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Changing Practices of "Being Together" in the Transnational Kin-Relationships among Gorani

The article aims to study how Gorani manage family-kin relationships across space and time examining the continuities and shifts as they create and experience shared co-presence due to the developments of the migration patterns and increasingly complex transnational modes of living. The dynamics of the political, economic, social etc. environment are also considered when people's efforts and practises of doing family and maintenance of kinship are analysed. The author proceeds from the assumption that transnational family-kin members seek and find ways to make (imagined, by proxy, virtual and physical) togetherness and to keep up their relationships viable and active across space and time. In this respect, various tools and strategies supplementing each other are used, among them – memories, imaginations, dreams, gifts, souvenirs, remittances, long-distance communication and visiting trips. The article draws on ethnographic first-hand data which is gathered due to multi-sited fieldwork in selected villages in the region of Góra (sending area) in Kosovo, on the one hand, and the cities of Belgrade and Skopje as labour and living places for many Gorani, on the other.

Key words: Gorani, transnational family, co-presence, long-distance communication, visiting trips

Промена у праксама „бити заједно" у транснационалним сродничким односима Горанаца

Рад има за циљ да проучи начине на које Горанци управљају својим породичним односима у простору и времену, испитујући континуитете и промене у њиховом стварању и доживљавању узајамног присуства услед развоја миграционих образаца и све комплекснијих транснационалних модела живљења. Динамика политичког, економског, друштвеног и других окружења такође се узима у обзир приликом анализе напора и праксе људи у одржавању породичних и сродничких веза. Аутор полази од претпоставке да чланови транснационалних породица траже и налазе начине да остваре (замишљено, преко посредника, виртуелног или физичког) заједништво и да одржавају своје везе живим и активним у простору и времену. У том смислу, користе се различити поступци и стратегије које се узајамно допуњују, као што су: сећање, машта, снови, поклони, сувенири, новчане пошиљке, комуникација на даљину и посете. Рад се заснива на етнографским подацима „из прве руке" који су прикупљени током мултилокалног истраживања у одабраним селима подручја Горе

(област порекла и окупљања) на Косову, као и у градовима Београд и Скопље – местима у којима многи Горанци раде и живе.

Кључне речи: Горанци, транснационална породица, узајамно присуство, комуникација на даљину, посета

Introduction. Approach and aim of the study

Family-kin ties and relationships inevitably affect and are affected by the intensive processes of the continuous migration (especially in the cases when more than one generation is involved). Family and kinship are at the core of some theoretical approaches and conceptualizations about migrations and mobility. The theories of the social networks are the first to take into consideration the relations between migrants, returnees and non-migrated members within family-kin groups (Boyd 1989, 641–643). These networks entangle both, the sending and receiving communities. They are the channels through which information, assistance and remittances are exchanged, thus constituting a form of social capital, which facilitates subsequent movement of people within a certain family-kin network. The examination of the migration decisions (who goes, where to, for how long, to do what etc.) proves they are not made by isolated individual actors, but by larger units of related people, typically – families or households (Massey et al. 1993, 436–440). Migration is perceived as a family strategy for diversifying incomes in response to the risk of economic instability. It contributes to stable income and enables the household to invest in housing, education or commercial enterprises. The concept of family is therefore used as a tool of interpretative approaches, which explain the migration decision-making, the processes of adaptation in host societies and its role for maintenance of the well-being of the sending areas.

The dynamics of relationships within spatially dispersed family-kin groups in result of intensive and prolonged migrations, however, have been less discussed until recently. The transnational turn in migration studies has influenced a new understanding, concerning not only individual migrants and migrant communities, but migrant families and kin groups, as well (Nazarska & Hajdinjak 2011, 111). Since the 1990s, several key anthropological texts have introduced the concept of transnationalism which replaced the classic paradigms of migration studies, the latter focusing on post-migration phenomena within the scope of assimilation and integration in receiving societies (Glick-Schiller, Basch & Blanc-Szanton 1992; Basch, Glick-Schiller & Szanton-Blanc 1994; Hannerz 1996; Vertovec & Cohen 1999; Levitt 2001; Vertovec 2009). Instead, the experiences of migration are examined through the prism of multidimensional social relations and involvements, which migrants, returnees and non-migrants create and sustain in both sending and receiving locations. In this respect, the transnational paradigm shifts the attention from family-kin groups based on geographical proximity and co-residency at the same place to such that can be dispersed and fragmented in result of spatial mobility (Nazarska & Hajdinjak 2011, 122). The researches show that highly active flows of support and close emotional ties within a kin can be traced over long geographical distances, and on the other hand, a lack of support and poor relationships can occur

locally (Baldassar & Baldock 2000; Baldassar, Baldock & Wilding 2007; Bryceson & Vuorela 2002). Therefore, so long as the circulation and transnational exchange of emotional, moral, financial, practical and personal support are possible, spatial proximity seems not to be a key precondition for the existence of family-kin interactions and solidarities (Nedelcu & Wyss 2016, 204). They continue to exist at a distance as migrants and their relatives back home are able to construct "a sense of shared presence".

The increasing worldwide number of people leading more mobile lives, with spatially dispersed families and connections to relatives in different localities along with changing and more complex patterns of migration in conditions of globalized world raise research questions, such as: How people maintain and manage kinship over long distances? Are they able to do so over time? How they maintain their family life? What are the ways of "being together" and the practices and tools they use to experience "co-presence" in everyday life? How these change over time and especially under influence of technological development?

The questions above are addressed in this article on the base of ethnographic research among representatives of Gorani from the region of Góra in Kosovo – a community renowned for the long-standing intensive labour mobility, which often has involved two, three and even more generations within a family-kin group. In the analysis of the ethnographic data I employ the Loretta Baldassar's classification framework that defines four types of co-presence that can be experienced by transnational family members – physical, by proxy, imagined and virtual. "Physical co-presence" means that the one is bodily present with the longed for person or in the longed for place so that they experience them fully, with all five senses. "Co-presence by proxy" is achieved indirectly through special transnational objects (such as photos, letters, post cards, souvenirs and gifts), as well as through other people, whose physical presence embodies the spirit of the longed for person or place. Although people or objects can be touched, heard, seen etc., the physical manifestation of this (by proxy) presence serves as the abstraction of an imagined presence. "Imagined co-presence" differs since it refers to the sense of togetherness that people feel and believe they share even when they are not actively engaged in direct communication with each other – for example, the prayers for missing family member are a form of imagined co-presence. Due to the significant improvements and reduction in costs of the communication technologies, the forms of "virtual co-presence" probably are the most widespread nowadays. They are commonly constructed through the sense of hearing – either directly by verbal exchanges via telephone, or indirectly in the form of written words on email, SMS messages, chat applications. The internet-based telephony and social media, which enable video streaming through webcam, also provide the sense of sight (Baldassar 2008).[1] The virtual communication provides the premise for a "transnational everyday reality" to emerge, which is (more or less) based on instantaneity, simultaneity and immedi-

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[1] Similarly, John Urry commenting on human mobility suggests four different kinds of "travel": *corporeal* travel of *people*, travel of *objects, imaginative* travel and *virtual* travel (for more details see Urry 2000, ch. 3)

acy of interaction over space (Nedelcu 2012, 1346). Furthermore, in the social life all of these types of co-presence intersect so that people are contingently and complexly linked "in patterns of obligation, desire and commitment, increasingly over geographical distances of great length" (Urry 2002, 256).

Fieldwork and data collection

As I mentioned above, the article draws on ethnographic first-hand data collected among representatives of Gorani from the region of Góra in Kosovo. The fieldwork was conducted within the frames of a research project entitled *"To work there, to marry here". Migrations and Family-Kin Dynamics in the Case of Gorani Community: Continuities and Shifts*.[2] Although there was a questionnaire with basic research topics, I preferred conducting semi-structured and unstructured interviews, in order to outline better the evaluations, attitudes and perceptions of the people. Often I encouraged my interlocutors to narrate their personal life experience, i. e. the biographical approach also was worth of use. In their life stories people give an expression of both, their perception of successes and failures, and make generalizations from these that help them to explain the life choices they have made (Brettell 2003, 24–25).

As shown below, family ties and relations, responsibilities and roles take a crucial place in the life-world of migrants and their relatives, they are among the important topics in the narratives. Such ethnographic data allow the researcher to observe the changes in the cultural and social experience of the individuals, their points of view and daily cultural practices, and the meanings people invest in their actions (Roberts 2002, 21). This approach takes into consideration the subjectivity of autobiographic narratives, but finds them valuable as far as they reveal the respondents' opinions, dispositions and attitudes (Lieblick, Tuval-Maschiach & Zilber 1998, 8–9).

The "multi-sited ethnography" approach (Marcus 1995; Boccagni 2010) was also applied – the fieldwork sites were selected villages in the region of Góra (sending area) in Kosovo[3], on the one hand, and the cities of Belgrade (Serbia) and Skopje (Northern Macedonia) as labour and living places for many Gorani, on the other.[4] In total, 77 interviews were conducted with people of different age, gender, education and professions. Some people I interviewed twice and more, in some cases even in different localities. I also met and talked to relatives of my interlocutors from Góra in Skopje and Belgrade (and *vice versa*).

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[2] The project was funded by the Program for Support of Young Researchers and PhD Students – 2017 at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (Grant no 17–23/24. 07. 2017).

[3] I worked in Dragaš, Leštane, Ljubovište, Dikance, Brod, Mlike and Donja Rapča.

[4] My interlocutors in Belgrade descend from Dragaš, Leštane, Dikance and Mlike. In Skopje almost all of the respondents originate from Brod; I also talked with Gorani from Urvič and Jelovjane – two villages located in Republic of Northern Macedonia, but these narratives are not analyzed in this text.

Migrations of Gorani: a brief historical review

Labour mobility out of the birthplace with the aim of earning means for living has been known for centuries among the population in a broad area of the Balkans.[5] The model, according to which men earn money "away" or "abroad" (the neighbouring region, the bigger town, another state/country or "somewhere in the Balkans"), but return seasonally or yearly to their home places and families, is known as *gurbet / kurbet*, or with the South-Slavic term *pečalba / pečalbarstvo* (Hristov 2015, 31). The work engagements and activities are diverse – agrarian, such as harvesting and sheep breeding, or craft industry, such as construction, pottery, confectionery and bakery (Palairet 1987, 25–37). There are a number of common typological features that even give cause for calling this model "Balkan culture of migration" (Hristov 2010, 11).

Particularly speaking of Gorani, I could say they are one of the archetypal migrant communities in the Balkans: for them migrations in search of livelihoods and better living conditions have become a structure of everyday life, influencing and determining the peculiarities of the local culture and the social organization and relationships since (at least) the middle of the 19th century. In the next paragraphs I do not intend to make a comprehensive review of the migration history[6], but just to outline some key moments of the Gorani migration dynamics which are important for contextualization of the questions researched by me.

The preceding studies claim that the basic economic activity in the past was animal husbandry, and especially the sheep breeding (Hasani 2011, 314). The relief in the region is mountainous and the good arable land is scanty, but there is plenty of grazing land. During the winter, Gorani shepherds migrated with their herds to the Adriatic and Aegean coastal areas and even Anatolia. These shepherds were part of the networks in the Ottoman Empire, which supplied the needs of meat, wool, hide etc. Craft industry and the labour mobility, however, were another important possible option for households for earning livelihoods. In the second half of the 19th and especially in the first half of the 20th century, the developing pečalba became a more important source of making living, compensating for the gradually abandonment of animal husbandry. According to the interpretations of many researchers, the destruction of the agrarian system and the profound social crisis in the late Ottoman Empire, caused by the weakening of the centralized power and intensifying robbery, reduced the sheep breeding elsewhere in the Balkans (Selišev 1929, 405–406; Cvijić 1931, 134–135; Trifunovski 1952, 415–416; Ivanov 1993, 140–141; Hasani 1995, 155). Important causes also were the dissolution of the empire, the birth of

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[5] Michael Palairet writes that in the Balkans during the 19th century there were three large regions with concentrations of villages dispatching large numbers of people to work away: Central Bulgaria around Stara planina and Sredna Gora; Rhodope, especially to the north of Komotini; and the area extended from the western borderlands of Bulgaria and adjacent regions of Southeast Serbia to Kosovo, Macedonia and Pindus (Palairet 1987, 23).

[6] For information and details see Hasani 1995, Hasani 2002, Hasani 2011, Đorđević Crnobrnja 2014; Đorđević Crnobrnja 2015a, Tončeva 2012, ch. II).

the new countries on the peninsula and the establishment of state borders through the region, at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century (Hristov 2015, 39–40; Tončeva 2012, 38–39). After the World War I, in 1925 when the state border between Albania and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was finally established, the region was divided – the so-called Kukaska Góra (9 villages) became a part of Albania, while Prizrenska Góra (19 villages) – of the Serbo-Croat-Slovenian kingdom (later on – Kingdom of Yugoslavia).[7]

So, it is documented that at the end of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century many Gorani men worked all over the Balkans – in Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, Greece, Turkey and even in Egypt (K″nčov 1900, 102; Cvijić 1931, 199; Lutovac 1955, 233). They specialised mainly in several craft activities: bakery, selling of dried nuts and fruits, pastry and ice-cream, so as vending of the drinks *boza*, *salep* and lemonade etc. In the common case these migrations were seasonal – the men left in the fall (around St. Demetrios' day) and returned in the spring for St. Gorge's day. Sometimes the work was year-round; then, especially in the cases of extended family households, their male members travelled on a rotational basis every several months. However, when the work destinations were more distant, there were also men who had not returned for several years.

After the World War II, many Gorani families left their homeland forever because of the new political situation and socio-economic relations and the imposed ideological framework, marked by Soviet-type collectivization and forced expropriation of property by the communist authorities (Hasani 2002, 37; Hasani 2007, 146). After the split between the Yugoslav and Soviet leaders Tito and Stalin, the borders with the neighbouring Albania, Bulgaria and Romania who remained loyal Soviet allies, practically became impossible to be crossed. Simultaneously, during the 1950s and the middle of the 1960s the Muslim population in the newly created Socialist Yugoslav federations was put under economic and political pressure. In 1953 it was signed the agreement with Turkey for expulsion of the "Turks" from the Federation to their "motherland" (Vickers 1998, 49). According to some narratives collected in Góra, all migrant workers abroad had to decide – whether to return home or to stay in the respective country separated from their families. Some remained in Bulgaria and Greece, but many went back to Góra. Soon after that their wealth was nationalized. These developments pushed them to permanent emigration – based on their Muslim faith many declared themselves as Turks and whole families left for Turkey through Macedonia (Hasani 2007, 146).

The rest continued to live in difficult and poor economic conditions. As I have already mentioned, the roads to Greece, Bulgaria and Romania as labour destinations were closed. The economic development of the Federation followed its own specific modified version of socialist central planning and industrialization after the split with Stalin. While most of the republics realised economic growth, Kosovo within Serbia lagged in terms of economic development. This additionally

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[7] After the World War II, within the Federative Yugoslavia Prizrenska Góra came into the frames of the Autonomous Kosovo-Metohija province within the Republic of Serbia, and two villages (Urvić and Jelovjane) entered the newly established federative Republic of Macedonia.

stimulated seasonal workers from the Góra region to turn their labour paths to the towns and cities within the Federation. There they worked again as bakers, confectioners and sellers of dried nuts and fruits in order to secure livelihoods for their households. Since the end of the 1960s, with the signing of the official labour force recruitment agreements between the Yugoslavian Government and some West-European states, the Federation became a very active participant in the guest-worker programmes of post-war Europe. My interlocutors claim that there also were Gorani who went abroad as gastarbeiters.

Going to pečalba, as well as temporary working in Europe were male paths. Except for the people who left for Turkey, there were only few cases when women and children accompanied the men working abroad. This started changing very slowly in the 1970s, when some of the male migrant workers took their wives and children along with them due to the acquisition of self-contained flats and the general improvement of living standards. These men were considered as breakers of the regular social order. In some cases there were intra-family tensions and conflicts. According to my interlocutors, even in the early 1990s, this kind of family migration was still seen as an exception.

The Kosovo armed conflict in 1998–1999 was a turning point which is deeply inscribed as "place of memory" by people I talked. Because Gorani took sides with the Serbs during the war and they were institutionally and financially supported by the Serbian state in the post-conflict years (and even today), they were put under social, political and economic pressure by the Albanians in Kosovo. Despite the presence of KFOR there were many revenge attacks and violent actions over Gorani and their property. For instance, the narratives of my interlocutors pointed at burnt down shops, demolished restaurants etc., as well as the closing of some Serbian owned enterprises where many people worked. Thus, large number of Gorani lost their jobs, including those employed in the collapsed Serbian administrative systems (education, healthcare, and police). Furthermore, the Gorani where repressed for speaking their mother tongue, in many villages Serbian classes were dismissed and replaced with Bosnian[8] (cf. Đorđević Crnobrnja 2014, 42–43).

According to the sources, until June 1999 there were around 17 000 Gorani in the region. In result of all these political, socio-cultural and economic reasons and according to the different estimations, between 6 and 10 thousand people left Góra in the following years (Mladenović 2001, 43; Hasani 2002, 320). My interlocutors consider this period as an example of mass exodus. It was observed that migrants had their preferences towards a specific destination for migration, based on the village they descent from. This perception derives from the earlier chain labour mobility. For example, the families from Bachka, Dikance and Mlike went in the greatest numbers to Serbia, mainly to Belgrade, these from Zli potok settled in the autonomous Vojvodina province; families from Brod found new homes mainly in Skopje, Northern Macedonia. All of them point at NATO intervention as well as the

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[8] Currently there is only one gymnasium in Serbian language, and it is not located in the municipal centre Dragash, but in the village of Mlike.

socio-political changes in post-war Kosovo, as the turning point of the sudden replacement of the typical pečalba by migrations of entire families. In most of the cases, the families settled in places where the husband or other close relatives had already worked (see also Đorđević Crnobrnja 2015b, 41–43).

Families who tried to escape by applying for asylum in Western European countries were also numerous. Among my interlocutors and their relatives are such living in Switzerland, Germany, France, Luxemburg, Sweden, Finland etc. In the course of time, this has led to new inequalities and tensions. The "wealthy" relatives from the West constantly show off with their homes, cars and other prestige objects. Many of those who are left behind are jealous and irritated at the same time. On the other side, there is a great pressure on migrants to share their "wealth" with relatives who stayed in the native place and to help them to migrate as well.

In 2008 Kosovo declared independence, not recognized by Serbia. The declaration elicited mixed reaction internationally. The issue still divides the international community.[9] Currently, all Kosovo citizens need an official visa permit in order to work or reside legally in the EU countries (Schmidinger 2013, 126–127). It is practically impossible for one to travel with Kosovo identity documents to states that do not recognize the country. Simultaneously, in the last years Kosovo is considered a "safe third country". Because of this complicated international situation, some Gorani acquired Bulgarian passports in order to take advantage of the opportunity for free travel, which the country as an EU member gave them. However, because of doubts of corrupt practices, in 2014 the consideration of applications of Kosovo citizens was discontinued.

In the given circumstances, marriage has acquired additional significance. The legal papers of the future husband or wife now play a certain role. As far as the marriages are still predominantly endogamous, Goranian girls and boys having legal status abroad have become preferable partners. This kind of family formation is another important tendency that strengthens the pattern of family migration. Thus, European migration regimes and policies also influence Gorani community and its manners of movement.

Living abroad with the entire family, however, changes migrants' priorities: the focus turns towards earning to provide for the nuclear family living there, while remitting to villages of origin takes second place. There are different indicators of the shift in the priorities. These include the strong propensity for naturalization, the acquisition of real estate in the receiving country, and investments in the wellbeing and education of the children there.

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[9] As of 9 February 2019, 102 out of 193 (53%) United Nations (UN) member states and 23 out of 28 (82%) European Union (EU) member states have recognized Kosovo.

Doing family and making "co-presence" according to the classic pečalba pattern of migrations

As I stated above, until recently only men left Gora in search of livelihoods. In order to earn more, they restrained their consumption to a minimum. The gained money was sent or brought to the households in Góra for covering primary vital needs – food, medicines, clothing, and housing. The women and children stayed behind and were taken care of by the husbands' parents, brothers or unmarried sisters, mostly living together in extended rural households. They took everyday care of the children but all the decisions concerning the work distribution, participating in rituals, visiting wives' relatives, education etc. were prerogatives of the head of the household. As soon as the boys turned seven, they would go away with their fathers or uncles in order to take up their profession and to start gaining for the household (Hasani 2007, 146). According to my field materials, the young boys were sent abroad during the summer holidays or after they finished their elementary or secondary education in order to learn the professions. For instance, one of my respondents told me that after finishing fourth class, he and his brothers were sent one after the other to their father and uncles working in rotation in Samobor. There they completed their secondary education and worked during free time. The girls, however, were not allowed to work abroad, nor even go to school; they helped with the housework and learned at home all the knowledge and skills needed for their future role of housewives.

Thus, to provide livelihoods for the near kin is perceived as a moral obligation and duty. The separation, however, is crucial and always induces stress and sadness for both sides – the pečalbars, who were going away and their relatives, who were staying behind. Often the one who was leaving was sad and anxious about the upcoming trip and separation from the family, especially when he was a newly-married man or had a new-born child. Most male respondents, who worked alone abroad, recall this period of their life as one of great pain and often describe it as the most difficult and grinding for them. Today many retired migrant workers relate with grief and tears in their eyes about the moments they missed, while being away. There are stories of men, who were not able to return home for several years, and when they came back they could not recognise their children on the street; in other cases, the father found out that some of the children died during his absence.

Similarly to other regions with strong pečalbar traditions (Konstantinov 1964, 71–74; Hristov 2014, 113–114; Markov 2015, 179–181), around the moments of pečalbar's departure and return, a ritual complex was performed. The pečalbars used to leave the village in groups in the autumn (commonly around the St. Demetrios' day). The days prior to the departure were extremely tense. The one who was going away met relatives and friends, some just wanted to bid farewell and wish him a safe trip; for others this was a chance to send something along to their loved-ones abroad, such as local food or handmade clothes, or some other small gifts. On the eve of the trip, relatives gathered around the table. On the day of the departure, some rituals of a protective nature related to leaving the home, took place. For example, a cup of water was spilt in front of the pečalbar, and his relatives wished him

a safe trip and work as smooth as the water standing before him. The spouse or the parents often gave him some object from the home to carry with himself, in order to preserve the thought of "here" while being "there". These actions aimed to reduce the pressure induced by the separation and leaving home and were a ritual mechanism for dealing with the situation.

Relatives accompanied by a procession of specially engaged musicians, playing *tupani* (drums) and *zurle* (zourias), followed the men to a specific place at the edge of the village. From there they continued the procession to a closer or a more distant destination. Returning to the village, the relatives adorned the doors of the houses with freshly gathered flowers and green twigs, symbolizing the health of the pečalbar. His room was not to be swept this day, in order to avoid sweeping his luck away. Although the man was physically far from home, he remained within the thoughts of his relatives.

During the period of male absence, the mutual concerns constantly accompanied the daily life of the migrants and their relatives left behind. To sustain a sense of family and togetherness and to keep good kin relationships across space was important but also difficult until the recent development of the new technologies. "Imagined co-presence", according the classification of L. Baldassar, was a main way for constructing a sense for shared co-presence – it was expressed by the migrant's thoughts or night dreams about the family members remained in the village of origin, on the one hand, and the latter's prayers for his health and good fortune, on the other. The possibilities for long-distance communication were very poor – messages and hand-written letters were carried by some of the migrants, returning to the homeland or slowly delivered by post office; later on the telegraph and telephone came into use. My elderly female interlocutors often tell sorrowful stories about their earlier years of marriage, when they wrote letters to their husbands and waited anxiously weeks and months to receive an answer. There were also cases, when instead of a letter by the migrant they received the bad news of his dead.

Sending gifts and money to relatives, as well as the support of different initiatives in the village of origin (such as mosque restoration, construction of bridges and fountains, provision of school equipment etc.) could be interpreted not only following the rationalist logic and making economic analysis, but they were closely linked to emotional motives and expression of intimacy (Boccagni & Baldassar 2015, 5). The financial support of the relatives and the local community in Góra was one of the ways of doing family and sustaining kinship; it was an expression of mindfulness and love for those remained at the villages of origin. Migrant workers felt satisfaction and hopefulness that they managed to help the relatives in Góra to improve their living conditions. In many cases this enabled them to cope with poor living conditions, inferior position and various forms of discrimination in the places they worked. As I mentioned above, letters and gifts were exchanged in both directions. These objects and the people who brought them[10] embodied the absent person

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[10] Usually they were other pečalbars bounded through kinship or friendship to the migrant and the

or place, and thus created a form of co-presence ("by proxy" in the terminology of L. Baldasssar).

As the separation was a sad event, so the physical return of pečalbars and their corporeal co-presence aroused happiness and excitement. The biggest fest in Góra (in the past, as well as today) was the week around the St. George's day (*Đuren* in the local dialect). This was the time when most of the working abroad came back to their native villages and the kin reunites. There was even the following widespread saying among the local population: *Ke da si, da si, za Đuren doma da si!* ("Wherever you go, for St. George day you must return home!"). Pečalbars was cordially welcomed home, again with music, dances and a festive table. The fest[11] lasted several days and was organized on a glade near the respective village, where people were grouped based on kinship. This period was also appropriate for arrangements of engagements between the young girls and boys and their families, since most of the relatives on both sides were present and could participate in the rituals. According to the classical ethnographic data and my older interlocutors' narratives, the physical presence of all members of a particular kin network coincided with the period of wedding ceremonies and the circumcision ritual of little boys. These events occured during the summer, mostly in July and August and before the departure of the pečalbars.

As the Polish ethnologist Karolina Bielenin-Lenczowska (2010, 520) notes, organizing such fests was possible and rational in the place of origin, since only the local people could comment on their customs, as well as the material and social aspects of fests and rituals could be observed and evaluated only by them. Thus, in the pečalbar model people structured their life in order to provide the family well-being in Góra. Working away with the intention for returning "home" was a common social norm, as already mentioned. All practices, which created shared co-presence and especially regular pečalbars' visits in the native places, aimed at their permanent return. Because of that, the trips were unilateral – only men working away travelled back and forth. Furthermore, the idea of leisure was not central to their trips to Góra – during their stay they participated in community rituals which define the family-kin life cycle and helped providing their households with resources and products for the time of their absence (for instance, they helped gathering hay and fodder for the livestock).

Continuities and shifts in the ways of "being together"

In this paragraph I proceed from the assumption that there are complex and intertwined socio-cultural continuities and shifts in the practices and tools that people use to experience "co-presence". They are caused by the intensive migrations, which have involved several generations and have been running without cessations for decades, but at dynamically changing political, economic, social etc. macro

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household.

[11] Here the fest itself and its ritual elements will not be explored in details. For more see Antonijević 1974; Tončeva 2012, 94–104.

conditions. In order to outline the transformations better, I shall describe and ana-lyse two particular cases, the data of which are gathered due to multi-sited field-work.

Case 1

I met Amel during the summer of 2018 in his native village in Góra. In the autumn of the same year, I visited his home in Skopje, where I also met his wife and daughter. He was born in 1956 in Góra, in 1975 went to Skopje in order to complete his military service. After that, however, he remained there and started working in the grillroom of his cousin. Four year later, Amel married Esma (she was born in the same village in Góra). She joined him in Skopje just six months lat-er. Amel has changed several work positions, currently he is unemployed; Esma has never worked, she has been looking after the children – a son (b. 1982) and a daughter (b. 1984). The couple travels often between Skopje and their native vil-lage, generally spending the summer in Góra and the colder part of the year in Northern Macedonia.

In the conditions of Kosovo conflict situation, the family sought asylum in Germany, where they remained for two years. Later, they applied and received Bul-garian citizenship (except for their daughter). Thus, Amel and his son went to work in Spain legally – Amel for a season, but his son remained there for 2 years (Esma and the daughter stayed in Skopje at that time). The son is not married yet, and cur-rently works and lives in Switzerland. During my fieldwork in Góra, Amel was waiting for him to come to the village just for a few days after his vacation in Greece. While in his home place, his son has established a daily pattern – hiking the mountain with some friends and visiting cafes and restaurant in the nearby town of Prizren. The daughter married in 2001. She was introduced to her husband in Góra a few years earlier during the wedding ceremony of her uncle (Amel's brother). The boy's parents went to Skopje to seek her in marriage. Because of the war, the wed-ding ceremony did not take place in Góra, but in Skopje, where the young family settled. They had three children, a daughter and two boys. Currently the family lives door-to-door with Amel and Esma in Skopje. They visit Góra every summer just for a short holiday.

On the other hand, Esma's three brothers live in their native village in Góra (she has another brother, who lives in Greece and a sister whose family found ref-uge in France). During my fieldwork in Góra, I spoke with two of Esma's sisters-in-law – Alice and Selma. Selma descents from the same village, but Alice comes from a Goranian village from the Albanian side of the border. Their families live in separate houses, but share common courtyard, breeding several hundred sheep to-gether and thus make their living. Esma's youngest brother, along with his family (they are cattle breeders), live in his parents' house in the village with his mother.

The relationship Esma and Amel have with their near kin in Góra is stable and very active. During my visit to their home in Skopje, they treated me to home-made cheese produced by their relatives in Góra. Esma gave me as a present a tow-el, hand embroidered by her mother in Góra (she keeps at home such several tow-

els). We were watched videos and photos from their native village during my entire stay. The families call each other regularly via Viber phone application. One of my visit to Selma's home I did along with a female colleague of mine, at the end of the meeting, my hostess even sent a photo of her and my colleague to Esma. In this respect, several times throughout our conversations, Amel noted that such everyday communication was impossible in his childhood: "You used to send a letter – whether it would arrive or not, whether the postman would deliver it or not – you wouldn't know! When I was a child, many times I ran after the postman and shouted 'Is there a letter from my father, is there a letter?' But now – there is Internet, my daughter speaks several times a day every day with her mother, despite they live door-to-door".

A few days after my visit in their home in Skopje, the daughter's family circumcised their younger boy. They plan a bigger feast in Góra in the up-coming summer (in 2019). However, some of the relatives came to Skopje for the ritual. Soon after that, Esma and Amel left for Switzerland to visit their son for a few weeks.

Case 2

Sabit and Halil are first cousins, their grandfather had three sons and one daughter, Halil is a son of the oldest brother, and his aunt is a mother of Sabit. The grandfather went to Belgrade to work in 1963. After ten years he obtained his own flat in the city, where the rest of the nuclear family moved in later on. Halil's father married in the 1980s – the wedding ceremony took place in Góra, but the young family continued living in Belgrade, where Halil and his brother were born, grew up and still reside (nevertheless, both of their weddings also took place in Góra). Similarly, their uncles' families also live in the Serbian capital. Sabit's mother, however, married in Góra, where the family remained afterwards. Thus, nowadays he and his brother live with their spouses and children in Góra (they moved to Belgrade for just a few months, in the height of the Kosovo crisis in 1999). Nowadays, they have developed their own small business. Sabit's two daughters had completed secondary school in Góra, but went to receive their higher education in Belgrade. That is where Sabit's sister is married and resides too.

The virtual communication between the cousins is regular and very intensive. Thanks to my initial contact with Halil in Belgrade, I got in touch with Sabit and had the chance to meet him in Góra. After every meeting of ours, Sabit called (via Viber) Halil and even once sent him photos of us together. However, the virtual communication between the two cousins has not been satisfying enough for both of them. Halil claims, he brings up his children to love Góra, and throughout the years his family goes there for the annual leave from work. When visiting, the family meets and spends time with relatives (including Sabit), but they also take the air in the mountain or visit cafes and restaurants in the near town of Prizren.

For three years, however, Halil has not returned to Góra neither for the spring fest *Đuren*, nor for his annual leave, although his wife and children continue visiting for two – three weeks every summer. During our conversations, he always

admits his love for Góra, but his days free from work are not many, and visits to the region are not always possible for him. As for the village fest, it seems too rustic to him from his present living position; he does not approve such manifestations. On the other side, his cousin Sabit always makes remarks before me about Halil's long physical absence. He regrets for the lack of face-to-face contact: "I spoke with Halil several days ago and he told me that you would come. But Halil, he won't come. His wife has arrived just today, there is a wedding in her village, but he is not able to come, he has work. Every time I tell him: 'Come here to be my guest! I will pay the travel and even I will come with my car to bring you!' But he is always so busy".

Both, independently of one another, point out that the number of the weddings in Góra decrease, since the young people more often get married in restaurants in Serbia, Northern Macedonia and other states where they reside. However, according to Sabit and Halil, the wedding ritual is important for the relatives of the young couple, kinship still has its essence and influences this change, since the weddings take place where loved-ones are. Indeed, Sabit and his brother along with their families, as well as their parents, met other relatives in Belgrade on the wedding ceremony of one of their female cousins. Sometimes Sabit and his wife travel to the city to visit their daughters or for Bajram to greet Halil's father who is the oldest in the kin. This allows the two cousins to manage their face-to-face communication, even though not in Góra.

* * *

These two stories support the argument that the ongoing processes of migrations and mobility among Gorani are complex and multi-layered. An important point to mention is that during the last two decades the "family migrations" existed along with the migrations of single men (i.e., pečalba model). Thus, emigration, settlement abroad, return and remigration to a different country co-exist. Different types of migrants (labour, educational, marriage, refugees etc.), living or only temporarily working in various countries, are interconnected economically and emotionally through family-kin ties, as they are connected to relatives and kin members in the places of origin. Gender and age dimensions are also diverse – women participate in migration processes alongside their husbands.[12] Young brides move because of marriage or girls go to study at universities abroad, which a few decades ago was inadmissible, according the traditional norms and rules for what people ought to do and how they ought to behave. There are Gorani who were born abroad; they grow up away from the native villages of their parents or grandparents.

Because of the migration complexity and improved means of communication and transportation, most of the rituals described above have not been performed yet. Notwithstanding, all types of co-presence are still important in the everyday

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[12] I made similar observations in my study of migratory patterns' dynamics among the Albanians from Republic of Northern Macedonia (Markov 2013, 250–251; Markov 2015, 288–291).

strategies of Gorani to "do family" and maintain kin relationships and intimacy. Mutual thoughts and concerns continue being part of everyday routine of transnational kin. "Co-presence by proxy" is also significant – bringing presents and material support for the relatives (i.e. homemade cheese and other foods, which Amel and Esma receive form her kin from Góra), objects and items bearing memories and provoking emotions about loved-ones (such as the towels, embroidered by Esma's mother) are modes for keeping kin proximity and emotional closeness.

There are, however, some important changes, which transform and diversify the "ways of being together". The proliferation of the information and communication technologies in the last two decades has given rise to new, potentially rich interactions from distance, which largely overcome some of the constraints associated with earlier forms of mediated communication (Madianou 2016, 186). It has enabled people to make their communications across space and time more regular, intense, and intimate. Thus, the "virtual co-presence" according to the Baldassar's terminology change the nature and experience of "presencing", since people can feel proximate while still distant. In virtual space it is possible "to sense the other, almost to dwell with the other, without physically moving oneself or without moving physical objects. Being on the screen involves a strange combination of proximity and distance, nearness and farness, what is virtual and what is non-virtual" (Urry 2002, 268). Furthermore, this sense of presence relies upon the emergence of what Mirca Madianou and Daniel Miller have termed "polymedia": media environments become more complex, offering people a range of media opportunities, which they may combine for being together at a distance (Madianou & Miller 2012). Simultaneously, the popularization of social media and smartphone devices have enabled the combination of different types of co-presence: polymedia environments facilitate both "virtual co-presence" (via a variety of synchronous platforms like Skype, Viber, Messenger, What's app) and "co-presence by proxy" (for example through the visual content one can retrieve through social media or video platforms like Facebook, YouTube etc.) (Madianou 2016, 187).

In reality, regardless of the rough mountain terrain of the Góra region, in every village and home one can find good and fast internet connection and people in large numbers (even elders) own smartphones and use Facebook, Viber, What's up for everyday (and free of charge) communication with relatives all over the world. This way they share news, stories, images and videos, creating a multi-sensorial engagement and maintaining the sense of belonging to the transnational kin (Svašek 2010, 868). As shown above, it is a common practice among the people I have spoken to in Belgrade and Skopje to show me photos and videos of their native places, houses, family events and rituals such as weddings, circumcisions etc. The opposite is also true – the narratives of my interlocutors in Góra go along with pictures and clips which portray better their account about close kin members living away or even call them in real time.

The increasing possibilities of doing family in a virtual environment, however, do not undermine the importance of face-to-face sociability (Balddassar 2008, 260). Physical presence and visits have a specific emotional quality and intensity that cannot be reproduced by interactions from a distance. In words of Maruška

Svašek: "The multi-sensorial dimension of co-presence, the ability to see, hear, smell and touch each other, and to interact emotionally within the same time/space frame, allow for a unique form of intimacy which is irreplaceable by communication at a distance" (Svašek 2008, 219).

Many of my interlocutors living in Góra explicitly express their opinion about people's need to be there, to be physically present. Longing to be embraced, as well as the touch and the handshake remain an aspirations for people. Therefore, the corporeal visits have a big emotional charge and people highly evaluate them as the best way to maintain intimacy within kin. Indeed, many Gorani, even the second (and the third) generation still come to Góra for *Đuren*, Bayram, for boys' circumcisions, to marry there. Although nowadays the young people get to know each other mainly via social media and virtual communication, the physical presence of such ritual events still has its significance and social role. Others spend their annual leave in Góra, there are pensioners who remain for the warm part of the year. Many parents send their children during the summer vacation to their grandparents, thus, introducing them to the local Goranian culture and traditions and stimulating their participation in local fests and rituals. In this respect, the driving forces behind the return visits are both – the nostalgia to the native land, the missing kin, and the communal and kin duty "to be there". There is, however, some transformation in the nature of these visits – according to the two cases presented here (and many other within my study) they are often described in terms of "relaxing" and "getting away" from the stressful routine life abroad. Generally, the future return to Góra does not define the trips anymore; the idea of leisure is more central.

Another very significant tendency is particularly visible in the two examples given in the text. The visiting trips are not unidirectional, on the contrary – people from Góra visit their children abroad; they travel to be present at a wedding ceremony in Belgrade or at the circumcision of a boy in Skopje. Especially referring to the weddings, since generally most marriages still are endogamous with preference to partners originating from the same or neighbouring villages[13], such ritual trips to the "opposite" direction could be easily explained through the continuities in the Goranian norms of behaviour. Rituals bring together the kin (this was clearly stated by my interlocutors too), and in the current transnational social field where often most kin members live away from the place of origin, but in close localities abroad, they are performed at the place, which is convenient for most of their relatives.

Concluding remarks

In this article I sought to study how Gorani manage family-kin relationships across space and time examining the continuities and shifts as they create and experience shared co-presence due to the dynamics of the migration patterns and

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[13] The dynamics of marriage practices in correlation to migration and integration of Gorani in Serbia (Belgrade and Tutin) is studied in details by Đorđević Crnobrnja 2018.

increasingly complex transnational modes of living. Although spatial proximity does influence or provide a context for negotiations about kinship and can make kinship relations and practices easier or harder to achieve, it does not define entirely how family ties and kinship are shaped (see Mason 2004, 421). The presented data show that transnational family-kin members may find ways to juggle with time and space, to connect one another and thus to make (imagined, by proxy, virtual and physical) togetherness and to keep up their relationships viable and active. The tools and strategies used by people are various and include memories, imagination, dreams, gifts, souvenirs, remittances, long-distance communication and visiting trips.

In the course of time, the traditional pečalba model of labour mobility has shifted towards more complex and multidimensional movements. Along with that, the globalization process leads to emergence of a novel information and communication technology environment. Gorani take advantage of the new media technologies and applications in order to be together. Yet, as L. Baldassar argues, "while the modes of communication and the possibilities of connection have changed dramatically over the last decade, the structures, processes and expectations of family relationships remain largely unchanged. Indeed, new technologies are arguably most commonly drawn into the service of reproducing the ties, obligations and expectations associated with proximate family relationships" (Baldassar et al. 2016, 135). Thus, the existing common rules and moral regulations about kin obligations serve as social frames, which shape how individuals understand and negotiate their responsibilities and determine their actions, besides the exact way of creating shared co-presence.

Because of that the "need for physical co-presence and corporeal travel would appear to be with us for a long time yet" (Urry 2002, 270). The examined cases by me support this statement, but the ethnographic data also show that in the conditions of various new patterns of migration movements the directions of visiting trips change significantly over time, with "stayers" and "leavers" travelling in both directions, challenging the established dichotomy between mobile migrants and static non-migrants (Janta, Cohen & Williams 2014, 587). Undoubtedly, this affects not only the everyday routines, but also the festivities and the observance of rituals – a problem, which was just marked here, but would be researched further.

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