legal status. But he also had to conceal parts of his identity and his illegal status to most acquaintances and remained dependent on his employees, who never tried to legalize his immigration status. In addition, access to such basic things as medical care was problematic, leading Florim, for example, to seek medical help only when the pain was no longer bearable or when his condition did not allow it otherwise.

Florim's case exemplifies the extent to which undocumented border crossing was and still is an important strategy for translocal family care, but one that also creates considerable vulnerabilities. As already observed by Nando Sigona (2012: 55), who studies migrants in the United Kingdom, the undocumented status keeps migrants in a liminal state and reduces the possibilities to plan a future and develop a life trajectory. The undocumented status and the lack of citizenship rights are 'inscribed in the lives of undocumented migrants, gradually permeating their social worlds and social and community networks' (ibid.: 50) and experienced as fear, illness, pain, stress and even shame (Khosravi 2007: 331–32).

This state of exclusion, however, extends across the borders and includes relations to one's home region: in addition to limited possibilities to build a future abroad, undocumented workers also encounter difficulties when they want to visit their relatives and acquaintances back home. In Florim's case, the undocumented status even prevented him from visiting home for over five years. Each border crossing was not only expensive but also dangerous, as it entailed the risk of being arrested, imprisoned and prevented from returning to Germany. This also threatened his livelihood and opportunities to earn money for his family in Opoja. More generally, undocumented status prevents migrants from establishing intimate relations – both abroad and back home – and leads to a form of fragmented existence, not least because migrants are forced to systematically conceal information about their 'other' life – back home and abroad.

Still, the risk of deportation sooner or later increases the dependency of undocumented workers on relatives back home and pressures them to stay connected to them. Florim created a proxy presence in the village by regularly sending money to his mother and marrying a young woman from the region. He returned for the first time in 2007 for his own wedding, which he had self-financed, to celebrate in the circle of numerous relatives and neighbours lavishly. In our conversations about the wedding, he stressed that the lavish wedding was for his mother, who always dreamed of such a wedding, adding that 'one marries only once in lifetime' and that this marriage would set the course for his future. Still, some months after his wedding, he went

to Germany again, while his wife remained with his mother. The household income in Opoja depended on his earnings from abroad and the terms of his stay in Germany excluded family reunification. When he finally returned for good, his son, who was born during his absence, was already several years old and his attempts to legalize his stay in Germany and fetch his family had failed. To conclude, the undocumented status renders the individual migrant more vulnerable and could lead to multiple forms of fragmentation within the translocal family network. Simultaneously, it can also strengthen the relations of migrants with relatives back home, not least because it envisions a complete return, which could be – sometimes forcefully – realized sooner or later.

### *Temporary Mobility via a Serbian Passport and Seasonal Labour*

During my conversations in one of the coffee houses in Opoja at an early stage of my fieldwork, I learnt that some men regularly travelled to Belgrade. That was a surprising detail considering the recent war along ethnonational lines, the forced migrations, and the ongoing political conflict between Kosovo and Serbia over territory and border issues. Although I was aware that many Kosovo Albanians had worked in Serbia until the 1990s and several also had owned property there, I had not realized that many still had family members in Serbia, reaching back to the socialist era, and sometimes even a job. Many who travelled regularly had kept their Serbian passport next to the one Kosovo had issued.

Since 2009, Serbian citizens have been allowed to travel visa-free to EU countries for three months once they have new biometric passports. Thus, the Serbian passport has become useful for navigating the mobility regimes. As Serbia has an inclusive approach to citizenship for Kosovo citizens and residents, because the Serbian state does not officially acknowledge Kosovo's independence, some Kosovo Albanians have also started to apply for Serbian passports for easier access to the European Union, to legalize their temporary stay there. Up until February 2015, the Serbian Ministry for the Interior counted 60,000 passport applications from Kosovo, among them also from Opoja. When the EU then urged Serbia to introduce 'second class' passports for citizens residing in Kosovo without the right to visa-free entry into the EU, many applicants managed to provide a residential address in Serbia (Lapins 2015).

Sitting at a coffee bar on a Saturday afternoon in Vienna, I talked to a middle-aged migrant relaxing over a beer. He came to Austria as a tourist with his Serbian papers and was working without a work permit under rather precarious conditions, spending the mornings on special street corners in the town, where day workers wait to receive an offer for manual work, of-

ten, however, in vain. He would have to avoid the police patrol at work if he found a job, and he lacked health insurance or insurance to cover occupational accidents. Other migrants I met were there for seasonal work for a couple of months a year, in sectors that lacked the necessary workforce and where firms were allowed to employ non-EU nationals on a temporary basis. They often deliberately worked as much as possible within a short time frame to be able to cover expenses for the entire year, as they were unemployed back home. While they were aware that they were a secondary force in relation to workers with full rights in the EU, the migrants remarked that it was still better than their position back home. For many migrants, working abroad, even under precarious conditions, is the only option given the negligible job prospects in Kosovo and the lack of social benefits back home. Like undocumented migrants, seasonal migrants maintain their life and family in Opoja and visit the migration destination only to earn their income. While this seems to resemble the life of labour migrants in the 1970s and 80s, the degree of legal precarity and dependency on employers – but also on family members and acquaintances – is considerably higher.

## CONCLUSION

A diachronic study of migration from Kosovo's Opoja region sheds light on an impressive diversity of migration trajectories and the impact of changing border and migration regimes of EU countries. Until the 1990s, in the 'first phase' of migration from Kosovo to Western Europe, migration could mainly be classified as based on labour, and migrants could enter Western Europe without a visa. During the 1990s, the states of the European Union hardened their border and migration regimes, but migration numbers from Kosovo increased, owing to the ethnopolitical conflict and war as well as its weak economy and young demographic. In this 'second phase' of migration from Kosovo to Western Europe, migration trajectories highly diversified and included family reunification, marriage migration and asylum migration, often following an undocumented border crossing.

The end of the Kosovo war in 1999 marked the start of the 'third phase' of migration from Kosovo to Western Europe. While legal migration opportunities further diminished and were limited to family reunification, otherwise only undocumented and other forms of temporary migration remained, in some cases with Serbian passports, in which support from family members often played an important role. Reflecting on these changes in migration regimes, it becomes clear why Opoja migrants, and more generally migrants from Kosovo, cannot be seen as a homogeneous group: they not only took different migration trajectories but also held – and still hold – diverse legal

positions in the respective country of immigration, which affects their access to the labour market and possibilities for family reunification. The reasons for migration during this phase diversified, ranging from better earning possibilities abroad to security reasons, and to realizing individual aspirations to provide for the family in Kosovo or to unite with family abroad. Often, migrants had more than one reason for going abroad.

As has been shown in the chapter, migration practices and trajectories of individual migrants are simultaneously influenced by not only changes in the geopolitical constellation in terms of changing legal migration frames, but also by family considerations and family solidarity. With the lack of economic possibilities, social rights and partly also security in both their home country and to some extent also in the destination countries, family plays a central role in migration facilitation and management. Family members occupy different social positions, in Opoja as well as abroad, and through cooperation and exchange may seek to use these positions to bridge some of the divides and inequalities within the family unit to create better prospects.

The roles family members take up are in part in line with gendered and generational norms. Especially male family members are expected to migrate and send remittances as their fathers had done, to prevent further fragmentation and conflict within the family and to maintain Opoja as the locus of the family. On the other hand, women are expected to fulfil family care obligations in the home region, and thus are restrained from migrating. However, these roles have increasingly come under pressure. Already in the 1990s, intergenerational conflicts and the impetus, especially among male migrants, to forge new individual pathways, led to creative solutions and sometimes also fragmentations within the family setting; for example, to counteract increased insecurity in the job market in Kosovo as well as in the receiving countries, some migrants successfully established family-based firms abroad. Furthermore, since the 1990s, the increased migration of wives and daughters within the framework of family reunification has practically shifted the locus of the nuclear family to the migration contexts. While that has not necessarily diminished the importance of the family, with the changing societal context, intergenerational as well as gendered roles have constantly been renegotiated.

With hardened border regimes for a larger strata of Kosovo migrants in the new millennium, the locus of the family in the Opoja region has regained significance. Furthermore, the family acts with a certain degree of flexibility in order to establish an important source of support in situations where migrants face tight legal boundaries and a variety of social barriers, and the reliance on affinal relatives – next to patrilineal ones – has become more important. At the same time, individual family members, and the family as a unit, are exposed to even greater challenges. How these situations are man-



aged within families and households across borders, what kind of support individual family members provide and also what conflicts arise will be explored in more detail in the next chapter.

#### NOTES

1. Inhabitants of Gora refer to their language as 'našinski' ('ours'), which is a mixture of Bosnian, Macedonian, Serbian and Turkish.
2. This situation reversed in the 1990s after the war. After a first phase of violent excesses against the Gorani (see Reinmüller 2015: 70–78), interethnic relations were slowly re-established, and in 2011, interethnic tolerance was higher than in most other places in Kosovo. However, as the schooling system is divided and young Albanians no longer learn Serbian communication between the two groups is limited.
3. Similar observations were made by Bielenin-Lenczowska (2014b: 521) for Slavic speaking Muslims in Macedonia.
4. However, the actual number of refugees from Yugoslavia with a *Duldung* status in 2004 stood at 83,000 persons – which means the large majority did not receive the right to permanent residency (Pro Asyl 2004b: 14).