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Exit or Voice? The Recent Drivers of Kosovar Out-migration

Judith Möllers*, Arjola Arapi-Gjini*, Thomas Herzfeld* and Sherif Xhema*

ABSTRACT

A remarkable out-migration from Kosovo occurred after the winter 2014/15, raising urgent questions about its underlying drivers and implications for both Kosovo and the destination countries. This article aims at providing a better understanding of key migration triggers and some particularities of the phenomenon. We link our empirically found migration drivers to Hirschman's (1970) famous exit, voice or loyalty scheme by asking in how far the exit must be understood as the explicit alternative to voicing dissatisfaction with the current situation in the country. According to our results, the recent Kosovar out-migration is a clear response to weak governance and thus goes beyond the widespread 'migration-cum-remittances' livelihood practice. In this sense it could be interpreted as a revolt against the political system. With view to policy implications for destination countries, we point at legal travel and migration opportunities as the better solution to channel both voice and exit.

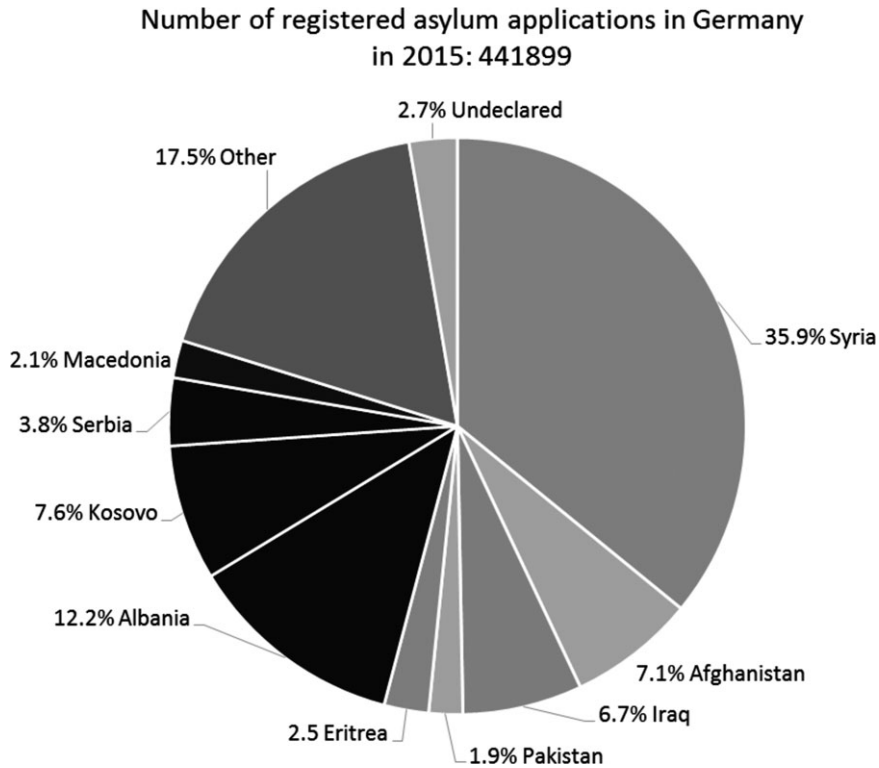
INTRODUCTION

In 2015 Europe faced a major migrant crisis as an unprecedented number of migrants headed towards the EU. While the media focus soon turned to the refugees from the crisis ridden Near East and the boat tragedies happening in the Mediterranean, a remarkable exodus began in the winter of 2014/15 out of the Balkan countries and in particular Kosovo and Albania (Figure 1). It only slowed down in the second half of 2015 when the situation on the 'Balkan route' became more and more difficult and people realized that their chances of being allowed to stay in the destination country were close to zero.

In Kosovo, migration is not a new phenomenon, but a long-standing livelihood strategy. Over the past 50 years, Kosovo has experienced a strong outpouring of people. The majority of Kosovar migrants (70%) originate from rural areas (World Bank, 2007), where migrants were sent out when the traditional livelihood base, the farm, could no longer secure the livelihood of the large traditional households. Suppression of the Albanian minority within Yugoslavia, and the Kosovo War added to this with a large number of refugees in the 1980s-1990s. In the long history of Kosovar out-migration, leaving the country was never a welcome prospect for the migrants, but simply sheer necessity (Reineck, 1991). However, even after half of the estimated 500,000 people-strong diaspora became naturalized within the destination countries (UNDP, 2010), many of them living legally in the EU, strong connections with the home country were never lost (Meyer, Möllers, & Buchenrieder, 2012). It is estimated that every third household in Kosovo has migrant family members (Haxhikadrija, 2009). The main economic link between migrants and family members

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FIGURE 1
ORIGIN COUNTRIES OF REGISTERED ASYLUM SEEKERS IN GERMANY IN 2015



Source: BAMF (2016)

Note: Compared to the previous year, applications from Kosovo have increased by 384% in 2015.

remaining at the origin are remittances, which reflect the popular ‘migration-cum-remittances’ livelihood strategy (Barham & Boucher, 1998; Barjaba, 2000; King & Vullnetari, 2003; Möllers et al., 2015).

After the war ended in 1999 and Kosovo became an independent country in 2008, it appeared as though the era of mass migration had come to an end: many Kosovars returned to their home country full of hope for a better future. At the same time migration doors closed when, among others, Germany, where most Kosovar refugees and migrants lived, ended its generous toleration policy¹ (ESI, 2006). However, emigration intentions have quickly risen to their pre-independence level (Ivlevs & King, 2015) and out-migration has again been increasing in recent years. The recent migration peak may be seen as an extreme amplitude of this new movement. It developed in autumn 2014 and culminated in the first months of 2015. Up to 100,000 people may have illegally crossed EU borders in a very short period. In Germany alone, more than 30,000 Kosovars registered as asylum seekers in 2015. Although the number of incoming migrants from the Balkan countries has decreased significantly in the meantime, this rather sudden and unexpected movement of people raises urgent questions about the underlying drivers and implications for both the concerned Balkan states and the destination countries.

This article aims at providing a better understanding of the key drivers of the recent exodus from Kosovo as well as insights into some particularities of the phenomenon. We link these drivers to

Hirschman's (1970) famous exit, voice or loyalty scheme by asking to what extent the exit must be understood as an explicit alternative to voicing dissatisfaction with the current situation in the country.

We capture the drivers of this out-pouring of people by exploring migrants' views on their home country, situation and emotional state when they left, and their expectations about the destination country and factors pulling them there. Based on this we identify certain categories of migrants along typical narratives. These narratives highlight the key dimensions of drivers of the mass exodus and are triangulated with insights from expert interviews. The article offers new findings feeding into the ongoing migration debate by taking up a very recent event that has raised questions about its causes and consequences among both researchers and politicians.

STUDY DESIGN

The study was driven by the wish to explore an ongoing, puzzling phenomenon: the sudden departure of thousands of Kosovars toward EU countries in 2015. The research strategy aimed at generating a quick, but sufficiently detailed insight into how individual migrants interpret their leaving. While general migration motives are described in the literature, we were particularly interested in understanding the specific (additional) triggers of this significant movement and its timing. Our analysis draws on qualitative methodology relying mainly on explorative interviews with migrants who arrived in the state of Baden-Württemberg, Germany, at the central collection point in the city of Karlsruhe at the end of February 2015. The interview technique was a semi-structured interview based on an interview guide, leaving enough leeway to pick up topics raised by the interviewee (Bryman, 2012). Our guideline covered questions about the socio-economic and emotional circumstances of the migration decision as well as expectations and return intentions. It was designed to elicit a reflective talk about migration drivers as well as the personal experience and perceptions of the interviewees. Migrants were identified randomly in the premises of the collection point, where we approached those who spoke Albanian or could otherwise be identified as Kosovars. All interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and translated. Adding to thirteen qualitative migrant interviews, we further conducted seven expert interviews via telephone and email to capture additional insights. Experts included journalists and publicists specialized in topics related to Kosovo, staff of international organizations and think tanks such as the International Organization of Migration (IOM) and the European Stability Initiative (ESI), as well as researchers and officials. A review of media reports from newspapers and the internet completed the picture. Data collection was carried out between March and May 2015.

We use triangulation techniques by combining narrative interviews (focusing on the specific story of the participant), participatory observation and expert interviews (more focused on the situation and the overall phenomenon). The analysis of migrant interviews is case-centred and seeks to understand the phenomenon through the form and content of participants' stories. As migrants are generally self-selected they may have an incentive to explain their own inability to thrive in Kosovo as being a reflection of the failings in Kosovar society. Therefore, complementary expert interviews are used to get a more balanced view on the situation. They allow us to supplement information from the migrant interviews for a (cautious) validation of findings (Flick, 2014). Despite this, our approach certainly comes with some limitations arising mainly from the small sample size and the sample selection. Generalization is not possible because, for instance, due to pragmatic reasons the sample selection was done from only one location. Yet we are convinced that our study gives valuable and relevant insights into quite a diverse sample of migrants, coming from different regions, with different educational backgrounds and migration histories. Further research based on extended databases is, however, recommended.

BRIEF REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON MIGRATION DRIVERS IN KOSOVO

Ever since its beginnings, research on migration has always stressed the economic nature of migration motivation (Ravenstein, 1885, 1889; Todaro, 1969). Economic motives are certainly relevant for Kosovar and other Balkan migrants in the current migration wave, as they are generally not fleeing from an ongoing war or violent conflicts, but rather from poverty and perceived hopelessness. Nonetheless, the ensemble of migration triggers tends to be more complex. Migration is thought to be motivated, for instance, by risk reduction, family strategies or failures in markets. Transnational networks and a 'migration culture' also trigger migration (Boyd, 1989; Carletto et al., 2004). Finally, according to Hirschman (1970), leaving the country can be seen as a way of voicing dissatisfaction with the situation in the country. Most often, a combination of various factors is at work.

By using Hirschman's (1970) categories of exit, voice and loyalty, we shed light on migration as a response to the relation between citizens and their government. We also respond to the call to re-introduce the concept for a better understanding of today's transnational migration (Hoffman, 2010).² Hirschman argues that relative dissatisfaction with an existing situation may induce action against the situation (and the government that stands for it), i.e. voice, or lead to escaping the situation through exit (Colomer, 2000).³ Thus, exit and voice also reflect a choice between the economic realm and politics, or market and non-market forces respectively. One of the two options will ordinarily have the role of the dominant reaction mode, while at the same time they may substitute or complement each other. The role of voice is expected to increase as the opportunities for exit decline. At the same time, as Hirschman argues himself, emigration may work as a means to relieve a country's economic distress (Hirschman, 1970). Hirschman (1970) furthermore argues that, in comparison to voice, the exit option is less costly. While this may not always be the case in migration decisions, exit in the form of emigration may be seen as a clear-cut and straightforward solution and therefore preferred to the unpredictable outcome of voice. Loyalty, however, the special attachment to an organization or country, could work against the exit option when people decide not to leave with the hope that improvement or reform may be reached. Loyalty thus acts as a "brake on the decision to exit" and will also affect re-entry after exit (Hirschman, 1970: 88).

The specific "migration culture" of Kosovo is reflected in generally positive attitudes towards migration and the fact that migrants are seen as "role models". Ivlevs and King (2012) find that previous migration in the family reduces the psychic cost associated with migration. However, at the same time, migration is often seen as a burden and sacrifice in which the migrant has to support the family at home as part of the 'migration-cum-remittances' livelihoods strategy (Möllers et al., 2013). In Hirschman's terms, this could be seen as loyalty in spite of exit (Hoffman, 2010), where remittances establish the loyalty link between the migrant and the origin. Social capital, especially its underlying social ties/networks, is generally seen as one decisive door-opener for migrants, a phenomenon also known as cumulative causation of migration (Haug, 2000; Pries, 2001). Social networks can play a variety of roles in a person's ability and motivation to migrate, such as social pressure to provide for one's family, offering resources to pay for the journey and providing information on possible routes and opportunities once in the destination country (Cummings et al., 2015). It may also lead to extending voice beyond the borders of the nation-state as for example through the transnationalization of voice within networks of migrant communities as described by Hoffman (2010).

The 'migration-cum-remittances' livelihood strategy and lacking local employment opportunities have always played a fundamental role in Kosovar emigration (Müller & Munroe, 2008; Vathi & Black, 2007). One obvious driver of Kosovo's high migration numbers is the extremely high unemployment rate of 35 per cent (ASK, 2014b). It seems safe to assume that the real percentage is even higher as many rural job-seekers do not register as unemployed. The official youth unemployment

rate is 61 per cent (ASK, 2014b). About two-thirds of the population are younger than 30 and a large number of young people will start searching for jobs within the coming years. Thus, the pressure to migrate will remain high and, indeed, 50 per cent of the young generation say they would emigrate if they could (Haxhikadrija, 2009).

Among the constraints on migration, transaction costs are of outstanding importance. Migration usually requires some seed money, which may often be a hindrance to migration especially in poor households. The initial transaction costs are those directly connected with the move and the duration of time until the migrant finds a job. One would expect social networks to allow for better informed and prepared migration decisions, thus lowering the transaction costs. Yet, it seems that in the past only a small share of Kosovar migrants came to Germany with a concrete job offer, and the majority entered without a valid visa (Möllers et al., 2013). Interestingly, even the efforts in terms of information collection about the destination country seem to be at a rather low level. Still, as was expected as a result of Kosovo's long migration history, networks exist in most cases (Meyer, 2012; Möllers et al., 2013). In the time between 1999 and 2011, family re-unification was reported among the most important reasons for out-migration from Kosovo (ASK, 2014a).

Germany has been an especially desirable destination for Kosovar migrants for a long time now. Economic triggers, social networks and comparatively low entrance barriers make migration to Germany an attractive choice for Kosovar migrants. Möllers et al. (2013), in analysing labour migration from rural Kosovo to Germany, describe three main migration waves (see Table 1). The first wave of labour migrants (before 1986) was characterized by young and unmarried men who were sent by their families to earn money abroad. The migrants understood their migration as a sacrifice that had to be made for the family. This constellation reinforces strong patriarchal family structures (Vathi & Black, 2007) and meant migrants could be ordered back and exchanged by another family member if they failed to remit regularly. Most of the migrants in this migration wave returned as soon as possible or, at the latest, when they retired. The second wave of migrants (1986-1999) was mainly driven out of Kosovo by a situation without prospects – both economically and politically.

TABLE 1

MIGRANTS' SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS ALONG THREE MIGRATION WAVES (2009)

	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Total	Test statistics	
	before 1986	1986-1999	after 1999		χ^2	P
Number of migrants of this wave	40	162	24	226		
Age (years)	60	41	32	43	104.888	0.000
Migration age (years)	25	24	25	24	3.318	0.190
Household size in DE	3.23	3.96	2.29	3.65	26.050	0.000
School attendance (years)	7.85	11.25	11.42	10.68	59.998	0.000
Unmarried at departure (%)	62.50	70.00	75.00	69.20	1.264	0.532
Immigration was illegal (%)	12.82	79.19	66.67	65.57	60.045	0.000
Migration duration (years)	35	17	7	19	141.988	0.000
Months until migrant found work in DE						
Less than 1 month (%)	41.18	17.42	15.00	19.27	5.789	0.055
Between 2 and 3 months (%)	29.41	32.26	20.00	30.73	1.259	0.533
Between 3 and 6 months (%)	0.00	11.61	25.00	11.98	5.520	0.063
More than 6 months (%)	29.41	38.71	40.00	38.02	0.596	0.742
Temporary work permit only (%)	2.50	10.63	58.33	14.29	44.118	0.000

Source: Möllers et al. (2013)

Note DE = Germany. The test statistics for group differences refer to a Kruskal-Wallis-Test.

The labour migrants of the second wave responded to economic and political pressure. During this period, a large number of war refugees also left the country. Compared to the first wave, labour migrants of the second wave were better educated (Table 1). Further, their move was a more individual decision, although this does not necessarily imply that their bonds to their home country and family were weaker. Their status in Germany was, in general, safe. Due to the escalation of the situation in their home country, at that time even illegal immigrants were not deported back to Kosovo. Nevertheless, their situation was also insecure, because work permits were usually only issued for a period of six months. It was also much more difficult than for the first wave to find jobs after their arrival in Germany (Table 1). The third wave (after 1999) includes migrants who left Kosovo in the post-war period when migration flows for some time tended to go back to Kosovo. Migrants of this wave often already had migration experience, but were deported back to Kosovo after the war ended. They used their existing networks and experience and found their way (legally or often illegally – see Table 1) back to Germany. The main motivation for leaving Kosovo (again) was the still unfavourable economic situation. With no prospects in Kosovo, these migrants looked for a better future for themselves and their children abroad. Also typical for this wave is the return of migrants who, after they were in Germany before, had difficulties readapting to life in Kosovo. The current exodus may be seen as a new peak of this third wave.

RESULTS

In the following, we present results on the drivers of the recent migration wave from Kosovo to EU countries (and specifically to Germany) and provide a typology of incoming migrants.

Drivers of out-migration

We identify three main reasons that fuelled recent migration from Kosovo to Germany. First and foremost is a high degree of frustration with Kosovar politics and the weak governance of the state; second, persistent economic hardship that has led to a lack of clear prospects in life; and third, a conglomerate of facilitators that encouraged this wave of migration. The first and second reason link the recent migration peak with Hirschman's voice or exit response to poor governance. Being aware of an unsatisfactory situation and fleeing, according to Hirschman, means preferring a neat exit over the messiness and heartbreak of raising one's voice and starting a revolt. Migration in that sense provides everyone with a "paradigm of problem solving" (Hirschman, 1970: 272).

Serious fragilities persist in Kosovo's economic and political spheres and have led to deep pessimism in the country (Ivlevs & King, 2015). Adding to this, the recent forming of the ruling government coalition caused further discontent and may be seen as the torch that ignited the migration flame. One migrant describes the formation of the government coalition in 2014 as an agreement between a "mafia party" which ruthlessly broke agreements with their partners in a party block, and concludes that one "cannot build a state like this" (migrant interview, 02/2015). The political system, from the point of view of the migrants, is in a poor state. Insights from expert interviews reinforce the view that Kosovar people have lost their confidence and hope. Migrants blame politicians for a highly politicized labour market, shadow economy, corruption and a general lack of the rule of law, which has driven them out of the country. They feel that they have been robbed of their future by the politicians and the powerful: "*It's the politicians who force us to leave our country. [...] Politicians should take care of the affairs of the state, but what do they do instead? They take care of their families and give jobs to their family members who do not even have diplomas*" (migrant interview, 02/2015). Mafia-like structures and nepotism are mentioned by most interviewees as an important cause of their frustration: "*Politicians corrupt themselves, then the*

state and everything else"; "No one will ever invest here as long as these politicians are in power."

More generally, migrants describe their state as poorly functioning in many aspects. In particular, a lacking rule of the law frustrates the people: "Laws in Kosovo are only on paper"; "Only poor people have to follow the laws"; "The laws make Germany a good country. [...] Sadly, there is no justice, no security in Kosovo." (interviews, 02/2015). Of great relevance in this regard is, of course, the labour market, which is described as a highly insecure black market: "You work for one or two months and then you get no pay. And you can't do anything against employers like that. I worked quite often, but not one day accounted for social security payments. It is all black market. If you insist you want legal work, you get fired. This is how it is." There is indeed ample scientific proof of the country's precarious state and poor governance. When assessing Kosovo, the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators (www.govindicators.org) show that in areas such as Voice and Accountability, Government Effectiveness or Rule of Law recently stagnated. This is opposed to most neighbouring Balkan countries, which have shown progress in the last years (Capussela, 2015).

Poor governance is linked not only to Kosovar state institutions, but also to the international community. Migrants reported that they feel abandoned and deceived by EU nations whose rule of law mission, Eulex, is accused of corruption and of protecting senior figures in government: "Even Eulex is corrupt [...]. They take bribes. [...] What can we do? It's like the theatre in our parliament, we laugh ..."; "EU countries pay a lot of money. They support Kosovo in many ways. But they do not control where all this money ends up. This is very bad" (migrant interviews, 02/2015). One-third of the Kosovar population lives in poverty, and deprivation is certainly another decisive push factor. Migrants reported on desperate economic situations, stating for instance: "We are a family of eight and no one has work. How should we survive? (...) What would you do if you saw your family starving?" Many said that they would not have left if the situation had not been unbearable: "My husband could not find a job for a long time. Had we had some minimal living conditions, I would have never thought of leaving Kosovo, never. But, faced with unemployment, not enough food for the children, living in the house of someone else, there was nothing else we could do" (migrant interviews, 02/2015).

Yet statistics do not support the notion that the economic situation has worsened to such an extent to be able to sufficiently explain the observed migration wave. The GDP increased by 5 per cent in 2014, and wages also increased. Our findings confirm that although economic motivation is a key motive, the majority of people currently leaving are not doing so because they are unemployed and poor, but because they have lost hope that things will ever change for the better: "There is no future in Kosovo. To be honest, there is no life there, there is nothing to even survive"; "Most people who left are young. They have no chance, you know. In Kosovo there is mafia, the politicians are also mafia, and people are fed up with all this by now. It's a vicious circle, it will never stop" (migrant interview, 02/2015). One of our interviewed experts (Hashani, 2015, expert interview), describes this as the "collective pessimism" of a nation that is running out of patience with its struggling state and feels it has nothing to lose any more. In the words of one migrant: "People here would rather die than return to Kosovo. For fifteen years we were only hearing 'wait, wait, wait', and we were waiting, but nothing has changed" (migrant interview, 02/2015).

While the lack of economic prospects and a high degree of frustration with the poor governance of the state and political system were identified as the main triggers of the migration wave, there is a conglomerate of facilitating factors that enticed out-migration. These factors contribute to explaining the extent and timing of the wave of migrants.

First of all, numerous (mostly) false promises were spread as rumours through media and personal networks across Kosovo. Thus, Kosovars were lured, for example, by Facebook pages advertising a good life in Europe. One concrete example was a rumour spread in the region of Ferizaj that Germany would automatically grant asylum to incoming migrants who arrived in the month of

February 2015. One of our experts explains the strong impact of such rumours with an attitude of credulousness: *"We Kosovars believe a lot and we hope even more"* (Gjokaj 2015, expert interview). It seems that, for example, the message that the chances for Kosovars to be able to stay in Germany are very low became a pull factor when transformed into the belief that there could be a slim chance for successful migration. *"And now I hope – even though the chances are low – that they accept me as an asylum seeker. Maybe they turn a blind eye if they see that my German is good and that I'm qualified to work here"* (migrant interview, 02/2015).

Second, easier travel conditions have led to a significant decrease in the cost of migration. Many migrants paid only 10 to 20 per cent of the previous standard smuggling rate. The price that migrants paid to the smugglers lied between a few hundred euros and up to 4,000 euros. Since trafficking is a considerable business, some experts suspect that those who directly benefit from the outflow, the smugglers and their accomplices, have purposely contributed to spreading incentivizing information and rumours such as those described above (Gjokaj 2015, Hashani 2015, expert interviews). Cufaj (2015, expert interview) further pointed to information and family networks as additional drivers of the migration wave.

The Serb-Hungarian border was relatively permeable and used by illegal migrants of the third wave (see above) to gain access to the EU for quite some time, but two changes further facilitated migration in recent times. First of all, as of 2013 Hungary no longer detained migrants due to a change in the asylum law in compliance with EU legislation. Thus, migrants, once they entered the EU via Hungary, could travel smoothly towards their final destination countries. Second, unobstructed travelling from Kosovo to Hungary through Serbia has been possible since autumn 2014 when visa free entry to Serbia became operational. That this ease of travel has played a significant role for the exodus shows in an estimated 5,000 cases of parents requesting birth certificates for their children in order to be able to travel to Serbia (Jorge Baca-Vaughan, 2015, expert interviews). According to media reports, in Vushtria alone, the normal number of around 550 requested birth certificates increased to 2647 in December 2014, to 3525 in January 2015, and in early February almost 1000 certificates were issued in just four days (sueddeutsche.de, 22.2.2015). In addition, as many as 60,000 people are said to have applied for a Serbian passport within just a few weeks' time to be able to enter the EU without visa obligations (information from the Serbian Ministry of Internal Affairs according to zeit.de, 12.2.2015). Overall, the migration routes were described as well-organized by traffickers, most of them ethnic Albanians, who have, for instance, established accommodation for migrants near the Hungarian border from which they are then brought to the other side. This situation changed only in summer 2015 when Hungary built a fence in order to hinder further border crossing of migrants.

Finally, a snowball effect built up this migration wave. One expert (Gjokaj, 2015, expert interview) explained: *"If someone spreads a rumour or some information, [Kosovar] people think there has to be something behind it. If we see someone leaving then we think we should leave too."* The feeling of not wanting to stay back when everyone else is leaving, together with the relatively easy travel conditions, the rumours that raised high hopes as well as missing clear signals warning of immediate evictions contributed to a quick rise in people who quite spontaneously decided to leave the country and try their luck as asylum seekers. Thus, (the myth of) successful migration stories became the base of a "paradigm of problem solving" (Hirschman, 1970: 272) which led to a massive exodus. Interestingly, the exclusion of Kosovo from the visa-free regimes with EU states that are operational to all neighbouring countries (e.g. Albania, Macedonia), has only increased the wish and urgency to escape from this situation as it fostered a feeling of being abandoned and isolated from the more prospering EU countries: *"We have borders and we are not allowed to cross them. And this makes them all the more wanting to leave. If they were allowed to come without a visa to Germany, I think, not so many people would be here [in Germany] now"* (migrant interview, 02/2015).

A typology of Kosovar migrants

Migrants who recently arrived in Germany are typically lower middle class people – poor, but not from the poorest strata, often people who had access to some regular income in Kosovo. We estimated that around 60 per cent have completed at least high school education, some even have completed university studies, but failed to find a job. Geographically they tend to come from the Kosovar plains, for example from Kacanik, Ferizaj, Viti, Lipjan, Vushtria, as well as from the surroundings of Prishtina and from Mitrovica. Most of these places are directly connected by buses to Belgrade and thus to the main migration route.

Incoming migrants in Germany reported to have left Kosovo rather spontaneously, without much more than a couple of days' time between the decision and the actual departure. Many were uninformed and naïve with regard to what to expect in the destination country. However, there is also a considerable share of people with previous migration experience. Many even have German language skills which they obtained during an earlier stay. Many of these German speaking migrants left Germany deliberately (often with their parents) after the war ended. They now came back, disillusioned and with the hope of being able to return to their previous lives. One migrant explained "*I [first] left [Kosovo] because of the war. [...] I met my wife here [in Germany] and we raised three children. When the oldest child was six years old I decided, after 14 years, to return to Kosovo. [...] I was so happy that the war was over. [...] I didn't want my mother to die without having seen my children. That was my personal wish and the reason why I returned. But sadly, there is no future in Kosovo*" (migrant interview, 02/2015). A distinct group of young people among the incoming migrants could be labelled a lost generation. They once went to school in Germany after fleeing the war in Kosovo with their parents, and now wish to return because they never fully re-integrated into the Kosovar society after they left Germany (Box 1).

Beside this lost generation we identified three types of migrants: the migrant archetype, families, and a group of particularly vulnerable migrants. The biggest share of incoming migrants in Germany belongs to the migrant archetype – single young men, willing and able to work. These young men are in desperate search of a paid and secure job, which they could not find in Kosovo. They have fled from a situation in which they did not see any prospects for further education, obtaining a proper profession or entering employment at all (Majkowska-Tomkin 2015, expert interview).

BOX 1

A LOST GENERATION – A NARRATIVE ALONG QUOTES OF A YOUNG MAN IN HIS TWENTIES WHO GREW UP IN GERMANY

I lived eleven years in Germany, between 1993-2004. I spent my whole childhood here. I went to school in Germany until the 7th grade. After my return to Kosovo, I had no access to proper education. I went to school until the 10th grade, but not further. I couldn't go on because I was not good enough at school. My grades were not good enough and my Albanian language skills were not good enough. I still cannot write properly. It was hard to follow and understand the lessons at school. Even today I understand a book of 100 pages in German rather than in Albanian. This is a big disadvantage. If you want to go to university you need to pass a test for admission – and this is hard if you haven't learned there from the beginning on. If I could, I would like to get some more education here. If I had a certificate that would be helpful even if I had to return one day. Why shouldn't we have a right to stay here? Why should the chance for a good education be taken from me? We are civilized people, too, if we get a chance, we will integrate very well.

Typical migrant quotes to underline this view are for instance: *“I finished [university] studies and could not find a job for over a year. I was deeply disappointed, this is why I wanted to leave”; “I’m 23 years old. What should I do for the next 44 years? How should I live? I came here because I thought this will be better for me because I can speak German and I could find a job”* (migrant interviews, 02/2015).

A rather new phenomenon is the significant number of people who have left as a group or with their families. The increased interest of young families to leave that was already recognized by Ivlevs and King (2015) now seems to be materializing. Among others, poor health care and education make prospects grim for a young family living in rural Kosovo or in small towns (Shahini, 2015, expert interview). Not all of the families were poor, but they turned their back to a life without prospects. They are looking for a better future for their children and, in opposition to the typical Kosovar migrant of the past, do not intend to return, but to start a new life in the EU: *“I would have never come here if it was not for my children. We could not educate them. [...] We will not return unless they forcefully return us. We have no place to return to. For us the most important thing is that we can stay in Germany, that I find work. [...] I want my children to go to school here, and live here”* (migrant interviews, 02/2015). Cufaj (2015, expert interview) estimates the share of families to be around 20 per cent; Hashani (2015, expert interview) believes that even up to 50 per cent travel in groups of several family members.

Last, there is a smaller group of around 10 per cent of very poor and/or vulnerable persons. Often they are elderly people or people with health problems who hope to get appropriate treatment and social assistance. These are often families who strive for “humanitarian protection” for a sick child or elderly family member that cannot get treatment at home (Shahini, 2015, expert interview). All types of migrants have taken considerable risks, from the high travel costs usually paid with borrowed money or by liquidation of savings and assets, to the dangerous border crossing and unpleasant treatment, often reported during the crossing through Hungary. This reflects their determination, but also the perceived hopelessness of their situation in Kosovo. Experiences with regard to the journey are mixed, but for most of the people travelling was harsh: *“The journey to Germany was very burdensome. We came via Serbia, Hungary, and Austria. This journey was the worst thing I ever experienced”* (migrant interview, 02/2015). The desperate situation in which some migrants find themselves even after arriving safely in Germany was described by one migrant who reported witnessing a family with children who was returned to Kosovo by German authorities: *“[the man was] crying, [...] and he was asking: where will I take my children? I have sold the land, I have sold the house, the tractor, and I have nowhere to return to. Where are we to go?”* (migrant interview, 02/2015).

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In conclusion, we find that dissatisfaction with the current political situation, poor governance of the state, and a lack of prospects in life have been central to the latest wave of out-migration from Kosovo. Thus, the picture described by ASK (2014a) which sees political reasons only as relevant migration drivers before 1999 is no longer true. On the contrary, we argue that the recent migration wave is the result of a struggling state which failed to maintain the enthusiasm and hope of its young nation and turn it into sustainable development. Instead, lack of prospects and accumulated frustration with the political caste that uses the public to enrich themselves, the widespread corruption, nepotism, and unemployment in Kosovo drive out even middle-class people and whole families.

The enraged people, if we follow Hirschman’s (1970) idea of exit or voice, have opted for exit as a response to weak governance and lack of prospects at this stage. This reflects their preference for a

BOX 2

VOICE OR EXIT? SOME STATEMENTS BY MIGRANTS AND EXPERTS

"If they [the migrants] are all sent back, you will see what happens. It will be disastrous. [...] These people have nothing any more."

"But I don't think that they will send us back. [...] Do you know why? Because this will lead to a civil war. And that would be the most terrible thing."

"As long as this bad policy is there, the exodus will not stop, believe me. And a civil war will start. Only those who are supported from abroad, the parents, will be able to stay. No one else. No matter where, no matter how, no matter at which price, they will leave. And when the civil war starts it will get even worse."

"If I have to return, I will get in front of the parliament and I will raze it."

„If I had to return, I know the way back to Germany now, and I could be here in 2-3 days."

(Migrants interviewed in Karlsruhe, 02/2015)

"I think there will be problems but not immediately. [...] But the disappointment of having attempted a better life and failed, will inevitably lead to less patience with Kosovo's inefficient governance so I do think that Kosovo is headed to more pronounced social and political unrest."

(Shahini 2015, expert interview)

"The instant return of 50-60 thousand migrants to Kosovo has the potential of seriously destabilising the country and the government ..."

(Demi 2015, expert interview)

„The return of thousands of migrants in Kosovo could be a social ticking bomb for the country and the government in particular."

(Cufaj 2015, expert interview)

„But, many of them would probably decide to try again. I do not know how permanent the return is going to be."

(Majkowska-Tomkin, 2015, expert interview)

neat (and comparatively cheap) escape over the unknown and maybe violent outcomes of voicing their dissatisfaction. Migrants and experts clearly expressed that the alternative to leaving the country could be violent protest and social unrest (see Box 2). However, Hoffman (2010) argues that exit and voice might as well be considered as not excluding each other, but overlapping and simultaneous. In this sense, Kosovar migration could be seen as a revolt against the political system. This is supported by a statement from a unionist, cited by a newspaper as follows: *"Either the government will ensure that we get our outstanding wages for eleven months and our factory re-opens, or we will rent buses and cars and will also leave the country, a couple of hundred workers with their families."* The unionist further points out that many of the workers have already taken care to have their birth certificates issued for the planned exit (sueddeutsche.de 22.2.2015). This entanglement of voice and exit bears the danger of a crisis with unknown outcomes, especially if migrants are returned quickly.⁴

In economic terms, the outpouring of people could lead to a short-term relief of the labour market within Kosovo. If remittances start flowing, it could benefit impoverished migrant-sending households in the medium-term. However, if migrants are returned before they can cover the cost of their migration, the situation might instead worsen. On the negative side, the loss of people may lead to a brain drain of up to 10 per cent of Kosovo's working age population. Definitely, the exodus poses a significant threat to the viability of the young state when angry young people are losing hope and patience, and a large number of educated and middle class people leave.⁵

Policy solutions addressing the identified drivers of migration will need time. In particular, regaining credibility and trust will be a tedious process and requires a strong willingness for change, including a breaking-up of the existing political and clan structure, politicized labour markets and circle of corruption. External support seems important, yet EU countries also need to regain credibility, and to ensure that future EU policies are convincing and effective.

Visa regulations and asylum laws played a major role in facilitating and encouraging this migration wave. However, when considering measures and actions on the side of the destination countries, smart timing is important. Speeding up the processing of asylum claims is certainly desirable and could lead to a further drop in applications. However, fast evictions could bear the risk of unrest (and thus new out-flows of migrants) in Kosovo. Thus, it might be sensible to offer limited work permits to rejected migrants as part of a gradual return policy in order to prevent a routine filing of objections and thus long and costly court procedures. However, such measures should be limited in time and apply only to those who are already in the asylum procedure so as not to set incentives for new migrants to follow. Clearly, asylum is neither a desirable nor in most cases acceptable way of migration for Kosovars. Therefore, it should be worthwhile to think about alternative, legal migration options. Kosovo desperately needs opportunities for work outside the country, because even under the most hopeful scenarios the majority of young people cannot be employed in their home country in the medium-term. The resulting social crisis carries the risk of causing the state-building project to fail, a scenario that is certainly not in the interest of the EU. Instead, the slightest serious prospect of future legal migration or even simply access to the European visa programmes could help to slow down the incentive for leaving the country illegally.⁶

Temporary seasonal or circular legal work could be a suitable opportunity to offer legal access to work without burdening Kosovo with a massive brain drain. While there is no final proof that temporary or circular migration is a 'triple win' policy tool for managed migration (benefitting the destination country, the migrant and the country of origin), it seems well suited to the traditional migration patterns of Kosovo. In the country, poor households will benefit from remittances, and the labour market could be relieved to allow for substantial reform. For the host society it is important to understand that yes, Kosovars do want access to the EU economic and social systems, but they want it through employment. In that sense, legal travel and migration opportunities are the better solution to channel both voice and exit.

NOTES

1. Toleration ('Duldung') provides that for a certain period of time the holder cannot be compelled to leave. Reasons for being granted such a certificate may be illness or war in one's home country. Many people from Kosovo and Serbia stayed in Germany with such papers for several years; their status, however, remained insecure as the papers were issued (repeatedly) only for short periods.
2. Earlier applications in the field of migration research are for example Hirschman (1993), Pfaff and Kim (2003) on Eastern Germany, and Colomer (2000) on Cuba.
3. Hirschman (1970: 30) defines voice as "any attempt at all to change, rather than to escape from, an objectionable state of affairs"
4. Indeed, the possibility of negative returns to voice is explicitly stressed by Hirschman (1970).
5. The phenomenon of better educated and middle class people leaving the country was already observed by Ivlevs & King (2015).
6. The view that more barriers will increase illegal migration and put the most vulnerable at higher risk is supported by our interviewed experts from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). It is also in line with new research by Czaika & de Haas (2016), who find that travel visa policies and migration restrictions decrease circulation significantly and decreasing migrant inflows are undermined by decreasing outflows of the same migrant groups.

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