



Book review of
Leutloff-Grandits,
Carolin. 2023. *Translocal
Care across Kosovo's
Borders. Reconfiguring
Kinship along Gender and
Generational Lines*. New
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BOOK REVIEW

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Leutloff-Grandits' book *Translocal Care across Kosovo's Borders. Reconfiguring Kinship along Gender and Generational Lines* offers a rich and nuanced exploration of how family care is organized, experienced, and practiced in translocal contexts, shaped by both gender and intergenerational dynamics. Set against socioeconomic and political conditions that provide minimal state-sponsored social security in Kosovo, the book demonstrates how migration—particularly international migration—has become an essential lifeline for extended families. Focusing on the rural Opoja region of southern Kosovo, marked by persistently high unemployment, lack of access to healthcare and eldercare, and strong patrilineal gender relations, the study underscores the central role of the family as a source of social protection, particularly amid conditions of structural scarcity. While ethnographic fieldwork took place in 2011–2013, through secondary sources, the book traces the modalities and meanings of outmigration for the social security provision of extended families since the 1960s. It follows the time when Kosovo was part of socialist Yugoslavia and many male inhabitants left as labor migrants; the time during the ethnopolitical war at the end of the 1990s, when many families left as refugees; and finally, to the post-war era when marriage migration has become the main channel to leave for Western Europe. The book shows the impact of the various migration channels on the gendered and generational caring roles that uphold the translocal ties between the migrants abroad (mostly in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland) and their family members in villages of the Opoja region. Through a conceptual framework that is sensitive to gender, generations as well as transformations of social and cultural norms, and rich empirical observations and analytical accounts, the book's nine chapters demonstrate the crucial conflation of migration, family, and care for individuals' social protection over time and space.

Each chapter of the book starts with an introduction spelling out its aim and focus and ends with a short summary of the main findings presented in the chapter.

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The introduction positions the book in the existing scholarship of transnational family and kinship studies and the current research on transnational migration, caregiving, and translocality and articulates the overarching analytical framework: a translocal approach to family care. Building on foundational work in transnational family studies (Bryceson & Vuorela 2002), the book positions care as the sustaining force behind familial ties that span national borders.

Chapter 1 introduces the reader to the Opoja region in Kosovo and offers a detailed overview of the region's socioeconomic and political landscape since the 1960s. The chapter also explores employment opportunities and migration patterns across these decades, alongside evolving gender and generational norms. Informative and wide-ranging, the chapter sets the stage effectively—doing so through a map illustrating Opoja's location within Kosovo, the broader Balkan region, and the destination countries would have been the cherry on top. The next chapter highlights a remarkable diversity of migrant trajectories and argues for understanding migration as a key strategy in translocal family care in rural Kosovo. By tracing these trajectories from the 1960s onward, the chapter emphasizes that the timing of migration is critical, as border regimes and immigration policies shape the nature of mobility—be it labor migration, refugee movement, family reunification, or marriage migration. Chapter 3 explores family roles in care within households that span between the Opoja region and a western European country, offering an in-depth examination of these households as joint economic and social units, where caretaking responsibilities are distributed along gendered and generational lines. While emphasizing the significance of financial care—particularly remittances, which form a vital component of the social security for those remaining in Kosovo—it also considers the practical and emotional aspects of caregiving and how these unfold across borders. The chapter highlights how migrants' legal status abroad directly influences the extent and nature of the caregiving roles they can assume. It also sheds light on the caregiving between siblings, which is an underresearched perspective in the study of families separated by borders. Notably, it points at emerging care arrangements and adaptive strategies as a result of the increasing female emigration, which has created considerable gaps in local elderly care provision. The theme of home and investments is explored in the next chapter (Chapter 4), which focuses on the conditions, social meanings, and implications of migrants' material contributions, examining how houses built by migrants in the home region serve as powerful symbols of family unity while also functioning as markers of personal status and modernity.

Chapter 5 explores the dynamics of marriage partner selection, analyzing how shifting patterns of migration have influenced both individual preferences and family strategies of marriage partners. Conducted during a period when marriage migration represented the sole legal migration route, this examination offers nuanced insights into the complex relationship between tradition and modernity. Rather than positioning these forces as mutually exclusive, the book argues for their coexistence, revealing how they give rise to hybridized gender roles—particularly in the domains of breadwinning and caregiving. The chapter charts the evolution of partner selection practices over time, emphasizing the distinct perspectives shaped by gender and generation. Chapter 6 centres on wedding celebrations, which typically occur during migrants' extended summer visits. These events are portrayed as potent expressions of cultural continuity and communal cohesion. However, the chapter also reveals how widening economic disparities have transformed weddings into sites of social distinction, subtly reinforcing divisions within the community. Chapter 7 delves into

the complexities of cross-border marriages amid an increasingly restrictive migration landscape. As family migration became subject to tighter regulations at the end of the 1990s—particularly in Germany and Austria, where mandatory language proficiency tests were introduced prior to entry—marriage migration emerged as one of the few remaining legal pathways for mobility. This chapter examines how such immigration policies shape the lived experiences of migratory spouses and their sponsors, with a particular focus on evolving gender roles. A standout contribution of this chapter is its rich exploration of gender dynamics when the husband is the migrating spouse—a perspective often overlooked in both transnational family studies and mainstream migration research. Migrating husbands frequently struggle with adaptation. Their migratory move often results in initial dependence on their female partners and in-laws—disrupting traditional conceptions of masculinity and partnership. Many men take on more active roles in domestic care and child-rearing, largely due to earning less than their spouses and lacking cultural capital.

The final chapter (Chapter 9) of the book opens with a return to the field site in 2021, eight years after the conclusion of intensive fieldwork, and offers a synthesis of the individual chapters' contributions. Despite the passage of time, Kosovo remains marked by persistent unemployment and a fragile social security system. These enduring structural challenges underscore the continued significance of family and migration, positioning translocal connections as vital mechanisms for everyday survival and well-being.

From my perspective as a scholar of transnational family relations and care, three major contributions of this book stand out. The first is the author's analytical and empirical emphasis on locality – particularly the nuanced exploration of the specific context within Kosovo. The 'home locality' here is not merely a backdrop; it plays an active role in shaping transnational family relationships and caregiving practices through its prevailing economic precariousness and embedded social norms. In turn, it is itself reshaped by cross-border relationships, which bring economic and social remittances that serve as catalysts for social and economic transformations of both families and the region. The book offers in-depth, nuanced, and reflexively analysed insights into how the Opoja region informs individual positionings within translocal family networks. Although the inclusion of more details on how local conditions in destination areas shape translocal family dynamics would have offered valuable complementary insights, this omission does not undermine the book's significant contribution to the understanding of translocal familial relations. Second, the book also stands out for its ability to capture translocal family ties as a dynamic and evolving phenomenon across both temporal and spatial dimensions, along with the dynamic shifts occurring in caring relations between genders and generations. This is a significant contribution to the burgeoning literature on transnational family relations, which is often concerned with a specific point in time. Finally, the book stands out through its comprehensive engagement with gender and generational dynamics. The author's focus on the experiences of male migrants and perspectives of masculinities in a translocal context is particularly valuable. This emphasis provides a crucial intervention into transnational families, where male experiences have often been overlooked.

With this in mind, the book is of great interest to anthropologists, sociologists, human geographers, and other scholars interested in dynamic accounts on transnational families and caregiving, masculinities and shifting gender roles in migration, translocal identities, and the impact of migration policies on experiences of migration from a dynamic perspective.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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