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Migration, mobility and the dynamics of kinship: New barriers, new assemblages

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Abstract

Although kinship has long since been established as a topic in migration research, migration scholars often lacked an analytical concept of kinship and relied on their own ethnocentric understandings and legal definitions. Reconciling insights from the anthropology of kinship and migration studies, we outline how a new theorization of kinship could be suitable and helpful for the study of migration and mobility. First, we need a conceptualization that accounts for kinship's flexible and dynamic character in changing settings. Second, it is imperative to pay close attention to the intricate ways kinship interrelates with state politics. Lastly, an analytical notion of kinship should take into account that kinship relations can also have negative implications for the persons concerned. Articles in this Special Issue are attentive to these caveats and approach through the prism of kinship different issues of migration and mobility.

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Introduction

> "I'm sorry Dad and Mom. The way I went overseas was not successful. Mom, I love
> Dad and you so much. I'm dying because I can't breathe...Mom, I am so sorry,
> Mom" (22 October 2019).

This was the last message Pham Thi Tra My sent to her mother. A few hours later,
she was found dead inside a refrigerated semi-trailer in Essex, U.K. In the trailer,
the police found 39 dead Vietnamese citizens. All of them had paid enormous
amounts of money to be smuggled from Vietnam into the U.K. in the hope of a
better life for themselves and their families (The Phuong et al., 2019). The father of
Nguyen Dinh Luong, one of the 39 victims, explained, "Our family is big and we
are poor. Luong had seen many other people from this area make this journey and
send money home, so he wanted to be like them" (Smith, 2019). Likewise, Pham
Thi Tra My undertook the risky journey with the purpose of helping her sibling
pay off a car loan and assist other family members with living expenses. Her costly
trip was supported by her parents, who took a loan, using as collateral the prop-
erty of another family member (Suzuki and Geji, 2019). In Tra My's last words, the
guilt she felt over failing to migrate is evident. Chillingly, Tra My's guilt rings
louder than her fear of death.

The illegalization of certain types of labor migration (De Genova, 2002) has
dramatically raised the risks and cost of migration (Cuttitta and Last, 2020; Van
Hear, 2004) and forced migrants to rely on their families and kinship networks
(Andrikopoulos, 2018; Boehm, 2012). The assistance from kin, which is not always
voluntary (Belloni, 2016), places an additional burden on migrants and implicates
obligations that are difficult to denounce (Heidbrink, 2019; Taliani, 2012). In the
Essex incident, it is impossible to understand why migrants undertook such a
dangerous journey without taking into account what motivated them to migrate,
what legal routes were (un)available to them and what means they could mobilize
to realize their aspirations. The answers to these questions relate in one way or
another to kinship and its interplay with exclusionary politics of migration. In the
face of new barriers, increasing exclusion and growing legal precarity, kinship and
mobility obtain a new significance for migrants and aspiring migrants. This Special
Issue explores the dynamics of kinship in the process of migration and examines
the complex articulations of kinship and mobility. Articles in this collection
approach through the prism of kinship migration and mobility issues, such as
the legalization of unauthorized migrants' children in Israel (Kalir, 2020), patterns
of mobility in Cameroon (Geschiere, 2020), the ethnic Greek migration from the
former Soviet Union to Greece (Voutira, 2020), the secrets of Somali and
Ghanaian migrants in the Netherlands (Bakuri et al., 2020) and the beginning of
a new life for two refugees in Britain (Carsten, 2020).

Kinship, once a favorite topic for anthropological studies of small and
"sedentary" societies, has, therefore, become highly relevant for the analysis of

present-day issues of migration in transnational contexts. Yet a concept of kinship is only useful for researchers of migration and transnational processes as long as it goes beyond classic anthropological theorizing that tends to consider kinship static and relevant only for stateless societies. A conceptualization that accounts for kinship's flexible and dynamic character in changing settings is necessary. Moreover, such a reconceptualization of kinship needs to pay close attention to the intricate ways kinship interrelates with state politics. Lastly, an analytical notion of kinship should take into account that kinship relations can also have negative implications for the persons concerned. Kinship is often associated with care and solidarity. But it is also a domain where hierarchies and inequalities are fixed and standardized and intimate aggressions thrive (Collier and Yanagisako, 1987; Yanagisako and Delaney, 1995). These are not anomalies of kinship but rather the dark side of it (Geschiere, 2013).

A more recent stream of kinship studies (Carsten, 2004; Franklin and McKinnon, 2001) showed attentiveness to these caveats. Building upon Schneider's (1984) critique of the anthropology of kinship, they contributed to a reflexive assessment of the meanings of kinship and created a new direction for kinship research. Heading in this direction, this Special Issue explores the possibilities of approaching migration and mobility through the lens of kinship and facilitates a productive dialogue between the anthropology of kinship and migration studies.

Following the theoretical foundations of mobilities studies (Cresswell, 2010; Sheller and Urry, 2006), we conceptually differentiate between migration and mobility. On the one hand, mobility is a more general notion that refers to any type of movement. To be mobile does not only mean that you are on the move but also that you have the ability to move. Apart from a physical movement, mobility is a resource that is differentially accessed and may result in status and power as well as deprivation and exclusion (Urry, 2007: 9). On the other hand, migration has a more specific meaning. It is a particular type of mobility that involves the crossing of international borders and, consequently, is subject to the logic and control of the nation-state (Dahinden, 2016). If we want to understand the relationship between kinship and migration, it is important that we first examine the relationship between kinship and the broader notion of mobility.

The mobilities paradigm criticized social sciences for having a sedentary bias and called for a perspective that does not treat mobility as exceptional but as an intrinsic aspect of human life (Sheller and Urry, 2006). In that regard, kinship and mobility share in common that they both are fundamental dimensions of life. Furthermore, as kinship scholars and mobilities scholars emphasized concerning kinship and mobility respectively, they both relate to power inequalities. The dynamics of kinship and the dynamics of mobility are products of power imbalances as well as the result of people's efforts to counteract these inequalities. Kinship and mobility are related because kinship provides, as Carsten (2020) suggests in her contribution, "a uniquely dynamic reservoir of resources to creatively imagine and put into practice ideas and visions that enable moving to and

living in new worlds." But the reverse is possible too: mobility provides resources that regenerate kinship – a process which may involve the revitalization of kinship relations, the weakening of kinship ties, the emergence of new forms of sociality and the management of toxic relations. The contributions in this Special Issue explore the interconnections of kinship and mobility in migratory contexts, demonstrating how movement results in new assemblages of kinship while kinship dynamics affect mobility.

In the next section, we outline how kinship has been approached in the scholarship of migration and argue that ethnocentric and state-centered notions of kinship limit the analytical potential of the concept. Then we present how a new theorization of kinship – attentive to the plasticity of kinship, its entanglement with state politics and the unpleasant side of kinship relations – could help us better understand different facets of migration.

Kinship in the study of migration

Kinship is not a new topic in the interdisciplinary study of migration. Whereas neoclassical economic models (e.g. Sjaastad, 1962; Todaro, 1969), interpreting migration as an *individual* cost-benefit decision, were once popular and influential, they are now considered outdated. New Economics of Labor Migration (NELM) criticized these approaches for their emphasis on the role of the individual and instead suggested that migration decisions are made by larger units such as families and households (Stark and Bloom, 1985; Stark and Lucas, 1988). Sociological studies also stressed the importance of kinship in migration already from the 1960s. At that time – and to some degree up until today – there was a division of intellectual labor between sociologists and anthropologists according to which anthropologists studied kinship in small, isolated, "traditional" societies and sociologists studied nuclear families in "modern," industrialized societies. Supporting such division, Parsons (1977) argued that kinship lost its societal importance in "modern" societies and became autonomous from other domains of social life, such as economics and politics. Litwak (1960) questioned the validity of this assumption. He examined whether geographic mobility, caused by industrialization and urbanization, have led, as Parsons claimed, to a decline of the extended family. His empirical data showed the opposite: the extended family was revitalized as it obtained a new task to provide aid to its members on the move. Litwak's findings gave impetus to other sociologists to investigate the connection between kinship and migration. A result of this exploration was the literature on chain migration. According to these studies, kinship networks connect migrants and non-migrants in different localities and facilitate further migration by providing all sorts of assistance to new migrants (Choldin, 1973; MacDonald and MacDonald, 1964; Tilly and Brown, 1967). The migrant network approach built upon this literature and made similar claims about the vitality of kinship networks in the migration process (Massey et al., 1987, 2002).

It is clear then that, in the second half of the previous century, kinship acquired a place in studies of migration. However, a problem was that migration researchers relied on Euro-American definitions of kinship and failed to analyze as kinship social relations that did not fall under their own ethnocentric understandings. Characteristically, some sociologists of migration classified as "fictive kinship" social relations that somehow resembled what they understood as kinship but that were a product of neither "biology" nor "marriage" (Ebaugh and Curry, 2000; Kim, 2009; Li, 1977). This categorization did not necessarily reflect how migrants themselves experience these relations and the importance they attach to them. Categories of "real" and "fictive" were rather projections of researchers' understandings of kinship and consequently of limited analytical value for the study of social relations in cross-cultural settings.[1] Lacking an analytical concept of kinship attentive to cultural variation and change, migration researchers, who wanted to analyze the role of social relations in the migration processes, had no other choice than to shift to other categories such as "community," "ethnicity," "social networks" and "social capital."

In recent decades, kinship, or more precisely "the family," reappeared in the research agenda of migration studies. The revival of migration scholars' interest in kinship was partly caused by the introduction of stricter measures against "family migration" and states' construction of the "immigrant family" as an integration problem (Bonjour and Kraler, 2015; Kraler et al., 2011). In Europe, where the nuclear family is the basis of provision of migration rights and thus the target of migration policies, research focused mostly on these family relations and especially marriage (Charsley, 2013; Kofman, 2004). These studies debunked states' assumptions of migrants and their families and criticized the exclusionary character of family migration policies. But often migration researchers uncritically relied on state categories of the family – including definitions of the family and marriage – and failed to recognize that family mobility does not always happen through the formal route of "family reunification" (Moret et al., 2019). Characteristically, research on same-sex couples on the move became part of the marriage migration literature only after the expansion of the legal definition of marriage to same-sex unions (Chauvin et al., 2019: 2). Of course it is important that the legalization of same-sex marriage entailed access to family migration rights for same-sex couples but this does not mean that these couples became families only upon their legal recognition nor that they were not mobile earlier.

The relation between "family life" and mobility has also been approached through the prism of transnationalism, a theoretical paradigm that focused on the links migrants maintain with both their country of origin and their country of settlement (Basch et al., 1992). Kinship provides an infrastructure for the development and maintenance of transnational connections and thus became a key area for the study of transnational processes (Baldassar and Merla, 2013; Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002). Studies of transnationalism provided new framings and empirical evidence on how migrants' family lives are shaped by global inequalities and capitalism (Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2002). For instance, as several studies

documented, balancing family life and professional careers for many parents in the Global North is contingent on the cheap care work of migrant workers. These migrants have often left their children to other family members in their countries of origin in order to migrate, work and send remittances that will ensure a better future for their children (Coe, 2014; Parreñas, 2005). Examples like this illustrate not only how important kinship is for global capitalism but also how kinship adjusts to conditions created by global inequalities (see also Trémon, 2017).

The most recent contribution in the debate over kinship and migration is the edited volume *Affective Circuits* (Cole and Groes, 2016). The book introduced the notion of affective circuits which refers to the networks of migrants and their families emerging from the circulation of material and emotive resources across different localities. Similar to the chain migration approach, the affective circuits notion paid close attention to the transfers taking place within kinship networks and how these are important for the mobility of persons. Yet affective circuits also sought in kinship an answer as to why people migrate: through mobility people attempt to reposition themselves from the margins to the nodal center of the circuits where they have greater control over the circulating resources and obtain authority and respect among their network members. This approach thus added a new perspective to the debate on kinship and migration and set new directions for further research.

As this brief overview shows, studies of migration that considered kinship have been quite heterogenous. Their approach to kinship – often articulated as "the family" – varied: a decision-making unit, a conduit to resources, a network of mutual support, a relationship of care, a social domain subjected to state politics, the economy and globalization. Often these studies lacked a theorization of kinship and relied either on the researchers' understandings of kinship and/or on legal definitions. This choice had particular limitations and either resulted in the replacement of kinship by other analytical notions or contributed to the reproduction of state-centered epistemologies. In the remaining section of this introduction, we theorize a notion of kinship suitable for the study of migration and mobility, reconciling insights from the anthropology of kinship and migration studies.

Mobility and the flexibility of kinship

In her contribution in this Special Issue, Janet Carsten (2020; following McKinnon, 2016) distinguishes two visions of kinship that correspond to two intellectual traditions. The first, *kinship-as-being*, considers kinship static and emphasizes fixity, stability and origin. This model is exemplified by the British structural-functionalist anthropology in the 1950s and 1960s. The second, *kinship-as-doing*, conceives kinship in terms of practices and processes of becoming. This dynamic view of kinship is attentive to change, plasticity and innovation. The second approach is more recent in anthropology, roughly from the 1980s onwards, and intellectually influenced by feminism. From these two conceptualizations of kinship, it is particularly the first, kinship-as-being, that crossed the

disciplinary boundaries of anthropology and reached the interdisciplinary field of migration studies.[2] Talcott Parsons's modernization paradigm, which considered kinship a feature of "traditional" societies, contributed to the spread of the first representation of kinship as an ascribed quality.

Peter Geschiere (2020) addresses Parsons's impact on his own work. In his contribution, he reflects on his struggle with the notion of kinship throughout his 50 years of research in Cameroon and realizes how fundamentally Parsons's "pattern variables" had affected his view on the topic before he started fieldwork. Parsons listed five pairs of antithetical variables and suggested that the transition from one variable to its opposite signals the modernization of a society in question. In the pair ascription-achievement, kinship was placed under the variable ascription, which characterized traditional societies, and was conceived as opposing achievement. Once in the field, Geschiere understood that such a neat opposition was misleading and counterproductive. On the one hand, his Maka informants seemed to be particularly interested in honorific titles and struggled to achieve respectable status. On the other hand, they also demonstrated commendable skills in working with kinship and finding relatives in the most unexpected ways in new locations. Geschiere's ethnography, as well as many other empirical studies, questioned Parsons's modernization hypothesis, which lacked empirical grounding. But even without it, Parsons's model became popular and influential in the social sciences and triggered further debates and discussions. For the topic of this Special Issue, it is relevant to briefly track three distinct trajectories of Parsons's ideas: in migration research, in migration politics and in kinship theory.

First, as detailed earlier, the point of departure in the study by Litwak (1960) was to test Parsons's hypothesis that conditions of modernity, such as the mobility of a labor force, result in a decline of kinship. His findings documented the continued importance of the extended family for American migrant workers and challenged Parsons's claim. Although Litwak's critique of Parsons's model resulted in further research that supported the vitality of kinship networks in chain migration, these studies adopted Parsons's view of kinship as a given status. As explained, this notion of kinship failed to capture the complexity of social formations in migratory contexts and, as a result, migration researchers abandoned the term.

The second trajectory of Parsons's ideas of kinship is more straightforward and without significant diversions. The belief that kinship refers to inborn qualities and is the opposite to achievement survives with surprising tenacity in today's political discourses, especially when it comes to migration control and constructions of the unassimilable "migrant family" (Bonjour and Duyvendak, 2018). The U.S. government's commitment, during the Trump administration, "to end chain migration" because it is "based on an antiquated system of family ties, not skill or merit" is a case in point (White House, 2017).

A third, intriguing trajectory is through the work of David Schneider. A former student of Parsons, Schneider (1980[1968]) was one of the first anthropologists to study kinship in the U.S., marking a rupture with the then common practice of anthropologists studying kinship in "traditional" societies. Nevertheless,

Schneider's choice did not aim to challenge the modernity-tradition dichotomy, as supported by Parsons, but was conditioned upon and reproduced it.[3] The perhaps surprising twist in this trajectory is that a newer generation of feminist anthropologists, some of them Schneider's students, relied on his work (particularly his assertion that blood is a symbol of kinship and not what constitutes kinship) to denaturalize kinship (Yanagisako and Delaney, 1995). Their work had been seminal for the development of the open and progressive view of kinship (kinship-as-doing) which opposed the conservative view of kinship (kinship-as-being) and the modernity-tradition dichotomy embraced by Parsons. We suggest that this dynamic view of kinship, which focuses on the processes of becoming related, could be particularly useful for studies of mobility and migration.

A dynamic and open understanding of kinship can better capture the role of kinship in processes of migration as well as the transformations and shifts of kinship in migratory and transnational contexts. These transformations and shifts of kinship, both in form and in content, are triggered by migration and/or made migration possible.

In terms of *content*, existing kinship relations are reconfigured and may become stronger, especially when they are vital for the migration project itself, or, in some cases, weaker and of less importance. For example, after the termination of guest worker programs in the Netherlands, kinship gained significance for Turkish workers as a new avenue of labor migration to the country (Böcker, 1994). In San Francisco, unauthorized Salvadoran migrants also turned to their kinship networks for support. Nevertheless, having nothing to share with them but poverty, they often ended up having fights with them and even receiving deportation threats from their relatives (Menjivar, 2000).[4] Physical distance and migration restrictions are new barriers for migrants to perform kinship roles and nurture relationships with their relatives across borders. For instance, Filipino migrant parents with children in the Philippines were often concerned that the lack of physical contact with their children and of the possibility to display their affection for them would damage their relationship (Parreñas, 2005). For some Ghanaian parents, meanwhile, migration provided the possibility of fulfilling the role of a "good parent" by remitting money for their children's education and needs (Coe, 2014). Additionally, ideas and practices of kinship change as a result of cultural adaptation that migrants and their communities experience (Foner, 1997).

In terms of *form*, new assemblages and innovative forms of kinship emerge in new settings of migration and mobility.[5] Migrants' encounters with change, uncertainty, legal precarity and cultural diversity often result in novel, even experimental, forms of sociality. In his fascinating ethnography of the U.S. visa lottery in Togo, Piot (2019) detailed a quite telling example of innovative kinship. Aiming to diversify the U.S. immigrant population, the visa lottery program offers green cards to a certain number of applicants in countries with low immigration to the U.S. For Togolese lottery winners who could not pay the expensive consular fee and the airfare to the U.S., Kodjo, a visa broker, had a solution. He could find a sponsor for all these expenses, including his own fee, and in exchange the winner

would marry the sponsor and migrate together to the U.S. Kodjo prepared the new couple for their visa interview and gave them detailed instructions on how to perform kinship at the U.S. consulate. While to an outsider this may seem a "sham marriage" arrangement (see also Andrikopoulos, 2019; Freeman, 2011), very often, the new couples, while in the U.S., lived together, established a family and had children. This outcome was more likely to happen when the sponsor was a man. He could argue that the money he paid was a kind of bridewealth which gave him certain entitlements. Thus, the practice of bridewealth, a marital payment often associated with tradition and therefore seen as static, could also change in the new settings of migration. But new assemblages of kinship can also develop across boundaries of ethnicity and culture (Baumann, 1995). In Amsterdam, for example, unauthorized Nigerian and Ghanaian migrants used the identity documents and worked under the name of other black migrants of African and Afro-Caribbean origin with whom they became "brothers" (Andrikopoulos, 2017). This exchange of documents had a strong economic element (the lender kept about a third of the salary earned by the person who used the documents) and involved significant risks. The framing of the relationship as siblinghood and the appeal to kinship norms provided lenders and borrowers of identity documents some sense of security in this highly uncertain context.

While the processual model of kinship is evidently more appropriate for the study of kinship's dynamics, as in the examples mentioned above, the static view of kinship that emphasizes fixity and origin may also be important for migrants when they look for footholds in rapidly changing settings (Carsten, 2020; Geschiere, 2020). Looking back in history and tracing genealogies provide resources to people for envisioning their life in the future (Voutira, 2020). Yet remembering the past involves the symbolic reconstruction of tradition in such ways that it helps migrants to make sense of their current life in a new place (Yanagisako, 1985). Thus, in the messiness of life that migration amplifies, migrants may rely on both visions of kinship.

State politics and kinship

In the modernity/tradition divide, kinship and the state have been classified as opposing modes of social organization. While in traditional societies, kinship supposedly regulated all aspects of social life, including politics, in modern societies, state political organization presumably forced kinship out of politics and limited its role in the private domain of home. Today this classification is generally seen as simplistic. Empirical studies have demonstrated that state politics and kinship remain interconnected and often are mutually constitutive (McKinnon and Cannell, 2013; Thelen and Alber, 2018). State-generated inequalities, such as the exclusionary side of citizenship, raise new barriers to migrants which they attempt to overcome by relying on kinship (Andrikopoulos, 2018). As migration is a form of mobility subjected to state control, it is important to consider here some of the ways state politics and kinship get entangled.

Perhaps the most obvious overlap is the reliance of national discourses on kinship terminology: the nation as "a family," citizens as "brothers and sisters," the national territory as "home," "homeland" (Kalir 2020) or "mother/fatherland." In all these instances "the nation expropriates the personal sentiments and experiences of its citizens, transferring them to the much larger and loftier stage of the nation" (Eriksen, 2004: 59). The appeal to kinship terminology, even if it is meant to unite, has exclusionary consequences for "migrants." In the Netherlands, for example, many Dutch complain that they do not "feel at home" anymore due to the increased presence of migrants in their country (Duyvendak, 2011). In Greece, ideas of unity based on common "descent" and "blood" have fueled xenophobic behavior and violent attacks against migrants (Herzfeld, 2016). Not all migrants, however, suffer these discriminatory consequences. Those whom the state includes in the family of the nation are given preferential treatment and are not even classified as "migrants." For example, Greece categorized ethnic Greek migrants from the former USSR as *pallinostountes* (repatriates), a term that does not imply lack of belonging (Voutira, 2020).

Furthermore, as Schneider (1977) once noted, kinship and citizenship share similarities in how they are structured and acquired. According to the *jus sanguinis* principle (right of blood), citizenship is acquired through *descent* while according to the *jus soli* principle (right of soil), citizenship is determined by *place of birth*. The first principle was favored in citizenship regimes of *emigration* countries that wished to maintain ties with their diasporas while the second principle was more prevalent in *immigration* countries (Voutira, 2012). These two ways of allocating nation-state membership are often associated with two types of nationalism: *ethnic nationalism* that emphasizes the unity of the nation in terms of ancestry, origin and shared history, and *civic nationalism* that is based on common values and a shared vision of the future. The reality, however, is far more ambiguous, as nation-states increasingly allocate membership according to a set of criteria and rely on diverse discursive resources to construct the family of the nation (Eriksen, 2004; Voutira, 2020).

In the case of Israel, the construction of the Jewish nation as a family transcends the borders of the country and includes all Jewish persons. Barak Kalir's (2020) article focuses on a segment of the population in Israel who is non-Jewish, does not have Israeli citizenship but is "culturally assimilated beyond distinction": the non-Jewish children of unauthorized migrants. After serious consideration, Israel decided to grant legal status to these children and consequently to their parents. At first, this case may seem to signal an inclusive shift in Israeli politics. Yet Kalir's analysis of the public discussions preceding the legalization unveils how deeply Israeli citizenship is understood in terms of membership in the Jewish family. The non-legalization of these children would eventually lead to open and critical public debates about membership in the Jewish nation. According to Kalir, for most Israeli politicians these debates could have been more threatening to Zionist conceptions of the Jewish nation than the legalization of children who have been de facto assimilated.

In addition to citizenship laws, there are many other ways that states impact directly or indirectly the lives of migrants and their families. Over the last few decades, European and other countries imposed strict criteria and controls on "family migrants." The right to family life is available only to those who are legally recognized as a "family." Family relations recognized as legitimate in one country might be illegitimate in others. Examples of such cases include same-sex unions, polygamous marriages, marriages that involve spouses under a certain age, informally fostered children and many others. Other kinship relations, such as siblinghood relations or relations of adults with their parents, might be legally recognized but not result in family migration rights. Therefore, state definitions of the family are important: they determine who is entitled to migrate through formal "family routes." Unsurprisingly, migrants often adjust their family lives to fit state definitions and requirements (Strasser et al., 2009).

But why are nation-states, especially in Western Europe, so obsessed with controlling the family lives of migrants? Obviously, one of the key reasons relates to migration control. Family, and marriage specifically, remain one of the last few open routes of legal migration for those who do not meet the criteria of the privileged categories of mobility. State controls of family migration are essentially meant to decrease the number of migrants who presumably have "poor prospects" (Bonjour and Duyvendak, 2018). Yet there is also something more fundamental. The nation reproduces itself – culturally and physically – through the families of its members. The families of migrants are seen as threats to the cultural reproduction of the nation, at least in the eyes of nativist politicians (Kešić and Duyvendak, 2019; Moret et al., 2019).

The question of social regeneration and how the future is envisioned through kinship is central in the marital practices of the two groups of Greeks in the USSR described by Voutira (2020). For the Soviet state, ethnic intermarriage was an essential step towards the creation of the "Soviet people." But Soviet Greeks, who dreamed of a future in Greece, preferred marriage with a Greek so they could keep their dream alive. In 1949, Greeks from the Caucasus were deported, under Stalin's orders, to Central Asia, where they came in contact with Greek political refugees. These were Greek Communists who had just arrived after their defeat in the Greek Civil War. Greek Communists were surveilled by the Greek Communist Party (in collaboration with the Soviet Communist Party), which discouraged them from marrying locals. Greek Communists had to be ready to return to Greece at any moment. Eventually, many of the deported Soviet Greeks married Greek Communists. Their stories demonstrate in the most telling ways how not only these two groups of Greeks but also the Greek Communist Party and the Soviet Union imagined the future through marriage.

The dark side of kinship

A common tendency in studies of migration is to associate kinship with solidarity, reciprocity and trust. This association singles out the positive qualities of kinship

and neglects the less pleasant aspects of kinship relations. Inequality, fear, abuse, exclusion and intimate violence, to name a few, are also ingrained in kinship practices. To understand what kinship does, especially in shifting and uncertain situations of migration, it is important not to exclude from our analysis the dark side of kinship.

In the chain migration and migrant network literature, kinship relations have been seen as a form of social capital that migrants use to realize their goals. "Kinship forms one of the most important bases of migrant social organization, and family connections are the most secure bonds within the networks," Massey et al. (1987: 140) claim in their study of Mexican migration to the U.S. According to the migrant network model, reciprocal forms of exchange that take place within social networks reduce the risks and costs of migration and thus facilitate migration flows. For Massey et al., reciprocity is stronger within the family and becomes weaker as the social distance increases: "Kinship assistance is generally extended freely and openly up through parallel cousins. Among relatives more distant than these, the strength of ties falls off rapidly, however, and their roles in the migratory process are correspondingly smaller" (1987: 141). This interpretation of reciprocity, as dependent on social distance, originates in Sahlins's (1972) theorization of the notion. In Sahlins's concentric circles model, generalized reciprocity ("transactions that are putatively altruistic") exists in the inner circle (house/family), and as the distance from the inner circle increases generalized reciprocity turns into negative reciprocity ("something for nothing," e.g. theft).[6] Building on Sahlins, Adler Lomnitz's ethnographic study of the networks of internal migrants in a Mexican shantytown suggests that the "intensity of reciprocal exchange depends on four factors: (1) formal social distance, (2) physical distance, (3) economic distance, and (4) psychosocial distance" (1977: 133). The last factor refers to what Mexican migrants called *confianza*, or what we can loosely translate as trust. It was through the Adler Lomnitz's work that migration researchers became familiar with Sahlins's theorization of reciprocity and its close link to kinship, trust and altruism. This approach to reciprocity was then welcomed in migration studies which, by that time, had approached kinship as a conduit to resources.

The linking of kinship with reciprocity and trust is problematic because it places outside kinship's boundaries practices of exploitation, abuse and distrust and at the same time construes home as a "safe haven." Feminist scholars have long argued that home is not equally pleasant and safe for all (Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Yanagisako and Delaney, 1995). Women and children, in particular, are overrepresented in cases of domestic violence and abuse. The rise in domestic violence incidents during the recent lockdowns owing to the COVID-19 pandemic is telling (Ford, 2020). Although these incidents are not a direct result of the lockdown, the imposed restrictions of mobility deprived people of the ability to deal with abusive relationships and avoid tensions. Through mobility and physical distancing people attempt to handle forms of intimate aggression and/or make bearable the dark side of kinship.

In Geschiere's ethnography in Cameroon (2013; also 2020), "the dark side of kinship" refers to witchcraft. Witches are believed to have terrible power over their relatives and be capable of betraying them to their fellow witches for their own benefit. Whenever there are allegations of witchcraft, the search for the culprit begins among those close to the attacked person. It is precisely social closure, not distance, that allows people to harm their kin. Interestingly, witchcraft's reach expanded as the notion of home became more elastic and stretched to include relatives who moved to the city and even outside Cameroon. While in the 1980s Cameroonians reassured Geschiere that "witchcraft does not cross the water" and, therefore, he would be safe when back to Europe, today the fear of occult attacks from relatives affects the lives of African migrants outside the continent (Taliani, 2012). African migrants in Israel feel compelled to remit money to their families not only out of concern for their well-being but also out of fear that disappointed relatives will exercise witchcraft against them (Sabar, 2010). In the Netherlands, problems and tensions arising from the exchange of identity documents, involving migrants who have been otherwise "brothers" and "sisters," are resolved either by an appeal to kinship norms or by a threat of witchcraft (Andrikopoulos, 2017). African migrants' fear of witchcraft essentially stems from their anxieties over the dangers of sociality. These anxieties are not specific to Africans. They can be manifested in different ways in other cultural settings.

The negative consequences of sociality are not anomalies of kinship but rather part and parcel of what kinship does and enables. Often these negative qualities are constitutive of kinship itself. Therefore, it is imperative to go beyond romanticized conceptions of kinship and take into consideration kinship's dark side. For example, if we consider the family the locus of trust, how can we understand secrets[7] that family members keep from each other? And, most important, how can kinship relations be sustained without secrets? This question is all the more relevant as the disclosure of secrets affects kinship relations and especially "secrets concerning sexuality and reproduction have the power to reconfigure families altogether" (Smart, 2011: 551).

The contribution of Bakuri et al. (2020) concerning the secrets of Ghanaian and Somali migrants in the Netherlands offers fascinating insights into the role of secrecy in the sustenance of kinship relations. As they argue, secrecy is not simply about concealing information from others. It is a relational process that requires significant labor, the "labor of love," by the person who keeps the secret and often by those who pretend they do not know it. By keeping certain life choices hidden from relatives, Ghanaian and Somali migrants attempt, on the one hand, to be considerate of the preferences of their families and comply with moral obligations, and, on the other hand, to pursue their personal desires and wishes. Furthermore, their ethnographic cases demonstrate how mobility becomes relevant to secrecy: either because it creates new conditions where secrecy offers a solution to balance relationships in different locations or because mobility facilitates the labor of love and makes keeping of secrets possible.

Conclusion

In the introduction to this Special Issue, we advocated an analytical notion of kinship attentive to the dynamics and elasticity of kinship relations, the intersections of state politics and kinship and the negative implications of kinship practices. Although we draw theoretical inspiration from the more recent, open and progressive approach to kinship (kinship-as-doing), we believe that classical anthropological theorizations of kinship can be relevant and useful in the study of migration as well. One such example, mentioned in Geschiere (2020), is the creative use of the Omaha and Crow kinship classification in the analysis of the history of Bantu migration in Africa (Vansina, 1992). These classifications represent two different forms of kinship organization with different rules of exogamy and different implications for mobility and settlement: the Omaha system corresponds to patrilineality and favors a centralized social organization while the Crow system is generally associated with matrilineal descent and facilitates dispersion.

In his effort to analyze why social networks do not always stimulate further migration, sociologist Hein De Haas (2010) provides an analysis with a surprising convergence with Vansina's appeal to the Omaha/Crow system. Instead of returning to classical kinship studies, De Haas turns to critical approaches to social capital that decouple social networks and social capital, acknowledge the downside of social capital, and differentiate between "bonding" and "bridging" social capital. This last distinction is key for De Haas to explain why not all migration acts lead to more migration and why migrants are not only bridgeheads but also gatekeepers (Böcker, 1994). We share De Haas's conviction that critical accounts of social capital are useful for the study of migration. The lens of kinship can complement these critical approaches to social capital.

Once properly theorized, kinship can best capture the complexities of social life, its contradictions and the shifting meanings and functions of social relations. All these become even more important in the changing contexts of transnational mobility. Kinship provides the means to imagine the future and interpret the past, processes that are vital for migration and settlement in new communities (Carsten, 2020). For these reasons, kinship needs a more central place in migration research.

But as much as migration studies need kinship, kinship research needs ethnography. Among all social science methodologies, only ethnography can capture the ambiguities of kinship, what kinship does and how. After all, the "labor of love" that kinship relations require involves not only the public display of affection and manifestations of support but also the hard labor of secrecy (Bakuri et al., 2020). Ethnography's attention to everyday life, its hidden aspects and its myriad inconsistencies is what makes it the most suitable methodology to study kinship and its entanglement with mobility.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

Funding

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Notes

1. To be fair, in the same period, ethnocentrism also informed, in more subtle ways, anthropological studies of kinship to the extent that Schneider (1984) doubted the validity of the very notion of kinship as a basis for cross-cultural comparisons.
2. The circulation of the static notion of kinship outside anthropology was facilitated by the fact that it overlapped with ethnocentric understandings of kinship as a biological relation in European and American academia.
3. "The kinship systems of modern, western societies are relatively highly differentiated as compared with the kinship systems found in many primitive, peasant societies. By 'differentiated' I mean simply that kinship is clearly and sharply distinguished from all other kinds of social institutions and relationships...It makes particularly good sense, it seems to me, to study kinship in as close to its 'pure form' as possible here in America, rather than in some other society where it is hidden beneath layers of economic, political, religious, and other elements" (Schneider1980 [1968]: vii-viii).
4. Also, the unequal distribution of civic resources necessitates the dependency of unauthorized migrants on authorized relatives which often results in legal violence (Del Real, 2019).
5. This also includes cases of forced mobility. For example, in the time of transatlantic slavery, new and lasting forms of relatedness emerged among enslaved persons, separated from their kin in Africa, during and after their journey to the Americas (Mintz and Price,1992[1976]).

6. In his latest book on kinship, Sahlins maintains the idea that generalized reciprocity exists in close social relationships, conceptualizing kinship as "mutuality of being": "Broadly speaking, mutuality of being among kinfolk declines in proportion to spatially and/or genealogically reckoned distance" (Sahlins, 2013: 53).

7. Often, Togolese winners of lottery visas conceal their migration plans to the U.S., until the very last minute, because they are afraid that spiritual attacks from jealous relatives could endanger their journey (Piot, 2019: 60–61). In the former Soviet Union, people kept their family histories secret even from their spouses and children. If these histories did not comply with Soviet norms of public memory, they could put at risk those commemorating them and their families (Voutira, 2020).

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