
Caroline Leutloff-Grandits:

Translocal Care across Kosovo's Borders. Reconfiguring Kinship
along Gender and Generational Lines
Berghahn, 2023, 276 p.



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Carolin Leutloff-Grandits is a senior researcher at the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt. She combines social-anthropological fieldwork and qualitative interviews with the analysis of historical data in her research on Southeastern European migrants. Her research reveals her determination to understand the migrants, so she dived into the local culture in order to understand the meaning of their behavior. The book *Translocal Care across Kosovo's Borders. Reconfiguring Kinship along Gender and Generational Lines* (Leutloff-Grandits, 2023) approaches the daily reality of the inhabitants of the village of Opoja in southern Kosovo from the perspective of historical context, and socioeconomic changes caused by the transition from socialism to liberal capitalism that has taken place in that region over the last half-century. A combination of the perspectives ensures that the research reaches a multidisciplinary approach, which is necessary for an in-depth understanding of migration studies (Bommes & Morawska, 2005).

The cornerstone of the study is precedent research of the migration in the same region by American anthropologist Janet Reineck (1991) in the late 1980s. The author decided on this follow-up study because she doubted Reindeck's expectation that migration would have negatively affected the socioeconomic development of the region and supported the idea that globalization and neoliberal transformations of society would result in more emancipated and individualized family forms. Comparison of the actual state with the previous research gave her clearer insight into the historical dimension of present migrations and family-based care and a better understanding of family relations and their transformations caused by the major political and societal changes. It also helped her understand the changes that had occurred along gendered and generational lines.

Multi-sited fieldwork recommended for the ethnographic approach (Amelina, 2010) lasted from 2011 to 2013 and consisted of many longer and shorter trips to Opoja, as well as to cities in Germany and Austria, where she visited migrants from the Opoja region. During that period, she communicated with various generations of villagers and migrants from the Opoja region who had faced various circumstances as well as diverse migration regimes. She used participant observation of everyday life, narrative, family-centered, and biographical interviews to understand their values, habits, interrelations, strategies, and capacity to determine their own life and future despite structural constraints. She developed warm and sincere relationships with villagers, but reported effects of patriarchal norms on her roles and positioning in relations with them. The sample represents the local population well in terms of gender, age, family stage, socioeconomic positions, and milieus. Each chapter contained excerpts from biographies of villagers relevant to the subject, which made the text more vivid and authentic. Moreover, the seventeen well-chosen photos help readers to visualize the village life.

The introduction began with the presentation of the study procedure and the description of Opoja in Kosovo as a region with high labor migration caused by a high unemployment rate, the historical burden of war conflict, transitional problems, slow and inadequate reforms, poor health protection, low education level, and inadequate social care. The next section

presents a conceptual framework in which the translocal approach to family, kinship, and care is explained and justified from the aspect of specific characteristics of the researched region. Its relevance for the region is additionally confirmed through the presentation of Albanian words that represent equivalent emic versions of concepts. The author thoroughly presented theoretical concepts from social anthropology relevant for understanding the translocal approach to family and kinship. Thus, it excellently prepares readers who are not experts in the field of cultural anthropology for the presentation of the research findings. Additionally, the author gave a review of important Western and Yugoslav socio-anthropological and historical studies that provided insight into the functioning of Balkan patriarchal families in the previous period and helped her in an in-depth analysis of society. Next, the gender and generational differences between the kinship and care practice based on blood patrilineal relations and matrilineal affinal relations were explored. The author also compared the relationship between these concepts based on 'modernity' and 'tradition'. In this very complex analysis, she combined perspectives on family and kinship on the local, regional, and state level, as well as on the translocal and transnational level. Family-provided care is conceptualized as more inclusive by recognizing it as personal relationships involving emotions and concrete care practices within the family and the household, which includes efforts to provide food and shelter, health, education, employment, finding a spouse, offering migration support, material and financial transfers during the life course, and through inheritance from one generation to another. She has chosen the conceptualization according to which 'old' and 'new' forms of social organization and solidarity in both mechanical and organic forms coexist because it is flexible enough to encompass the local conditions and global processes. Finally, the author presented the importance of translocal care as a way of keeping a sense of familyhood even if the members are physically separated. Besides, she recognized the importance of locality within transnational kinship and family relations. Accepting the approach of 'new kinship studies', she assumed that family and kinship are constituted, produced, or affirmed through active social relations and subjective interpretations of interactions, especially those that involve caring practices.

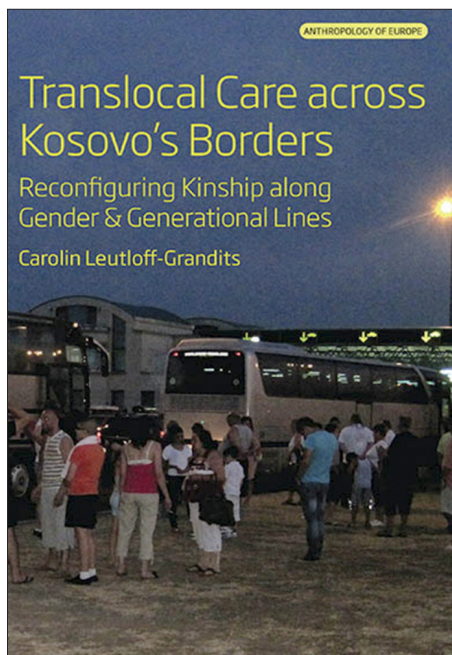
The book consists of seven chapters. In the first of these, entitled *Translocal Foundations of a Kosovo Village*, the specific characteristics of Opoja constitute it as a translocal region. The author intertwined the family history with the historical developments and socioeconomic problems in the Kosovo region and used it for the explanation of the increase of migrations of locals to Western EU countries. Consequently, the basis of social support remained migrants who send remittances and transfer their experiences from more developed countries. Moreover, the region's dependency on remittances resulted in the stagnation of the development of society itself, which maintains traditional relations despite positive changes (De Haas, 2005). The region supports patriarchal norms, which were very restrictive regarding the rights of females on education, employment, and participation in the society. The older married women are obligated to live in Opoja in the company of other women from within the household doing chores and caring tasks for the children and the elderly, or spending their leisure time in handicrafts. However, positive progress is visible in the life of younger people due to the accessibility of education that incited modernization of social relations, and improved positions of women in society (Kostovicova, 2005). The author claimed that Islamization was not an important determinant of social life in 2011, but she recognized that its influence has increased lately. She also presented the globalization process through the modern social media and internet connectivity, which allowed more intensive translocal communication, fostering translocality and stronger relationships. Moreover, the adolescents have become more acquainted with the

world's trends and modern lifestyle, using social media to connect with young people in other countries. She compared their behavior with globally characteristic behavior of adolescents on the social networks: "Expecting responses from peers in the village as well as abroad, girls, for example, publish pictures of high heels, IKEA bedrooms and wedding dresses – both tying themselves into the increasingly universal world of consumption while assuming gendered roles." (Leutloff-Grandits, 2023, p. 55).

The second chapter entitled *Migrant Trajectories: Shifting Relations of Translocal Families* described migratory paths of Opoja villagers to EU countries since the 1990s. This chapter underlines the role of family in migration processes claiming: "'Family' is expected to show 'border-crossing solidarity' to newly arriving migrants in the form of financial, logistical, physical or informational assistance." (Ibid., p. 61). The writer deconstructs the category of 'Kosovar Albanian migrants' by showing that dominant migration types – labor migration, family reunification, asylum migration, and flight migration chronologically changes as the response of villagers to socioeconomic changes in their society, but also to diverse legal restrictions. It also presents the way that family ties were (mis)used in the chain migration and the problems that it caused (Massey et al., 1993). The author presented the Florim's case of illegal migration motivated by the aim of taking care of his family. She described his situation: "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." (Leutloff-Grandits, 2023, p. 79). However, no matter of the motivation for illegal migration, it can have negative effects on the psychological status of migrants (Sigona, 2012).

The third chapter entitled *Family Roles in Care across Translocal Households*, focuses on the gendered and generational stratification of translocal households and analyses how positions in them affected and diversified care relationships between migrants and their relatives, despite the maintenance of patriarchal norms of care. The chapter presents the translocal household as a joint socioeconomic family unit by indicating that gender, age, and their cross-border location determine the members' roles. The division of the family roles are presented with Ilire's story. The author described it as "Where Ilire's husband sent remittances from abroad, thus providing financial care, Ilire took on the responsibility of providing instrumental and emotional care for her parents-in-law and the five children, only occasionally visiting her husband on a visitors' visa." (p. 92).

The fourth chapter entitled *Home and Investment: Shifts in Perceptions and Their Material Manifestation* explores the meanings of migrants' house-building activities and other investments of male migrants aimed at strengthening ties with relatives and to create a proxy presence in the local village community. The author recognized the symbolic role of the houses



that migrants build and commented on it: “house building activities resemble very different imaginations of family unity and family care”. These investments represent belonging, tradition, care for the village and family, status, and desire to modernize, but since they highlight gender and social stratification of the local community, they also cause the antagonisms within family and gender and generational relations (Pine, 1996).

The fifth chapter entitled *Seeking a Future and Fortune: Partner Selection in a Translocal Space* addresses the issue of spousal choice in translocal family networks. It opposed and discussed the importance of ‘family-framed’ and ‘individually framed’ marriages and showed that both villagers and migrants tend to rely on relatives as a secure way for finding the right mate, but keeping free choice. The locals see cross-border marriage as a secure way and a chance to build a brighter future, while migrants reaffirm their position in Opoja by choosing a spouse from the village. However, the author recognized that things are changing and claimed: “In a growing number of marriages in Opoja, the initial contact of the partners was not arranged by family members, as the young prospective partners fell in love outside the family context.” (p. 139).

The sixth chapter, entitled *Weddings as Affirmation of the Translocal Family and Kinship* pointed out that the weddings in the Opoja region are a culmination of community and family life, in which migrants have a crucial role as spouses, guests, or financiers of festivities. It strengthens translocal kinship ties, but also sustains patrilineal kinship and patriarchal gender relations and social stratification, which cause ambiguity in some villagers. Oppositely, it promotes romantic love relationships and gender equality, reshaping gender and family relations in ways that offer greater opportunities for emancipation and individualization. The author also recognized the consumeristic and competitive background of the marriage ceremony and wrote: “Migrants are especially active in organizing and financing these weddings, and also in reconstituting and redefining kinship and community relations. However, the high costs associated with such large weddings in Opoja and the increasing importance of consumption as an indicator of social status also reflect neoliberal transformations in Kosovo and around the world.” (p. 161).

In the seventh chapter, entitled *Realities of Cross-Border Marriages: Rearranging Family and Gender Relations* the repercussions of marriage migration on the functioning of the family, gender, and generational relations, family care, and the future of individuals are presented. The author concluded the book with reflections and perspectives on translocality, kinship, and care relations along gendered and generational lines and concerning transformations of the EU border regime.

This book is a rare example of systematic and profound ethnographic research that successfully integrated it in a modern anthropological approach to migration studies. Although the presentation of meso level and exploration of migration networks’ role dominates, especially of the complex translocal family ties in the migration process (Haug, 2008), it offers information that is necessary for understanding it on the micro and macro level. Migrations are depicted from the micro level by using the illustrative simplified examples of migrants’ personal history (Faist, 1997). Additionally, the macro level is introduced by the explanation of the sociopolitical and historical conditions in the region (Desbarats, 1983; Haug, 2008). The researcher pointed out the consequences of the migration on modernization and globalization, which resulted in the dynamic combination of modern and traditional concepts of life, the diversification of gender and family roles, higher emancipation, but also increased migration intentions in the Balkans region.

The ethnographic method allowed the deconstruction of the stereotypical perception of non-EU countries as ‘patriarchal’ and ‘backward’ cultures and introduced a more reflexive

and inclusive approach that critically examines various conceptual frameworks to overcome a superficial understanding of cultural specificities. However, the fact is that inhabitants of the Kosovo region are less educated, which affects migration processes and the role of the strong ties on them, which constrains the conclusions on the similar regions (Bagchi, 2001; Granovetter, 1973, 1983). The study identified remittances as the guarantee of transnational family relations and the prime source of social security and care, but also of the life course of villagers and their culture, which is in line with previous findings of their positive effects on socioeconomic status of migrants' families (De Jong et al., 1983; Rubinov, 2014; Vidal & Kley, 2010). The findings transcend borders and give insight into the effects of migration on translocality, kinship, and care relations in the Balkans in general from a broader view proposed by network theory and world system theory.

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Sabrina Tosi Cambini:
Other Borders: History, Mobility and Migration of Rudari Families
between Romania and Italy
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The Rudari are a Romanian-speaking ethnic group currently living in scattered communities across Central and Eastern Europe as well as in the Americas. They are frequently perceived by outsiders as “Gypsies” or, in other contexts, as Roma. They themselves, however, prefer the ethnonym *Rudari*. They are also known by a variety of other names, including *Boyash* and *Beás* in Hungary; *Bajaši* and *Banjaši* in Croatia and Serbia; *Karavlas* in Bosnia and Herzegovina; *Lingurari* in Moldova; Rudari in Greece; *Rudari* and *Kopanari* in Bulgaria; and *Ludar* and *Ludari* in the Americas. As a result of labor mobility after 1989, many Rudari migrated from Eastern Europe to Western Europe, where new communities formed and families adapted to their new social environments by securing housing and employment, with varying degrees of success across countries, and by enrolling their children in local schools. Despite an increasing number of publications in recent decades, particularly those focusing on their identity and mobile ways of life, this group has remained relatively marginal within scholarly debates (Achim, 2002; Kovalcsik, 1996; Marushiakova & Popov, 1998; Marushiakova & Popov, 2008; Neagota & Benga, 2016; Rotaru & Gaunt, 2023; Șerban, 2007; Sikimić, 2003, 2005; Slavkova, 2010, 2013, 2016, 2017; Sorescu-Marinković, 2013; Sorescu-Marinković, Kahl & Sikimić, 2021). Academic attention to the Rudari has largely been overshadowed by the broader focus on the Roma as both an ethnocultural group and a category of migrants. This book seeks to challenge that tendency by presenting an extensive study of Rudari from southern Romania who migrated to Italy and subsequently returned to Romania.

At first glance, the title of the book *Other Borders* appears to promise an exploration of encounters and tensions between Romanian Rudari migrants (referred to by the author, using a lowercase r, as *rudari*) in Italy and the local population, as well as a methodological reflection