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# VISITING FRIENDS AND RELATIVES AND ITS LINKS WITH INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION: A THREE-WAY COMPARISON OF MIGRANTS IN THE UK

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## Abstract

Our purpose in this paper is to explore the various types of interrelationship between two mobility forms – migration on the one hand, and visiting friends and relatives 'back home' (and maybe elsewhere) on the other. The link between visiting friends and relatives (VFR) and migration has until recently been overlooked by migration scholars. It was essentially the 1990s 'transnational turn' in migration studies which highlighted more explicitly the to-and-fro mobilities that migrants engaged in with their homelands. Fast and cheap air travel has facilitated this intense VFR mobility. Taking a wider view, we argue that VFR travel is not a marginal aspect of migrants' lives but is in fact constitutive of contemporary migration and diaspora dynamics. The first part of the paper maps out a typology of the multiple linkages between VFR travel and international migration; this is a complex task given the variety both of forms of migration and of types of VFR mobility. From this we aim to reconceptualise VFR travel as an essential element of most migration, and to draw out some of the economic and personal power geometries implicated in diverse forms of VFR travel and capability. We then examine three contrasting case-studies of VFR patterns amongst three different migrant groups in the United Kingdom: young Germans who are back-and-forth 'free movers' traversing shallow cultural and economic barriers to enjoy what they perceive as an exciting and cosmopolitan life in London; Kosovan refugees whose return visits were initially constrained by their exile status but whose VFR travels have since taken on a touristic aspect; and Latvian labour migrants in Guernsey whose to-and-fro mobility is partly driven by family ties and partly constrained by economic factors and the residence and housing restrictions on this Channel Island.

**Keywords:** migration, visiting friends and relatives, United Kingdom, German migrants, Kosovan refugees, Latvian migrants.

## Introduction

This paper brings together in conversation with each other two distinct forms of human and spatial mobility: international migration, and visiting friends and relatives (VFR). The relationships and functional interlinkages between these two space–time mobilities have rarely been considered. Yet it is one of the main arguments of this paper that, for most migrants, visits to the home country are an extremely important part of their lives as migrants; indeed such visits are constitutive of the very essence of the migrant experience.[1]

The paper has four main sections, the first one conceptual and theoretical, followed by three case-studies – of Germans, Kosovans and Latvians in the UK. Since each of these cases was conceived as an independent piece of research, each has its own theoretical and epistemological underpinning, to be described in the beginning of each case-study. The common features between the case-studies are, firstly, that the lead author of this paper was involved in all studies as supervisor or co-researcher; secondly, that the three studies employ similar methodologies, namely in-depth interviews to samples of participants; thirdly that they all relate to migrant groups living and working in the UK; and finally, and most importantly, that all three projects examine not just the migration of each respective group, but also their members' visits 'home' and other aspects of their transnational lives. As we shall see, each case-study brings unique and rich insights into the migration–VFR dialectic.

In brief, the three case-studies offer the following key perspectives on the relationship between migration and VFR mobilities:

- Case-study 1: Young Germans in England
  This research looks at the migration and VFR behaviour of young, single and mostly highly educated Germans in London and its surrounds. These are voluntary migrants moving across shallow economic, cultural and linguistic boundaries within the EU space of free movement. The study's key conceptual underpinnings are the notions of lifestyle migration, 'middling transnationalism' and translocal subjectivities.

- Case-study 2: Kosovans in London
  A refugee-origin group, Kosovans have settled in London and elsewhere since the 1990s. Their VFR behaviour is related to their legal status and to changing conditions in their politically contested homeland. Drawing on the accounts of both parents and teenage children, we propose the notion of 'transterritorial ties' to an ethnic homeland which now comprises not only Kosovo but also Albania and adjacent ethnic-Albanian parts of Montenegro and Macedonia, as well as other Kosovan

diasporic settlements in Europe. The study also notes the way in which the VFR function increasingly gives way to leisure and touristic visits.

- • Case-study 3: Latvians in Guernsey
  This group is made up of economic migrants recruited to work in the horticulture and hospitality sectors in a Channel Island with restrictive options for long-term residence. The study deploys time-geography and rhythm analysis to explore 'space–time events of co-presence' and multiple blurrings of the distinction between migration and visiting.

## VFR: a missing link in migration studies

The link between VFR travel and migration was slow to be picked up for scholarly attention. Migration theory lacked a vocabulary and a framework to explain these visits and other transnational movements until the 1990s. Earlier migration research categorised and simplified the migration cycle into permanent, temporary and circular migration where return was more or less implicit, yet little or no reference was made to short-term visits 'home'. Instead, 'return' was seen as a definitive act which 'closed' the migration cycle, either for good if the return was permanent, or for a while if the return was part of guestworker or contract-labour migrations. Of course, there was some occasional mention of return visits, for instance of male labour migrants going home to find a wife or to get married, and then perhaps bring their spouse over to the destination country, but usually these were notes in the margin of the main migration story, which was about the emigration itself and subsequent life in the host society (Foner 2005).

It was essentially the *'transnational turn'* in migration studies, dating from the early 1990s, which highlighted more explicitly the to-and-fro mobilities that most migrants engaged in with their homelands (Glick Schiller et al. 1992, 1995; Bailey 2001). These mobilities included both the 'corporeal' moves that migrants made, taking annual holidays, visiting friends and relatives, returning for special occasions like weddings and funerals etc., and non-corporeal mobilities like sending remittances, participating in family and economic decision-making, keeping in regular touch by phone and other electronic communications media (internet, Skype, etc.). These various forms of mobility – corporeal, material, virtual and imaginative – were given further theoretical purchase and empirical explanation under a second important conceptual trend, which characterised the subsequent decade of the 2000s, the *'mobilities turn'* (Cresswell 2006; Urry 2007; Adey 2010). At a more pragmatic level, and especially for migrants moving within Europe, a more intense pattern of VFR mobility has been facilitated by the extraordinary growth in the past 20–30 years of cheap air and long-distance

coach travel – budget airlines and the expansion of the European motorway network – along with the melting away of borders within the EU and its Schengen area.

Stripping back migration and VFR to their basics, both are forms of space–time mobility which exhibit different rhythms. Migration, especially international, is commonly defined as a permanent or long-term change in the place of residence, and therefore a fundamental change in the life situation.[2] Compared to the short-term mobilities of tourism and visits, migration results in a more definitive relocation of the base of everyday activities; and it differs from short-distance mobility (eg. commuting) in that everyday access to places, environments, resources and people is likewise completely altered (Malmberg 1997: 23). Viewed in these terms, we can say that VFR is *enfolded* within the longer-term space–time structures of labour and other forms of migration (Williams 2009: 316), in various ways which will be considered a little later.

Migration, especially long-distance international migration, produces a decoupling of locality, kinship, culture and way of life which fundamentally alters migrants' relationship with space, place and time (Cwerner 2001). Above all, the physical co-presence which appears obligatory to sustain many forms of family and social life is ruptured by the dislocations of migrants from their previous habitual settings (Urry 2002). Whilst Urry points out that 'all forms of social life involve striking combinations of proximity and distance' (2002: 256), there are some socialities which demand corporeal co-presence and cannot be substituted by imagined or virtual co-presence.

Migration thus constitutes a turning-point in VFR patterns – an obvious removal of part of the family/household and friendship groups to another place, which sets in motion VFR mobilities designed to overcome distance in order to retain at least some of the pre-existing family/friendship relations. Once the migration has taken place, movements can either be homeward-oriented in the form of return visits, or the VFR mobilities can be towards the 'new homes' of the migrants, or a combination of both. If the migration is part of a wider diaspora or refugee dispersion to multiple locations, the VFR patterns may also be lateral, across different diasporic locations, rather than necessarily back to the original homeland, which may be inaccessible or historically remote.

Forms of migration which create transnationally split families lead to a complex array of transnational mobilities, obligations and tensions. 'Familyhood becomes a transnational way of life' and visits are a fundamental component of this transnational familyhood (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002: 25). Bryceson and Vuorela (2002) and Janta et al. (2013) point out the various functions and outcomes of transnational VFR mobilities. In some

cases the globally dispersed transnational family can be a carefully planned strategy to optimise the economic, career and educational opportunities of various family members, rather than a divisive factor in family coherence. For others, visits home are important to restore, albeit temporarily, 'family life' and to administer hands-on care to elderly parents or to children 'left behind' in the care of relatives (Baldassar 2007). Friendships and social networks may also need to be maintained and 'worked at' by such visits with the important difference that friendships may be dissolved (or created anew) in the way that kinship relations cannot because of their permanence. VFR mobilities can also be important for reasserting ethno-national identities of migrants, keeping them in touch with their roots and perhaps acting as practical stepping-stones for an eventual return migration (Duval 2004). Finally, for second-generation or post-migrant generation children, such homeland visits can be either pleasurable times of holiday fun and family solidarity (meeting grandparents, hanging out with cousins etc.), or times of tedium and dislocation when they are subject to unwanted cultural pressures to conform and even be introduced to a future marriage partner (Wagner 2008; King et al. 2011).

*VFR and migration: towards a typology of relationships*
The great diversity of types of migration, mobility and diaspora formation, both in the past and more especially in the contemporary world, makes classifying the different ways that VFR is enfolded within regimes of migration an extremely challenging task. This is made yet more difficult by the fact that VFR itself is a far-from-homogenous phenomenon, as detailed above. The following should therefore be regarded as a preliminary attempt at a typology of linkages, based essentially on different types of migration.

• *Labour migrants* returning to visit relatives and friends in their home villages and towns. Usually such visits are timed to correspond with the annual summer holidays, traditionally a period of factory closures in the industrial regions of the destination countries, and also coinciding with school holidays for those migrant households with children at school. Summer is also when other migrants return to the home communities, which can become transformed by this annual mass return of the towns' migrants from various destinations.[3] In addition to the summer return, and depending on circumstances (distance, finance, availability of holiday leave, etc.), VFR returnees may also come at other significant occasions such as Christmas, New Year, Easter, religious festivals, weddings etc. However, many of these special occasions (village festivals, weddings etc.) are often timed to coincide with summer and good weather

(Baldassar 2001). Given the different demographic components of labour migration – for instance single men, or entire nuclear families, or married women migrating alone – the return visit may comprise a whole family or just one person. Homeland-based relatives may also visit migrants abroad, although this seems to be less common and only to develop at a later stage of the evolution of the migration system.

- *Highly skilled expats* whose work contracts may involve regular visits to their home countries. Such visits relate to annual leave entitlements, with one or more visits paid by the foreign or multinational employer; more frequent visits may also take place to visit family members and friends, and perhaps children in boarding school, depending on distances and costs involved. Typical locations for such expat placements include the Gulf, the United States, Singapore, the Far East and Latin America. As well as expats working in multinational corporations such as those involved in the oil industry, there are many other categories including diplomats, the staff of international organisations, and those working in the aid, development and charity sectors.

- *Lifestyle migrants* who make regular visits to friends and family. The most 'typical' lifestyle migrants are international retirement migrants such as North European nationals who have settled in southern European destinations such as the Costa del Sol, the Canary Islands, the South of France, Tuscany, Cyprus etc. In addition to their VFR function, return visits may also take place for medical check-ups and treatments, and to escape the extreme summer heat. Lifestyle migrants who live in attractive rural and seaside locations may also be frequently visited by friends and relatives, for whom the visit might be a holiday. Some lifestyle migrants relish the flow of visitors, for instance grandparents seeing grandchildren; but other visitors may impose unwanted pressures on the hosts' duty of hospitality (for examples, see King et al. 2000; O'Reilly 2000; also Benson and O'Reilly 2009 for an overview of lifestyle migration).

- *Diasporic populations* make homeland visits for a variety of reasons and across a range of diasporic generations. The notion of what constitutes a diaspora also affects the types and functions of visits: no longer limited to historic 'victim' diasporas like the Jews or the Armenians, the conceptualisation of diaspora has broadened to include labour diasporas, trade diasporas, imperial/colonial diasporas etc. (Cohen 1997). As defined and studied by writers such as Tsuda (2003), Wessendorf (2007) and King and Christou (2010), diasporic return travel involves holiday, study and touristic visits to the ancestral homeland to rediscover 'roots' and family connections. From the point

of view of identity formation, such visits seem often to make the visitors realise that they are, after all, more 'American' or 'British' or 'German' etc. than they idealistically felt when they sought to 'find' themselves in the ancestral or ethnic homeland. In other cases such visits may not involve 'pure' VFR but be more related to ethnic tourism to diaspora heritage sites: those 'visited' are deceased ancestors and their symbolic places. Good examples of this are Basu's (2004) study of 'roots tourism' to the Scottish Highlands and Islands or the many studies of African Americans' return visits to the sites of slavery in West Africa (eg. Bruner 1996; Holsey 2004; Fehler 2011).

• Finally, *circular migration* creates a blurring of emigration, return and VFR. Where the migrant is constrained by the nature of the work (eg. seasonal work in agriculture, tourism or construction) or by visa regimes (eg. only visitor or limited-length visas are available), then periods of work abroad alternate with 'forced' visits home, often for extended chunks of time. Depending yet again on the distances and costs involved, VFR may also take place for weekends during the short-term circular migration stints, especially if the ties and obligations to family members are strong. As we shall see later, the Latvian case matches this type.

## VFR: constitutive of migration

Instead of being a marginal or incidental aspect of the phenomenology of migration, we argue that VFR, especially in the 'home place' of migrants' origins, is constitutive of the very essence of migration (Hirsch and Miller 2011). We make this argument because, viewed emically, the migrant experience is often built around returns 'home'. Migrants assign enormous importance to their return visits, and to keeping in touch with relatives and friends, and this importance manifests itself in various ways, as revealed by ethnographic studies of migrants' lives. Migration is often the means by which family members are sustained in their home communities via remittances. As noted earlier, repeated visits may be necessary to render economic, 'hands-on' and emotional care and support to vulnerable family members. In their own accounts of migrancy, migrants often remark how they only 'come alive' during those times of the year, notably the annual holiday return, when they are 'back home': eleven months of sacrifice (hard work, saving, scrimping on non-essentials) is geared towards one month of relaxation, enjoyment, sociability, and giving presents, To cite just one example from the literature, Anthias (1992) remarks in her detailed study of Greek Cypriot migration to London, how her research informants frequently said that they 'live' for the month or six weeks that they can spend every year in Cyprus.

On the other side of the migration–VFR relationship, there is much that needs to be done to enhance the importance of VFR within tourism and travel research. According to Janta et al. (2013), VFR is fundamentally an expression of the relationship between tourism and migration/diasporas. VFR constitutes a major, if under-recognised component of tourism flows; and this contribution is constantly being reshaped by developments in transport and communication technologies, economic and cultural shifts, and changes in migration and mobility patterns (Jackson 1990; Backer 2012). Certainly tourism scholars have been slow to pick up on the way that mass migration gives rise to mass, if often hidden, travel and tourism flows; these flows are unrecorded to the extent that VFR migrants generally do not spend overnights in hotels and other 'official' tourist accommodation. In a similar vein, Feng and Page (2000) have drawn attention to the lack of recognition of 'ethnicity' as a powerful shaper of tourism flows, citing the example of Chinese migrants in New Zealand and their visits to friends and relatives in China and elsewhere.

Before unfolding the specificities of VFR by comparing examples from the three chosen case-studies of highly skilled free movers, labour migrants and refugees, we need to step back and consider how VFR is conceptualised. VFR should be seen as a relational practice that is arranged to occur at a particular place: it is an 'event of place' (Massey 2005: 140–141). It is an event, or series of events, where relatedness is practised; such events are anticipated, experienced, and remembered; and as far as our analysis here is concerned, embedded both within the wider socio-spatialities of the migrant experience and within the life-course of the persons affected. Such visits are dramaturgical encounters with more-or-less predefined choreographies. As a visit is essentially a temporary event, the visitor/guest is expected to stay a while and then leave. The visitor engages in a host–guest power relationship which depends on several things: the gendered and generational kinship relationship or pre-existing friendship (also subject to influencing factors such as age or gender); the relative economic and social status of the visitor *vis-à-vis* the visited (which may shift as a result of wealth generated through migration); and the expectations of hospitality (on the part of both sides) and generosity (especially gift-giving by visiting migrants) which are, again, a combination of traditional customs and new ones introduced by the migration experience.

Whilst the general thrust of the VFR–migration relationship is the way that the former is enfolded into the latter, so that it is migration that shapes and structures VFR, this relationship can also be reversed. VFR can potentially inform and generate future migration through the creation of 'search spaces', mobility competences and new social networks (Williams

and Hall 2002). Some of the British retirement migrants interviewed by King et al. (2000) had decided to move to their Mediterranean destinations partly as a result of visits to friends and relatives who were already living there. Our Latvian case-study in this paper also shows how some Latvians visiting migrant relatives and friends living in Guernsey use these visits to scout out possibilities for migrant work for themselves.

We also need to recognise that, just as international migration choices are heavily influenced by citizenship allocation, country of origin, regimes of migration control and economic status, so too is the ability to engage in VFR transnationally. The terrain of migration and VFR is not a level playing-field but characterised by economic and political power geometries which impact differentially: transnational movement is easy if you are wealthy and travelling visa-free; but difficult or even impossible if you are from a poor country or an undocumented migrant engaged in low-wage labour in the informal economy. For this latter, disadvantaged category, visits home to a distant country may be near-impossible. Refugees are also deprived in this respect: indeed it is precisely the impossibility of return and the denial of VFR travel (except perhaps to other refugee-diaspora locations) which defines the exilic condition of the refugee. Of course, these situations may change if there are political and security improvements in the homeland, as our Kosovan case-study will illustrate.

In order to reconceptualise VFR within migration and mobility studies, we need to determine *when*, *why*, *for how long*, and *under what conditions* migrants visit relatives and friends, or are visited by them, and how all parties concerned *react to* and *interpret* these visits. The three case-studies presented in the remainder of this paper explore these various dimensions of VFR in different migration contexts set within the UK.

## Case-Study 1. Young Germans in England: middling transnationalism, translocal subjectivities and ambivalent views of 'home'

The first case-study, drawn from Mueller's doctoral thesis (2012), looks at the VFR behaviour of young Germans in the South East of England, and especially London. This group of highly educated migrants are voluntary free-movers crossing shallow economic, cultural and lifestyle boundaries in order to experience a period of their lives in what they perceive to be a more exciting and cosmopolitan environment, especially that offered by London as a global, vibrant multicultural city.

Germans in England are a good example of what has come to be termed 'middling transnationalists' (Conradson and Latham 2005a). Such migrants, according to Conradson and Latham, constitute an important yet under-researched segment of transnational migration. They stand 'in between'

two stylised images of transnational migrants counterposed at either end of the social spectrum: high-flying corporate elites on the one hand, and desperate, poverty-stricken labour migrants and asylum-seekers on the other hand. 'Middling' migrants are 'part of the vast majority of the skilled and educated… [such as] students, nurses, mid-level technical and clerical employees, ambitious and upwardly mobile middle classes' (Favell, Feldblum and Smith 2006: 2). Although a few of the interviewees in this study do fit the 'transnational elite' description of Favell's (2008) 'Eurostar' ideal type (highly educated, career-driven, cosmopolitan, multilingual, mobile between key 'Euro-cities'), others are simply taking 'time-out' in order to experience a different lifestyle in a different city/country. Career-wise they may be 'marking time' or even taking jobs below their qualifications. Their objectives in migration are essentially cultural and experiential: they are manifestly not economic migrants (as are Latvians), and even less are they refugees (like the Kosovans). They move between countries of roughly equal economic well-being, and whilst one of their objectives might be language improvement, they are not moving to a linguistically alien country since all possess, before migration, good or at least acceptable English. Moreover, there are no institutional barriers regarding visas, residence, work permits or access to public services. Such migrants can therefore be regarded as the 'pioneers' of intra-European mobility and of European integration (Recchi and Favell 2009).

Estimates of the size of the German 'presence' in the UK range from less than 100,000 (based on Labour Force Survey sample statistics) to more than 250,000 German-born recorded in the 2001 census (but this includes British nationals born in Germany). A further estimate suggests that 40 per cent of recent German entrants to the UK (averaging 15,000–20,000 entrants per year over the period 1991–2011) are between 25 and 39 years of age (see Mueller 2012: 63–71 for more details on these estimates).[4]

Given the lack of a primary economic motive for most young Germans' moves to England, we can consider their migration as motivated at least in part by lifestyle and life-stage reasons. They are moving at a particular time in their lives (often soon after graduation, in their 20s) and seeking a new, urban, cosmopolitan experience in what is perceived as one of the great global cities, in the case of the majority who relocate to London. To the extent that they are 'lifestyle migrants', their consideration as such goes against the prevailing interpretation of lifestyle migration as motivated by the desire to 'escape' crowded and stressful urban environments in favour of a more relaxed rural or seaside way of life, often in a warmer climate. Our consideration of young Germans in England as – at least partly – lifestyle migrants thus constitutes a critique of the conventional rural, escapist

construction of lifestyle migration common in the literature (see Benson and O'Reilly 2009). Most of the research participants in this study, indeed, were moving from one city to another, or from rural areas and provincial towns in Germany to the UK's major metropolitan area, and to selective parts of that metropolis.

This opens up a debate on the final element of the conceptual scaffold of this study, the notion of translocal subjectivities, which has particular relevance for sense of belonging and VFR behaviour. According to Conradson and McKay (2007: 169), 'the formation of migrant selfhood is usually more closely related to localities within nations rather than to nation states'. 'Translocal geographies', the term preferred and proselytised by Brickell and Datta (2011), puts, if anything, too much emphasis on place. 'Translocal subjectivities' implies a more nuanced and multi-scalar engagement with space and communities, and also brings in an affective, emotional component to people's sense of belonging to more than one place/ locale/region. This concept takes into consideration migrants' ideas about their experiences and practices of transnational connections, including visits, allowing us to highlight the subjective experience of being in one place yet thinking about and being emotionally involved with another. To quote again from Conradson and McKay (2007: 168–169), 'translocal subjectivities comprise the emotional investment and commitment towards both the locale, and its people, that one has migrated to, and the locale and the people there that one has migrated from'.

## Methods

Formal, recorded interviews were carried out with 39 young to early-middle-aged German migrants in London (33) and other British cities (6). This purposive sample was limited to unmarried childless migrants who had mostly arrived in England in their 20s and early 30s. At the time of interviews, they ranged in age from 23 to 42 years. Males made up 17 of the sample, females 22. The interviewees were contacted and recruited via either 'organised' German social spaces (the German Protestant Church, the 'Zeitgeist' German pub, 'After Work Drinks' sessions in Central London bars etc.) or 'unorganised' German social spaces such as through the 'German Forum' website, informal social events such as group hikes, or chance encounters. Participants were briefed on the research, their consent was obtained (to record and quote), and all usual ethical procedures with this kind of research were followed. All names are pseudonyms. All interviews were conducted in German and carried out between November 2009 and September 2010. In addition, 10 'key figures' were interviewed within the same time-frame (these include a German pastor, baker, journalist, embassy staff member,

pub owner etc.), and numerous informal conversations were held with the community which included the interviewer/researcher (Mueller) working as a bartender in the German pub, attending church services and subsequent coffee sessions, participating in countryside hikes, going to After Work Drinks gatherings, attending parties, etc.

A note on research positionality: Dorothea Mueller is herself a German migrant to England, arriving at age 18 to do a geography degree at Oxford, followed by a PhD at Sussex (Mueller 2012). She is at the lower age-range of the interviewees, and shares some common characteristics with them. However, to position her at some fixed point along the insider/outsider spectrum would be too simplistic. Rather, it is a question of identifying some shared experiences with the research participants (and these vary from participant to participant), but also differences (cf. Ganga and Scott 2006; see Mueller 2012: 9–20 for more on the methodology of this study).

From the interviews and other field data, it was found that VFR behaviour depends essentially on two sets of controls, or at least influences: firstly the form that the migratory project took – university study, within-company job transfer, 'clean break' with past employment history in Germany, migration immediately following graduation etc. Secondly, VFR behaviour was conditioned by the way that the migration to England was embedded in longer-term mobility histories. Here, three main types were identified:

- *bi-local migrants*: these were first-time migrants from their German home-place, which was often a provincial town, to London/England; hence the VFR patterns are bi-locally defined;
- *multi-local migrants*: they have migrated before coming to England, either within Germany and/or internationally; hence their VFR patterns are correspondingly more complex and multi-local;
- *settled migrants* have been in the UK for a relatively long time (eg. since their university degree in the UK, or settled with a British partner); hence we observe a distinction between their friendship networks, which are British-based, and their relatives who are in Germany.

Before we examine these threefold VFR patterns in more detail, there is one important aspect common to all interviewees: why did they choose to migrate to England? Germans in England often justified their choice of destination in terms of geographical (and sometimes also cultural/linguistic) proximity, precisely in order to maintain transnational/translocal connections, above all the ability to 'do' VFR – both going 'home' and having friends and relatives from Germany visit them. In this respect comparisons were often made with the United States (English-speaking but too far away)

or with France (where interviewees referred to the language barrier). The US being in a different time-zone also made evening phone-calls and Skype chats more difficult to schedule. In the words of Sven (age 33):

> I wanted to move to a metropolis… I would have loved to go to Paris, but my language wasn't good enough… and so the English-speaking countries were the alternative… The USA was too far… the cut would have been complete… I wouldn't have been able to fly back for visits…

### Bi-local migrants: My mum said, 'I'm not an entry in your diary!'

Bi-local migrants were mostly recent and younger-age arrivals in England, having left Germany immediately or soon after finishing their education, and often moving straight from their parental home. They had therefore never left their social network for an extended period of time; their friendship groups and quite often their parents and other close relatives were all in the same place or area in Germany.

For bi-local migrants the norm in their area of origin, and hence amongst their family and social networks there, appeared to be geographical stability not mobility. Interviewees contrasted their own 'escape' from an otherwise predictable lifestyle and life-course with their siblings' and friends' counter-model of staying put, getting a steady job, and eventually settling down in their own dwelling with a spouse and children.

Yet bi-locals' escape from the norm of stability was only partial, and likely to be only temporary, if their initial plans are fulfilled. Theirs was a strategy of taking 'time out' – usually planned as one or two years – before returning and resuming their 'normal' life-path of a career and rejoining their social networks in Germany. Often the bi-local migrant moved 'travelling light', just with one or two bags of possessions, leaving most of their 'stuff' symbolically behind in their parents' place, awaiting a fairly imminent return. Armbruster (2010: 1237) refers to this as 'half-hearted migration': yes, it is a move between two countries, but with a certain lack of conviction, and with the expectation of a 'return to base' after a year or two. Bi-locals want to spend time abroad and accumulate new experiences, yet are happy with migration as a somewhat conditional existence, rather than building a new life abroad.

The provisional nature of bi-locals' move to England meant that theirs was rarely a career move. Rather, the German career was put on hold whilst the jobs taken in England were often below the migrants' qualifications, especially in the case of the females in this group. Sandra's quote below is typical of this view of migration.

So my original timeframe was a year… there's quite a few who say that, a year, I don't really know why […]. I always treated going abroad with a lot of respect; you're completely on your own, and you don't know anyone, and… that's why I thought, OK, I can do this for a year. And my boss at the company I was working for at the time… they kept my workplace for me for a year (Sandra, 24).

Interviewees remarked how going against the norms and expectations of their families and friends provoked certain reactions in these close associates. Elena (25), who had both her family and her close-knit circle of friends in one region in Germany, said that she felt she had somehow gone against her friends' wishes, and that they were 'humouring' her as a result of this, awaiting her return. Her decision to migrate was driven by her wish to 'get away' for a bit from her overprotective family and circle of friends: she used the German word '*gluckenhaft*', which refers to a hen looking after its young, to describe her situation in Germany. Other interviewees reported the pressure from parents (especially mothers toward daughters) to stop 'playing' by being in England and to come back and resume a 'proper life' in Germany.

For VFR behaviour, the key point about bi-local migrants is that they feel they must continue to 'keep up' with their friendship obligations and family duties at home and not 'miss out'. The fact that their friends and relatives are concentrated in one area in Germany helps to facilitate this. Many mentioned the one-hour flight to Germany as a way of highlighting their ability to maintain high levels of involvement with their social and kinship networks there. Reflecting the strong affective component of their translocal subjectivities, they invested a lot, financially and emotionally, in frequent visits and keeping in touch with friends and relatives. Indeed, in some cases their involvement with their friendship networks was so intense that it was almost as if they had never left.

In practice, however, this intense pattern of frequent VFR had its downsides, as some of the evidence introduced below will attest. The notion that one could live in England and still spend weekends at home with their friends and visit parents proved to be not so easy as many interviewees expected. The one-to-two-hour flight is actually embedded in much longer door-to-door journey times: you have to get to the airport, go through security, and then arrange onward travel at the other end. Many cheap flights leave and/or land at unsocial hours, and involve lengthy shuttle-bus connections. Moreover, all these frequent weekend visits home interfered with participants' wishes to explore and experience London and life in England, setting up a 'competition' in their choice of how to allocate their weekends.

Returning to Elena, she had just gone through a phase of being in Germany at least once a month for the past year or so. She also emphasised the amount of visitors she had received, often close friends who had visited her before and were there for a second, third or fourth time. She was closely in touch with her Germany-based friendship network and was clearly very involved with important occasions, like birthdays and weddings. For her, all this constant travelling and hosting was getting too much, as she felt she hardly had any weekends free. Moreover she was also aware of the cost element. Even cheap flights come in at around £30–50 return, and the prices for connecting travel have to be added to this, bringing the cost of each round-trip to £80–100.

Tilman (26) had his own strategy for keeping in touch with life and people at home. His strategy was to buy plane tickets en masse up to a year in advance, taking advantage of the rock-bottom price offers from Ryanair of flights at around £20 return. By using this tactic he was able to travel cheaply back home for weekends; and if, in the event, he could not make a particular weekend, only a small amount of money would be forfeited. He went home to spend time with his family and friends, similarly to when he was still living at home during his university studies. However, he also found that the amount of time available on these weekend visits was usually very limited – 48 hours or so to see friends and family, go out, sleep, and get to the airport again. His family had felt put out by the rush he was constantly in when visiting, and his mother had complained:

> I did this [the regular weekend visits] for quite a while, and I noticed it became really hard work, so I've cut back a little... My parents also said, it's not nice if I'm home, the constant rush, this time pressure... Like, I started micro-managing my parents, like saying, if we want to eat together, it has to be at 7pm sharp, because at 8.30pm I'm meeting friends, and I need to shower and change... and my mum said, 'I'm not an entry in your diary!'... Since then, it's all become a bit quieter.

Beyond migrants trying to navigate between frequencies and pressures of visits and emotional involvement at home and their new lives in England, a second problem arises when life at home and friendship groups move on. Like Tilman's initial idea that his German social life could continue as before, Sarah, too, felt that she could simply slot into her friendship network at home, but gradually her friends were no longer willing to make a special effort to meet up with her, and she felt disappointed about their lack of accommodation.

It's a bit of a shame: it's all falling apart [her friendship group in Germany]. When I'm back there, I try to organise meetings for us… you try to get all the people you know to come to a bar… And the last time I tried, of the 10 or 12 people I contacted, only two showed up… You'd think that if they knew I was coming, they might make a bit of an effort to coordinate with me, at least that's what I would do, but they didn't do that at all…

For these bi-local migrants, then, VFR patterns are rather simple spatially but circumscribed by conflicting emotions. There is guilt at 'abandoning' their family and friends, countered by a desire to keep in touch as often as possible.[5] Given the perceived closeness of Germany to England, there is an expectation, both on the part of the migrants and those being visited, that travel back and forth can be easy, frequent and cheap. Hence bi-locals start out with the notion of keeping in close physical and emotional contact with friends and relatives by visiting, and perhaps also being visited, frequently. A further layer of guilt and disappointment occurs when these visits prove to be not so quick, cheap and stress-free as originally anticipated. This disappointment intensifies when the coherence of the friendship group starts to crumble, as in the case of Sarah, whose rather egoistic sense of her importance to her social network was severely dented when only two turned up to a planned reunion.

### Multi-local migrants: 'A whole lot of my friends have moved to London as well'

Compared to bi-locals, multi-local migrants are oriented towards more than two places or regions, and sometimes to more than two countries. They have a history of family and personal migration. The first move is often within Germany when they relocate to another city for university studies. Others have been internationally mobile before coming to the UK, and yet others have moved around within the UK. Many recounted how their first international move was going on an Erasmus exchange when doing their undergraduate degree – as Conti (2012) found for Italian graduates living in Britain. The multi-locals are closest to Adrian Favell's (2008) 'Eurostars' in that they tend to be well-qualified professionals with highly transferable skills including linguistic and intercultural abilities. Many moved to England for explicit career reasons, working for instance in the financial and IT sectors.

In many cases there was an acknowledgement that internal migration within Germany had prepared them for their subsequent international mobility. Björn (28) related how he saw his initial move out of his parents' home to start university in another city as comparable to his move to

England. In addition, quite a few of the multi-local interviewees came from what could be termed transnational families (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002: 3), where migration is part of their family history and/or relatives are scattered in different countries. This 'family habitus' of migration could be either due to forced migration of parents or grandparents at the end of the World War Two, or the result of labour migration into Germany. Amongst this subsample of interviewees, for instance, were those with one parent who was French, another Italian, another Greek, etc. Moreover, the multi-local participants were themselves more likely than the bi-locals to have 'international' friends and partners, which both reflects past mobility and prefigures future mobility.

Regarding the patterns and obligations of VFR, these respondents were far more blasé than their bi-local counterparts. Björn again:

> [Friends and family in Germany] just had to cope with me moving to the UK. Like I said, I had already left behind friends and family when I moved to another town to study; it was a separation to start with… And then when I went to Australia for a year, I didn't meet up with any of my friends there, and when I came back from there I wasn't in Germany long enough for them to get used… they were already used to me being on the move a lot.

Friendship networks have thus become scattered as a result of past migrations, with the result that VFR travel, especially the VF component, becomes geographically scattered and probably more irregular than bi-locals' monthly returns to the family base. Parents, it seems, are less 'demanding' about return visits, partly as a result of their own migration heritage. According to Lasse (36), his parents never complained about his move to England, and he had to think quite hard about whether they had ever voiced any misgiving. Of Lasse's siblings, one was currently living abroad, and the others had either studied or worked abroad for a period of time, meaning that mobility was very much the norm in his family. Lasse's own history of mobility had given him a scattered friendship network that reflected this; but now he was finding that many of his friends were ending up in London, where he was:

> I don't know whether it was sheer luck or something else, but when I came to London, in the beginning I was all alone, but within the next two or three years, a whole lot of my friends, really good friends, moved over to London as well: some close friends from university… then a friend from 'sandpit days', from before primary school, and it's really funny that all of us are here now together...

For those with many friends still in Germany, these are likely to be scattered and thus not visited very frequently – perhaps only as part of a combined business and leisure trip. Multi-locals' aim seems to keep in touch, rather than keeping things the same. Some interviewees suggested that their mobile lifestyles (and that of many of their friends too) constituted a true test of friendship. Whilst some friendships fade away, others remain or get stronger despite the irregularity of the contact and meetings. Tamara (36), who had been living in the UK for ten years, expressed the special quality of some of the friendships she had:

> I'm not great on the phone or with email, but I try really hard to see them regularly… I really try, even if it's once a year or every other year, to organise a meeting where you spend some time together, and I have to say, I was surprised, but with good friends, even if you haven't seen one another for two years, and maybe not spoken so much on the phone, but you kind of know… when you're just hanging out together, then the first two–three hours are catch-up and then, after that, it's like not much has changed, the friendships are just there, and that's really nice to know, that they don't go anywhere just because you haven't spoken or emailed. I really appreciate that.

This is a very different scenario to Sandra above whose friendship group was disintegrating, or Elena and Tilman who tried to maintain unrealistically close contact with whole groups of friends still in Germany.

The final point to note about multi-local migrants is the relationship between, on the one hand, their past migration histories and their current patterns of VFR, and, on the other hand, their perspectives on return to Germany. On the whole multi-locals are not return-orientated. Unlike bi-locals, for whom migration to England is a one-off pending an imminent return, multi-locals have more complex mobility profiles; in a sense mobility *is* their life and this is as likely to involve 'moving on' to another location rather than staying put or return-migrating to Germany. And yet they have a more informed perspective on return should they decide to do so because most of them have experienced living in and visiting more than one (often several, in fact) German cities. Different migrants in this group thus mentioned the attractions of Berlin, Frankfurt, Hamburg etc. – these were not their 'home' cities, but where they had lived/studied before coming to England. The comparisons that they drew, after several years in London, made most of them cautious about settling back in Germany, at least for the time being. Lasse had been a frequent visitor to Frankfurt both for work and VF purposes; he had thought about moving there, but then decided against it:

Recently, I visited friends in Germany, at Bockenheim in Frankfurt. Of course it's nice… there's a bit more space that you can afford there, but other than that, it all seems a bit… it all seems a bit petty-bourgeois [the work he uses is '*kleinbürgerlich*']… Of course it's nice to have a large flat, but… there's negative things. To use Bockenheim as an example, the flat they [the friends] have, it's not huuuge, and the city [Frankfurt] wouldn't give me the opportunity to earn as much money [as I do in London]… And when I walk around South Kensington, it's a nice feeling in comparison to Bockenheim… Am I jealous? I don't think jealousy in that sense exists for me… I'm relatively convinced that, if I wanted to, I could move back to Germany any time… but then I decided against it.

To briefly sum up: compared to bi-local migrants, it is clear that proximity and distance are perceived very differently, with emotional investments and visits to Germany spread more widely. Multi-local migrants are more comfortable with their lives and personal relations spread out in space and time. They are, to use a phrase coined by Morokvasic (2004), 'settled in mobility'.

### Settled migrants: 'You wonder whether you got it totally wrong'

When bi-locals and multi-locals become long-term stayers and do not return, they evolve into our third category, settled migrants, who, rather than being 'settled in mobility', exhibit a more conventional form of 'settledness'.

Settled migrants have been in the UK for at least 5–10 years. Some arrived at a young age – sent by their parents to boarding school to do their A levels or International Baccalaureate, or arriving in their late teens or early twenties to go to a British university for undergraduate or master's studies. The category also includes those who envisage staying for a longer spell because they are now settled with a British boyfriend or girlfriend. Jana (27) had been in the UK, albeit with an interruption, since 2001. She originally attended an English school as a one-term exchange student but enjoyed it so much that she stayed to finish her schooling, applying, like most of her cohort of classmates, to English universities. After her undergraduate studies, she went back to Germany to work for a year or so, but then returned to the UK to rejoin her partner and her friendship groups from school and university. Konrad's (28) story was similar: arriving at a age of 16 to study for his A-levels, he also wanted to follow his cohort of English school friends into university, staying on for a master's degree and then a job in the City.

Both Jana and Konrad, and others like them, display the pull of friends they made during school and university years. Hence there is a

spatial separation between their friendship circles, mainly rooted now in England, and their parents and relatives in Germany. They seem to have minimal guilt about being separated from family; and in some cases this can be explained by their parents encouraging them to go to England for educational purposes. Moreover, as some of the 'settled' migrants are likely to be older by virtue of the length-of-stay criterion, their parents may no longer be alive. Paul (38) admitted in his interview that his parents' death 'gives more freedom to my mobility'. Jana joked that she knew the UK better than Germany, having spent most of her later teenage and adult years in the former country. Hence she had a far wider and more intense social network there than she had in Germany.

For settled migrants, the bigger decision is about whether, and when, to return to Germany. Those who do not envisage return, at least for a while if not longer-term, are those with a British or non-German partner who does not feel drawn to, or able to find work in Germany. Others self-question as to whether their decision to remain abroad for so long was indeed the right one. Florian (32) reflected on this dilemma:

> When you visit people at home, you always wonder whether they didn't get something right… and you got it totally wrong… They settle down, getting a house, family, children; and you go there for dinner and you talk about insulation systems for houses, which is something I'd never talk about, but for them it's really important, and they talk about XY has a sale on and you think wow, great, I want some of that, simply because it's been such a long time since I felt rooted in a region… You know your brother goes to the pub every week with the same people who have known each other for ages, it's just a different dynamic of people… and I skype with people at home, or others, but it's not the same thing, it's just not the same interaction…

One implication of an eventual return to Germany after a prolonged stay abroad which was mentioned by a few perceptive interviewees, but not grasped by many, concerns the consequent 'reversal' of the pattern of visiting friends left behind in the UK. Since this study did not incorporate returnees into the research design, we cannot verify the extent of this VFR 'reversal', but other studies of return migration confirm that this turning around of transnational ties and visiting patterns is indeed a relevant phenomenon (King and Christou 2011; Reynolds 2011).

## Case-Study 2. Kosovans in London: transterritorial ties to a homeland now with a sea

Our second case-study draws on post-doctoral research carried out by Zana Vathi and mentored by Russell King. Their project sprung out of the former's Marie Curie doctoral-fellowship research on Albanian migrants in London, Florence and Thessaloniki (Vathi 2011), and extended one aspect of this PhD research – that on the transnational behaviour and identities of first- and second-generation Albanians in London – to a parallel study on *Kosovan* Albanians in this city. The Kosovan case is qualitatively different from the other two considered in this paper because the community has its origin as *refugees*. The elements of forced migration, suddenness and 'flight' make both the psychological state and the practical, transnational practices of the refugee-migrants quite different from migrants whose moves are largely voluntary (Sherrell and Hyndman 2006). VFR behaviour, too, may be fundamentally different in a refugee-origin community as a result of these different conditions in the formation of the migrant/refugee/diaspora population. At the outset, we suggest the following hypothesised differences in VFR attitudes and behaviours.

- The sudden and involuntary nature of the departure may heighten the longing for the homeland and those relatives and friends left behind, who remain, at least for a time, 'cut off'.
- The political context of refugee migration may involve an element of 'ethnic politics' amongst the exiled community. In fact the origins of the Kosovan Liberation Army (KLA) were amongst Kosovans living Switzerland, and the KLA received support from some Kosovans living in Britain, including young men going to fight for the KLA cause (Kostovicova 2003: 53).
- VFR return visits may not be possible because of the very nature of refugee status, and ongoing conflict in the homeland.
- When return visits do become possible after a measure of 'normality' and security is restored, the homeland may have become drastically changed because of the effects of the conflict which produced the refugee movement in the first place (eg. destruction of property, population displacement, different political regime). Furthermore, the intervening gap of several years and the events which have taken place during this time, may make it difficult for emigrants to 're-connect' with relatives and friends (cf. Gerharz 2010 on Sri Lankan Tamils).

Conceptually, this case-study moves beyond the now-well-established ideas of a transnational social space (Faist 2000) or transnational social field (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004) as consisting of bipolar connections between the transnational community (or diaspora) and the homeland. We envision a more multi-local Albanian ethnic space which comprises a broad sweep of territory in the western Balkans (Albania, Kosovo, and adjacent ethnic-Albanian districts in southern Montenegro and western Macedonia) as well as various diasporic nodes in Western Europe (UK, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Sweden etc.). Hence, in our conceptual framing of Kosovan VFR behaviour and patterns, we replace the conventional transnational optic (which, despite the well-taken critiques about 'methodological nationalism', remains embedded by definition in a national-level scalar analysis – see Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002; Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2009), with something which is spatially more malleable. We follow Case-Study 1 in its emphasis on translocality and multilocality, but we extend this further to the notion of *transterrioriality* (Pichler 2009). As Pichler points out, 'transnationality' is a problematic frame of reference in the Balkan (and hence Albanian and Kosovan) context because it is too closely wedded to the 'Western' concept of the stable, civic nation-state, which does not represent geopolitical reality in the Balkans. Especially in the post-Yugoslav era, the Balkan states follow a model of ethnic rather than civic nationalism. Pichler notes (2009: 215): 'to consider oneself Albanian in Austria or Switzerland is to understand oneself as belonging to the Albanian ethno-cultural nation, which encompasses persons with different citizenships living in different states that might be far away from the imagined ethnic territory'. In his research on ethnic-Albanian migration from Macedonia, Pichler suggests the term 'transterritorial', which conveys the double meaning of an Albanian ethnic space, as well as of strong links between different places of origin and migration within a broader diasporic field (see also Markov 2013).

The notions of transterritoriality and multilocality are crucial for understanding Kosovan VFR behaviour, since Kosovans' visits involve time spent not only in Kosovo itself but also in other locations in the Albanian-inhabited lands; moreover, émigré Kosovans in other locations, mainly in Europe, may be visited, either at separate times, or en route to and from Kosovo. The evidence that we have collected also shows that visits are multi-purpose – a fact often related directly to their multilocality. In the Kosovan case we find not just 'pure' VFR as in the prior case-study, but many-centred visits which also incorporate leisure, tourism and health-related components – time spent by the sea, in spas, or in historic places. The fact that these visits take on a relaxation and lifestyle character – mobile behaviour usually associated with a more middle-class aesthetic – constitutes another refinement

and critique of the literature on 'lifestyle migration' which assumes ties to 'elite' migrant and tourist behaviour (Benson and O'Reilly 2009).

As regards the timing and scale of Kosovan migration, we need to recognise two main phases and types of exodus: labour migration, and refugees and asylum-seekers. Initially, as part of the newly constituted Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, emigration was more or less proscribed, although during the early 1960s many Kosovans fled to Turkey to escape Serbian repression in their part of the Federal Republic. The opening of the Yugoslav borders to emigration in 1965 led to large-scale temporary migration, mainly to Germany and Switzerland, but also to other countries such as Austria, Sweden and France. Kosovans participated prominently in these Yugoslav labour migrations, reflecting their poverty, marginality, and large family sizes (Haxhikadrija 2009: 29–39). The migrants were mostly men, coming from rural areas and with low levels of education, and employed on seasonal and short-term work contracts to do low-qualified jobs in factories, building sites and the service economy. This migration was halted by the 1973 oil crisis which resulted in a ban on further recruitment of labour migrants from Yugoslavia and elsewhere.[6] What subsequently happened was an unexpected outcome for the migration destination countries. Instead of returning to their home countries, as they were accustomed to do, the Kosovan migrants decided to settle in the host societies, and further migration continued in the form of family reunion and kinship-based chain migration. This was a rational option chosen largely for economic reasons since, despite the recession, work opportunities and incomes remained much higher than in their homeland. One final point to be noted about the Kosovan labour migration is that often their specific Kosovan-Albanian identity was hidden behind other labels such as 'Yugoslav' or even 'Turks' so that their ethnic-Albanian identity was masked (Blumi 2003; see also Markov 2013 on ethnic-Albanian migration from Macedonia).

The second phase occurred in the lead-up to, and after the break-up of Yugoslavia. Already in the late 1970s, the vicious cycle of lack of trust between the two Kosovan ethnicities, Albanian and Serb, was deteriorating to a point of no return, with the former group increasingly marginalised politically and economically. The 'politics of peaceful protest' and a parallel system of informal institutions were interim strategies before more vigorous protests developed in the 1980s (Malcolm 1998; Kostovicova 2005). In 1989 Kosovo's autonomous political status was abolished and there was a flight of persecuted elites and intellectuals to Western countries. Armed conflict escalated during the 1990s, sparked by the persecution and repressive measures imposed by the Milošević regime. The 'Kosovan crisis' of the late 1990s resulted in hundreds of thousands of Kosovan Albanians streaming

out of their territorial homeland into and through northern Albania. These refugee movements were then coordinated as part of the humanitarian projects of different host countries (Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, the UK etc.) or took place more independently as many Kosovans joined their previously settled relatives in these countries.

The exact size of the Kosovan migrant population is unknown. A common yet disputed estimate is 800,000, almost one third of the population. Another widely quoted estimate is somewhat lower, that 20 per cent of Kosovans are living abroad, a figure which is still impressive (if, in another sense, depressing), even if it is scale-wise somewhat below the figure for neighbouring countries such as Albania (45 per cent) and Bosnia (39 per cent).[7] Germany (300,000) and Switzerland (155,000) host the biggest established Kosovan communities. Haxhikadrija (2009: 31) quotes a House of Commons estimate of 17,000 Kosovans in the UK in 2000, but the current figure is undoubtedly higher, albeit complicated by the overlapping presence of both Albanian and Kosovan-Albanian communities in Britain.[8]

Although the Kosovan community in the UK now seems reasonably settled and consolidated, problems with marginalisation, access to employment, and delays with their full regularisation have affected both their economic and their practical ability to visit their homeland. Meanwhile the post-conflict situation in Kosovo is characterised by continuing poverty, which is mainly attenuated by remittances, and by high unemployment and a still fragile civic and political culture. Although the long-awaited independence (recognised by most, but not all, European countries) has now been achieved, this has only served to expose these problems further. On the whole, Kosovan migration is one of the least-studied European migrations.

*Methods*

Like Case-Study 1, this is a qualitative, ethnographic, interview-based study carried out in the London area, where most Kosovans in the UK are concentrated. Formal recorded interviews were carried out during the period 2008–2012 (mostly toward the end of that period) with 38 Kosovans divided between two 'generations': 20 with 'first-generation' parents and 18 with 'second-generation' teenagers, of whom 10 were UK-born and 8 were Kosovo-born, arriving in the UK before the age of 9. The interviews mostly took place in a broad area of North and East London where there are relative concentrations of Kosovans (who are nevertheless, rather scattered across many parts of the metropolis). Participants were mainly recruited through immigrant organisations and schools. Roughly equal numbers of males and females were interviewed, for both generational groups, with a slight majority of mothers. Interviews with the parents were

in Albanian, those with the teenagers were mostly in English or mixed both languages. All formal interviews were recorded, transcribed, and translated as necessary, with appropriate ethical procedures followed regarding informed consent, pseudonyms and removal of certain identifying details. The length of time resident in the UK ranged from 6 to 20 years with a mean of 13 years, dating back to the peak of the Kosovan conflict and refugee exodus in the late 1990s.

In addition to the 38 interviews with Kosovan parents and children, other field research was carried out: interviews with key-informants (teachers, community leaders etc.), school-based discussion groups, participation in community events, some of which were filmed, and non-recorded conversations with other family members.

Regarding positionality of the field researcher, Zana Vathi is Albanian (from Albania not Kosovo) and came to the UK to pursue master and doctoral studies at the University of Sussex. Her doctoral thesis on the Albanian first and second generations in London and elsewhere (Vathi 2011) included an emphasis on homeland visits and return-migration attitudes (Vathi and King 2011) which can be regarded as a forerunner to the present project on Kosovans.

One of the unique features methodologically of this case-study is the combination of first- and second-generation perspectives on VFR experiences. In particular, little attention has been given in the literature on return visits to children's experiences (for example see King et al. 2011; Vathi and King 2011; Zeitlyn 2012), or indeed to the wider childhood perception and experience of migration more generally (Ni Laoire et al. 2010).

### First-generation migrants: 'It's a huge expense for us… a great sacrifice'

The patterns of transnational ties of VFR of the Kosovan Albanian community in London are related to their migration history in Britain. A distinction can be drawn between those who arrived before, and those who came during, the Kosovan crisis year of 1999. For the former group, the unfolding of the conflict in the homeland was an important factor in shaping their transnational links and identities. Many of these earlier arrivals acquired their refugee status more easily and quickly than the later arrivals. The 1999 wave of arrivals had a longer and more uncertain recognition process; hence there were periods when they could not visit, because of the war itself or their limbo status.[9] Once these barriers were overcome, the transnational movements and return visits could take place more easily, restoring kinship and friendship links that had been 'blocked' for some years.

A first and often dominant theme in the older generation's narratives is the sheer emotionality of being able to see family members in the homeland,

often referred to as 'the place where the sun rises'. In the words of Lule (35), a mother:

> We go because of the emotional ties that link us to the home country, with our parents and ancestors, with those who looked after us until we grew up. It's a link which I believe every community in the world has got.

This same emotional link is projected by the parents onto their children. Parents commit to these VFR trips because the children have been removed by migration and refugee flight from their wider kinship networks, and parents feel the need to reconnect children to the warmth of this extended family environment. The VFR experience is facilitated by the small-scale and friendly nature of the villages and small towns that are visited: this both helps the children, especially the younger ones, enjoy their holiday times there, and makes the visits less tiring for the parents. Moreover, the narratives of the parents always seem to stress the positive aspects of these visits for the children, and how much the latter look forward to and enjoy them. In the words of Maliqe (38), another Kosovan mother:

> I go to Kosovo every year; I save throughout the year for the trip. I cannot stay here [in England] without seeing my mother. The children are eager to go… One week before the trip they cannot sleep because of the excitement… My daughter says: 'I live eleven months here for that one month there'. I feel for the children: they have no-one here to put a hand on their head and say 'Oh, my niece, my granddaughter'… There [in Kosovo] we go and stay for a while at one grandmother, then some time with the other grandmother… then to the aunts… My mother says, 'When you arrive you gather everyone around you… like a bee'.

But there are financial limits which may constrain the frequency and nature of such visits. These derive both from the relatives' high expectations of what visiting migrants should do and 'give', and from migrants' own material difficulties in London, where they have had to find work and build an employment profile more or less from scratch:

> We go, but not so often… it depends on the financial situation… I try to go, partly for myself and partly for my family. It's the longing! We have been going these eleven years, since we got the papers in 2000. We do go; we try every year. But it depends, because at the moment my husband is unemployed, so it's a bit difficult (Mynyre, 42).

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The encounter with a still-backward local economy in Kosovo, exacerbated by memories of the loss of properties and the destruction brought about by the inter-ethnic war, creates another form of stressful relationship. Some interviewees complained that they are treated as British both by the local population and by the local government, which has imposed an entry tax of £30 on foreign visitors (which affects Kosovans who now have British nationality; cf. Vathi and King 2013). Adnan (35), a Kosovan father, spells out some of these tensions and describes how migrants come to resent the lack of recognition for the financial contributions that they make to the homeland:

> There are also negative sides. There are some people… who treat us like foreigners. Yet, in reality, most of their support comes from us [i.e. through remittances]… but they don't seem to realise this… It's a huge expense for us to go there, a great sacrifice. No matter how much you try to keep expenses to a minimum, you just can't avoid spending lots of money there. Most probably other people, English people… who go on holiday… would not have to make these kinds of expenses [referring here to the need to give presents and pay for everybody at bars and restaurants etc.], they would not have to spend in the same way.

Other influences on the VFR patterns derive from the timing of the original arrival in London, early mobility histories, and the geographical distribution of family members. For instance, some young single men arriving before the conflict had little interest in visiting their troubled homeland, at least for a while. Marriage to a Kosovan, however, changes this situation, giving rise to stronger ties and likelihood of VFR. Early arrivals in Britain in the 1980s mostly originated from urban areas and were middle-class individuals, many of whom had earlier mobility experiences through the travel possibilities given to them by their relative wealth and the possession of a Yugoslav passport. Some, like Berat (40), below, settled in London in search of a more open and transgressive life, turning his back on Kosovo for several years.

> Perhaps it was the TV… When I was in seventh grade, I had the good luck, or maybe bad luck, to go to Paris for a two-week visit. Even during this visit, as a crazy kid that I was, I was thinking about whether it would be better if I didn't go back [to Kosovo]… Ever since I was very young, it was my dream to leave Kosovo. I was here in London for the first time when I was 15; I stayed here seven months. I went back to Kosovo for a year and a half and then came back to London again. I didn't go back to Kosovo for more than eight years after that.

These longer-term and generally more educated and skilled migrants have often had experiences of touristic visits to various places in Britain, and some have visited relatives in different Albanian-speaking cities and areas in the Balkans, such as Skopje or Tetovo in Macedonia, exemplifying our earlier discussion of VFR's multilocality, multifunctionality and transterritorial spread. Vlora (43), a Kosovan mother, gave her account of the actual and mental connections she has to different cities and places:

> If I had a magic wand I would live six months here [in London] and six months there [Kosovo], so I could experience as much as I can from this feeling [of attachment to different places]. I want to have Christmas in London, for the atmosphere, the warmth around the city, all those lights… it seems like people become softer and nicer. I miss London at that time of year, also perhaps because of the [bad] conditions in Kosovo during winter… So I would like to be there [Kosovo] for the summer, and here in London for the winter. But when it comes to my own town, my own neighbourhood… I miss even the stones… it's a feeling that is hard to describe!

Other participants described their return visits as taking the form of trans-European trips, usually by car, stopping off in Germany, Switzerland or Austria to visit relatives and then driving on towards Kosovo. Within the ethnic-Albanian Balkan transterritorial region, shorter-range trips to Albania (especially the seaside), to Skopje (Macedonia), Ulcinj (Montenegro) and even Thessaloniki (Greece) were mentioned; in these cases, tourism takes over from VFR. These European, regional and multilocal movements are facilitated by the acquisition of British citizenship which makes travel within the Schengen area easier, as well as within the Balkan region, where cross-border mobility might be more difficult due to lingering post-conflict animosity. For visits to Albania, an important factor has been the completion of a new, fast highway across the mountains separating the two countries, which has significantly reduced the travel time between Pristina and Tirana and the Albanian coast. Landlocked Kosovo thus becomes a 'homeland now with a sea' due to the obvious close links between the two countries, and the attractiveness to Kosovans of holiday resorts in and around Durrës and Vlorë, the two main towns on the Albanian coast. Jetona (33) described her family's visits to some of these areas in terms that illustrate the transterritorial and touristic nature of these visits, with VFR fading away in her narrative:

Every year we go to Kosovo and we go for holidays on the Albanian coast… One year we went to Vlorë, two years in Durrës, in Golem, one year at the Rock of Kavaja… Also to Ulcinj [in southern Montenegro]… Now that the road is better we mostly go to Albania, so we don't go any more to the Montenegrin coast… And we have a great time – the children are happy, the sea helps us for health and relaxation… We all have a really good time.

Increasingly, Kosovans reveal a developing and discriminating taste for the attractions of various places in this Balkan-Albanian transterritorial space – a space of VFR but also for touristic and cultural experiences. Some prefer the natural landscape elements of the region, or opt for the more authentic Albanian culture of Shkodër (an important and historically rich city in the north of Albania) rather than the commercialised tourism of Durrës with its string of hotels and long sandy beaches. Older-generation Kosovans who were not able to visit Albania during the communist era when the country was effectively closed off, are keen to see what the place is really like, or they leave this inspiring dream to their children to accomplish. Therefore pan-Albanian patriotic reasons may also be involved in the transterritorial spread of these visits and travels. As Berat (42) succinctly put it, 'For me Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia are one and the same: full of Albanians'.

However, the legacy of the conflict cannot be overlooked. Quite apart from the psychological trauma and material loss experienced by the refugees, the 'homeland' too has changed geographically, creating disruptions and separations. Berat reflected back to his childhood experiences of the now-divided town of Mitrovica:

Time has done its own work. After twenty years away, when I go to Mitrovica I can walk around for the whole day, but I don't know anyone and I am known by no-one. Unfortunately Mitrovica is now a foreign place for me; London is where I live. I don't even recognise places in Mitrovica, and I cannot go back to the neighbourhood where I grew up… Even though Mitrovica is a small town, still… the problem is that I grew up on the other side… and I don't recognise it any more. I left when I was a child; when I went back after eight or nine years I returned to the southern part and there was no access to the northern part where I grew up, where I had played, had fights, fallen over with friends… that part I cannot see any more. Of course there is a homeland, there is Kosovo, and I am Albanian… but the way I feel for Mitrovica… [cannot be compared].

*The second generation: 'I love the weddings... just being with my relatives, it makes me so happy'*

Most VFR and tourist trips to Kosovo and the wider ethnic-Albanian transterritorial space are undertaken by families with children. As we saw above, often such visits are organised *for* the children, to give them a 'good experience' of their ethnic homeland and to put them in touch with their wider kinship networks, especially grandparents, uncles and aunts, and cousins. Summer is the main time for these visits since it corresponds with school holidays, settled weather, and it also tends to be the season of weddings and other diasporic family gatherings. Indeed the latter are often planned around such visits. Children's testimonies closely match those of the first generation in their appreciation both of the warmth of the welcome received from family members on homeland visits, and of the various touristic experiences that are combined with VFR. Mrika (19, second generation but born in Kosovo) gave a typically enthusiastic report on her many visits to her early childhood home:

> Yes, it's great. I love the weddings, everything they do out there... It's just great being with my relatives, with my cousins, it makes me so happy. Because people see Kosovo as a really poor country and everyone says to me 'Why do you go there?' And I say, 'Well, it's really good to be close to my relatives'. I feel so good when I am in my country, where I was actually born.

Teenagers, it is often remarked, are very observant of the details of journeys and places, and other particulars of their VFR and holiday travels (Ni Laoire et al. 2010). They develop a keen appreciation of the various facilities and cultural features of the different sites visited. They have vivid, and not always positive, memories of the long trip by car, although the length of the trip may be alleviated by the sense of adventure and the presence of relatives visited en route, usually in Germany or Switzerland. Liridona (13) was one of our youngest participants, yet gave a mature and lively account of her visits to Kosovo and Germany:

> When I am in Kosovo, I have so many cousins... and when I leave them I am always crying because I miss them so much. But then every year I go there, so I see them every time. And most of the time I go to Germany as well, because my auntie lives there... The visits are quite frequent because sometimes we go [to Kosovo] for New Year, and April we go mostly to Germany, and summer we stay seven weeks there [in Kosovo].

Lora, also 13, elaborated more on the holiday destinations visited, and stressed the fact that, for her, Albania now functions as Kosovo's seaside resort.

> [We go to Kosovo] for around four weeks, and we also spend a week at the beach. Like in Montenegro or Albania, you know, to Durrës. And we spend a week there; we just to go the beach every day… and the nights we go to the restaurants and take a walk. It's really nice, the atmosphere; and the people, they are really like kinder… not as wild as in Kosovo… It [Albania] is just a very nice place… They've done a new road from Kosovo to Albania and it only takes three hours now.

These interview quotes from the teenager second generation generally reinforce the impression given by parents that children remain very embedded within family and kinship networks, despite their exposure to more individualistic anti-older-generation peer pressures from school and other friendship networks they may have. They are a vindication of Kostovicova's comparative statement that, in Britain, Kosovans are more community-orientated than are Albanian migrants from Albania; one indicator of this is the greater keenness of Kosovan parents and children to follow school-based classes in the Albanian language and to be members of folklore groups (Kostovicova 2003: 65, 67–68). Indeed a separate study of the Albanian second generation's return-visit experiences revealed some problems with reconnecting with the homeland due to the poverty and backwardness of Albania and the 'generation gap' between the teenage visitors and their Albanian relatives – not helped by the Albanian teenagers' imperfect knowledge of the parental language (Vathi and King 2011).

Overall, our data confirm the importance of return visits in the establishment and continuity (but also, sometimes, the disruption) of transnational ties, and therefore in conditioning the type of wider exchanges that take place within transnational social fields, not least because they consist of meetings of groups that have different perceptions and experiences of mobility. Depending on the number and frequency of visits made, and on the length of stay in the receiving country, such visits have multiple impacts on teenagers' fast-changing identities, their perception of the homeland, and their understanding of social ties and institutions.

**Case-Study 3. Latvians in Guernsey: space–time events of co-presence**
The third case-study complements the previous two by bringing into the comparative analysis a typical (in some senses, but not in others) labour migration. Labour migrants are those who migrate wholly, or principally, to

find work to earn a better income than they could at home. Generally, they do jobs within the subsectors of the local labour market which the existing supply of workers are unable to fill, or unwilling to offer themselves on the labour market at the prevailing wage for the job, or under the working conditions involved. Often, the type of work is tough manual labour under short-term contracts and/or unsocial hours. The work is accepted by migrant workers even if they are over-qualified for it, because of the marked difference in wage rates and employment opportunities between the two countries' labour markets.

Neo-classical economic theory (that migration is driven by spatial inequalities in wage and unemployment rates) and the new economics of labour migration (which stresses that migration is a family or household-level decision) combine to theoretically explain this form of migration. Thus, Latvians migrate to the UK (in our case-study here, to Guernsey) to fill jobs that are on the whole rejected by local workers, and they are willing to pick up these jobs, under the prevailing wage rates and working conditions, because the wages are substantially higher than those available on the Latvian labour market, or because they would simply remain unemployed if they stayed at home. Their migration is not merely an individually driven decision, but often relates to their need to support family members left behind in Latvia. In the Guernsey case, the majority of Latvian migrants are women, who are supporting children, parents and other family members. Hence for them VFR is vital to their life as migrants and to their, and their families', emotional well-being.

Whilst it is true that the broad parameters of the Latvia–Guernsey migration are those of classic labour migration as described above, we do not aim to reify this migrant category as stable and incapable of changing; indeed labour migrants often evolve into other mobility forms and characteristics, as we shall see. One of the distinguishing features of Latvian migration to Guernsey, at least in its early stages, was the way that circular migration shaped by short-term work contracts in the horticultural sector, and by housing and residence restrictions, limited the length of time that migrants could stay on the island, thereby turning circulatory migration and visits home into one and the same thing. This produces a marked functional, lifestyle and existential separation between the 'work place', Guernsey, and the 'home place', Latvia, in a way that almost reverses the blurred and enfolded migration-visit relationship. In other words, home remains firmly rooted in Latvia, and Guernsey is 'visited' for periods of work which are essential to sustaining life at home.

Torsten Hägerstrand's *time-geography* is seen as an appropriate conceptual and methodological frame within which to study the movements

of Latvians to and from Guernsey. Their circular and temporary migrations, and their visits home, are subject to specific *rhythms*. Although we do not have the space here to detail all the terms and neologisms in Hägerstrand's lexicon,[10] we conceptualise VFR as a time-geographic event in which the goal of *co-presence* with certain key individuals in crucial. In Hägerstrand's phraseology, we observe the 'bundling' of two or more people, synchronising their space–time life-paths for a short period of time for a specific purpose or 'project' – to visit with each other and generate the emotional, financial, relational support that they need. Above all, VFR travel should be seen as a *relational practice* – 'an event of place' (Massey 2005: 140) where relatedness is anticipated, experienced, remembered, and embedded in the wider socio-spatialities of migration (Doel 2000). The relational perspective is also fundamental to understanding how VFR practices evolve over time in response to changing family dynamics, economic circumstances, and legal aspects of migration and residence.

The rhythmic nature of both circular migration and time-specific VFR leads to a second conceptual scaffold closely related to time-geography: Henri Lefebvre's *rhythmanalysis*. According to Lefebvre, 'everywhere there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy [in the form of human movement], there is *rhythm*' (2004: 15, emphasis in original). Rhythmanalysis can be used to highlight the often tense relations between time, place and both forced and voluntary mobility and return in the case of Latvians in Guernsey. We note the ways in which the rhythms of VFR are enfolded within, but also blur the distinctions between, migration, work, visiting, leisure, tourism, and caring. Rhythmanalysis recognises both stability and repetition in movement, but also change and rupture, which Lefebvre calls moments of *arrhythmia* (see also Edensor 2010). Significant life events like divorce or the birth of a child fundamentally affect migration, labour, and VFR behaviour, marking a new stage in the migrant's life-path. A simple example of arrhythmia, the 'dissonance between two or more rhythms' (Lefebvre 2004: 16), is the way in which Latvians' work in Guernsey in the tourism and hospitality sector, with the peak of labour demand in the summer, conflicts with their wish to spend their summer breaks in Latvia when their children are on school holidays.

The third and final conceptual element of this case-study relates to the specificity of the transnational family and gender dynamics in post-socialist Latvia. Horschelmann and Stenning's (2008) recent review of 'ethnographies of post-socialist change' does not say anything that is specific to Latvia, nor indeed much about post-socialist mobilities and migrations (which is surprising), but it does resonate with our approach taken here in that it privileges Massey's (2005: 5) understanding of space–time as a framework

for spatialising societal, political and ideological change, and as a terrain of 'openness and possibility'. Meanwhile, in their discussions of 'twenty-first century transnational families', Bryceson and Vuorela (2002) introduce the concepts of 'relativising' and 'frontiering' (rather than the more emotionally neutral terms 'networking' and 'negotiating') to apply to transnational intra-family relations. *Relativising* refers to the 'ways in which individuals establish, maintain or curtail relational ties with specific family members'; it refers to modes of 'materialising' the family and its transnationally separated members as an 'imagined community with shared feelings and mutual obligations'. Relativising hence involves the selective formation of familial emotional and material attachments on the basis of socio-temporal considerations (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002: 14). *Frontiering* denotes that these transnational relations involve encounters which may be more or less amiable, or can become characterised by tension, conflict and breakdown. In many cases, the criss-cross of personal relations and changing societal and cultural values results in confrontations between genders, generations and individuals within the transnational family (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002: 11, 13). Unlike the previous case-study of Kosovan transnational family relations, where a long history of clan-based family solidarity remains strong and where VFR narratives reflected this enduring family cohesion,[11] interviews with Latvians, women especially, revealed a frequent occurrence of family tension, divorce etc.

Post-socialist Latvia, like other transition societies in East and Central Europe, is a theatre of conflicting gender regimes and ideologies.[12] In the background are Soviet-era ideals of gender equality in the pre-1989 period, and the EU policies and regulations relating to gender and equal opportunities which Latvia has signed up to and implemented, at least on paper, since the country's accession in 2004. But feminist scholars have challenged the socialist ideology that claimed to liberate women, but in reality only eliminated their subordination theoretically and instead imposed a double burden of work and mother/carer. Equally, feminist writers have critiqued liberal claims for universal rights where, again, legislation and official policy are not matched by practice and values (see Regulska et al. 2005 for an overview). Like other East-Central European countries, Latvian society has seen the neo-patriarchal reinscribing of the ideal woman as wife and mother, yet has reduced child and maternity benefits at the same time in a retreat from the Soviet nanny-state. With the shrinking of job opportunities, especially stable employment, after the end of the Soviet era and more recently in the wake of the 2008 recession, neoliberal principles of economic restructuring have left many women, especially older women over 40, with emigration as virtually the only way to achieve what Judith Butler (2004) has

termed a 'liveable life'. Whilst for some women (and men), especially those without strong family ties and responsibilities, this migratory route may be liberating and empowering; for others, achieving a minimum standard of living, especially for family members left in Latvia, only comes at huge emotional cost, creating a painful spatial arrythmia between the need for family care, solidarity and togetherness on the one hand, and the need to earn an income on the other.

Latvia has experienced high rates of emigration since independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, and especially after joining the EU in 2004. Britain and Ireland have been both the first, and the major, destinations for Latvian labour migrations since the 1990s. The 2011 Latvian census indicates a loss due to emigration of 213,000 over the preceding decade, resulting in a decline of the overall population (due also to sub-replacement fertility) from 2.3 to 2.0 million.

The movement of Latvian workers to the Channel Island of Guernsey (population 62,000) started in 1997 when Guernsey employers set up a recruitment scheme for migrant workers, initially single women, to work in the horticultural sector on nine-month contracts. Over time, other employment niches have opened up, also for men, and a further sectoral specialisation has developed for Latvian workers in hotels and catering. Latvians are the largest East European migrant group in Guernsey: informants maintain that, between the late 1990s and the onset of the recession, there was a rotating pool of 5000–8000 Latvians working in the island, and that currently there are 1500–2000 present at any one time. These figures pop up in many narratives yet they remain speculative as official statistical data is not available and the figures change rapidly due to the volatile nature of the flows to and from the island and the temporary nature of the work on offer.

Over the years, short-term labour, defined by work contracts of nine months and restricted by housing and residence regulations, has evolved into longer-term stays for some Latvians. Fieldwork revealed a diversity of labour contracts and housing permits, of family arrangements, and of mobility practices ranging from short working visits to attempts to settle permanently. Nevertheless, virtually all Latvians in Guernsey maintain VFR ties to Latvia and to other countries where Latvians are living.

*Methods*

This case-study, too, is based on in-depth narrative interviews: 96 in all, carried out over more than two years of ethnographic research between 2010 and 2012. Interviews were mainly with Latvian migrants in Guernsey (59, aged between 18 and 67, mostly women), as well as with family members, employers and policy-makers. Migrants had been abroad for periods

ranging from one month to 13 years. In what follows we mainly quote from the migrant narratives. The interviews with migrants were either in Latvian or Russian, according to the interviewees' preference. All names quoted are fictional, and all interviews and recordings were carried out with participants' permission.

Alongside interviews and participant observation in both Guernsey and Latvia, fieldwork also consisted of 'travel events', both by plane and an overland journey by car. This 'mobile ethnography' generated important observational insights into the migrants' mobile lives. Some interviewees were interviewed several times over the two-year research period, often both in Guernsey and in Latvia. The research described here is part of Aija Lulle's PhD thesis, about to be submitted to the University of Latvia. Regarding positionality, Lulle is herself Latvian, of similar age to many of the migrants interviewed. Carrying out fieldwork whilst being a mother to a young child, she was able to develop a two-way empathy with her participants over issues of work, mobility, and family separation. As we shall see in the narrative quotes, the focus on separation and practices of visiting relatives and friends tended to generate tension and emotion, not least because talking about the pain of separation and the activation of the idea of return for good at some time in the future generates so much existential uncertainty.

## Latvia = home place, Guernsey = work place: 'All these things I only do in Riga'

The Latvian case represents a perfect example of the spatial separation of the 'home place' (Latvia) from the 'work place' (Guernsey) which is constitutive of labour migration. Based on a surface perusal of the interview transcripts, it was relatively easy to codify planned return visits to Latvia as discrete events enfolded within migration histories, and hence to appreciate the distinct rhythms of the two forms of mobility. However, in other ways, VFR practices *sensu strictu* remained somewhat hidden in the narratives. This was partly because the participants rarely used the Latvian word for 'visit'. Amongst the most commonly used phrases were 'going to Latvia' or 'going for holidays [*holidejos*]', or simply 'go back' or 'went back'. We interpret these linguistic references as signifiers of the time–space discipline of contract labour in which choice and freedom of movement are constrained, and perhaps visiting friends and relatives (although this does take place) is not the primary motivating factor in the timing and nature of the visits. At least in the early years of Latvian migration to Guernsey, and for those whose movements are still shaped by short-term contracts and restrictive housing regulations,[13] there are powerful institutional forces shaping the frequency and timing of VFR travel. For circular migrants on three-month contracts,

the 'compulsory' three months in Latvia (or outside Guernsey) were often narrated as 'empty time' – an idle time–space of waiting for the start of the next contract-season. As Gunta (49) put it, 'You simply enjoy life, you do nothing, but actually, it is not an enjoyment … you do nothing'. In this instance, the rhythms of migration and visits home coincide: nine months' hard work in Guernsey, three months 'doing nothing' (but spending time – maybe too much time – with friends and relatives) in Latvia.

Hence the preferable regime for many is more frequent, shorter visits, during which the migrants not only 'do' VFR but also preserve and solidify their links to 'home' – retaining their Latvian residence, carrying out health checks there, sorting out bureaucratic procedures etc. Indeed it is almost as if the relationship between migration and visiting is reversed. Instead of work in Guernsey being interrupted by visits home, it is rather a collective statement about 'being at home' being interrupted by working visits to Guernsey. As Rita (49) narrated it, 'My home will always be in Latvia … I have always seen Guernsey just as a place to make money'.

Instead of the three months of 'idle time', most participants preferred a rhythm of more frequent, shorter visits, always constrained, however, by the availability of 'time gaps' such as weekends and public holidays, and of finances to pay for the trips. Gundega (50) described her preferred rhythm of movement:

> I am home every third month. I don't immerse myself here [in Guernsey], I don't want to get attached to my tiny single room here. I have my kitchen and bathroom in Riga. I buy tickets already [i.e. well in advance] so they are cheap. Other people say it is foolish to go back just for two days. No, it is not foolish. How much money do they waste on cigarettes or in pubs? I spend the same amount on flight tickets. And I see my family and friends… Hairdresser, beauty therapist, doctor – all these things I only do in Riga.

Like some of the German respondents in the first case-study, the strategy of 'buying up' multiple tickets well in advance makes the cost of going home much more affordable. Note, too, how 'home' is related to where the speaker's own kitchen and bathroom are (the implication is that these are shared with others in her cramped accommodation in Guernsey); and again how 'certain things' – not just VFR, but visiting the doctor, beautician etc. – are 'only done in Riga'.

Later in her interview, Gundega revealed how, during the time-space events of being back in what she clearly sees as her 'real home', she is constantly positioned as a 'migrant' who no longer 'belongs' to Latvia and

who just comes to Latvia to visit relatives and spend money. This positioning is embedded in the metanarrative informed by a sedentarist ideology of 'migrants versus stayers' in modern-day Latvia, and a kind of general 'disgrace' in public debates expressed towards migrants and their practices of making money abroad and then engaging in highly consumerist behaviour in Latvia (Eglitis 2010).

> We are often blamed that we don't pay taxes, and that we use cheap doctors subsidised by the state. No, we don't, there are no such doctors available. Wherever I go I pay for the doctor, the dentist. Teeth are fixed for my parents, for my children, grandchildren; all that is done by money earned abroad. And I am paying taxes for all these services. … We visited our relatives recently and they kind of humiliated us, saying that we are vagabonds, wandering the world. They are well-off people in business, but they pay half of the salaries to their employees under the table. Who is the patriot here at the end of the day?

The above excerpt represents one example of the twin concepts of 'relativising' and 'frontiering' (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002) discussed earlier. A barrier or frontier is set up at the national discursive level between 'disloyal' migrants and 'patriot' stayers, and this is reproduced within the family via the tensions experienced by Gundega when visiting her own relatives in Latvia. Another kind of frontiering line is drawn when family and residential statuses change and a decision is taken to stay abroad long-term. Taking up formal residence in Guernsey and giving up property ownership or flat rental in Latvia, often coincident with establishing a family abroad, clearly changes the nature and meaning of migration, and hence of visits to and feelings towards the homeland country. However, deciding not to return to Latvia permanently does not mean that visits become less frequent or less meaningful. Rather, it is that their meaning changes. Visits tend to become more routinised, and the migrant-visitor more clearly fulfils the role of 'guest'. Key moments for the timing of such visits are school holidays, especially during summer (a special time in Latvia, given the long and cold winters), shorter 'real snow' breaks to highlight (e.g. to children) the difference with the mild and usually snowless Guernsey winter, annual celebrations to do with birthdays, name-days, remembrance of the deceased, family reunions at weddings and funerals, and other family and homeland celebrations of 'Latvianness'. Two examples from the interviews illustrate these points. The first emphasises the importance of 'placing' important life celebrations (in this case a birthday) in the home country.

We celebrated my husband's birthday in Latvia. Even if we could afford to buy tickets for all 40 guests to come here [to Guernsey], it wouldn't be the same. What could we do here? Go to a restaurant, that's all. But in Latvia we hired a big boat, we went on a lake, it was a real party. Mentality … culture … all that is inside you and you cannot tear it away, it remains inside you [referring here to 'Latvianness']. … Nature in Latvia; grass, forests, birds. Here there are birds, too, but they are different, they are English-singing birds [laughing]… (Diana, 37).

We are already here for seven years; for us, Latvia is … [searches for the right word] … we go for *holidays* [said with emphasis, with 'holidays' said in English]; it is not a 'home' feeling. … We are aware that we are guests there. We don't discuss how or what, we fly there automatically. … Now, since our child is born, we will try to go for a month every year for the summer. Actually it is important for both [sets of] grandparents. To see them and also that he [the child] can hear them (Olegs, 30).

In the seond excerpt, above, a young father stresses that he goes to Latvia now for holidays, using the English word. This, and several other words relating to work rhythms, housing regulations and migrants' mobilities, are continuously used in their non-translated form in the interviews, which are otherwise all in Latvian or Russian. The emergence of this 'jargon' is a signifier of specific cultural practices stemming from the migration regime experienced by the participants, and are common in other migrant discourses as well.[14] Returning to Olegs, at other parts in his interview he referred to the holiday visits (which are usually constructed as visits to 'another place' away from home) as, indeed, visits 'home'. This conscious yet confusing choice of words to denote travelling to Latvia indicates how the practice of VFR travel is a 'practice in the making'; it has yet to be discursively (linguistically and socially) separated from other meanings and practices engaged in by other compatriots.

### The warmth of co-presence – 'as long as you have money'
Like other instances of VFR considered in this paper and elsewhere (see Janta et al. 2013 for an overview), VFR is a practice dominated, in most cases and for most of the time, by warm emotions of love, reunion, being together, and then the pain of departure. As Eva (45) put it:

I go to visit my mother three or four times a year. I am always longing to see her; she is already very old. I buy the tickets well in advance. I

also take care of other things I need to do, such as health checks. But one week at a time is enough.

The joy of reunion, catching up and sharing stories, and the distribution of presents are characteristic especially of the early days of each visit. This happy and bounteous state of affairs can be prolonged according to the availability of money to continue consumption practices that otherwise would be out of reach. Participants said how much they enjoyed taking their relatives or friends out to restaurants, spa centres and cultural events that would otherwise be out of reach price-wise; or going to visit other relatives in distant parts of Latvia, combining this with excursions to the countryside. All these activities require extra cash, of course, and sooner or later this runs out. As Rita put it, 'At the beginning it's fine, you have money, but then you stay longer, and you run out of money, and nobody needs you'. Olegs described his own adaptation to the reality of life in Latvia and not paying sufficient attention to things:

> The holiday money runs out and then you understand that the reality is different. At the beginning I was shopping there and overfilled the basket with everything that we wanted and did not check the receipt. But then, a week before the holidays were over, I bought a card and checked the expiry date and it was the 28th [the same day]. No warning, no discount, nothing: I was so angry. After living here [in Guernsey] I had got into the habit of not checking on such things … I forgot where I was.

Lines were also drawn between the common and preferred practices in Guernsey on the one hand and Latvia on the other; in Latvia no smiling faces, only angry ones, especially on public transportation; the aggressive driving culture; the heavy bureaucracy etc. – all are aggregated together to alienate people from the place they once called home (and some still do). Some are deeply annoyed by the contrast; others understand and tolerate it. Rita, for example, said 'I understand why people are so nervous, so angry' – simply because life in post-socialist, post-crisis Latavia is a struggle for most people. Moreover, because of the recency of labour migration for Latvia, VFR visits are still a widespread practice and many migrants' attachments (to husband, parents, children etc.) and their social and other networks are still based there. However, different forms and locations of VFR travel are also evolving, implying different linkages to international migration and tourism.

*VFR reversed: networking on the island*

As noted in the German case-study, VFR can also be reversed in the migration context. Participants referred to the presence of friends and relatives in Guernsey as part of their everyday lives, and indeed some interviews and conversations took place when visitors from Latvia were present. A notable 'event' might be the arrival of grandparents at the airport to greet their new grandchild for the first time. Visitors might be taken to the island's picturesque sights or on trips to adjacent islands or the nearby French coast. On such occasions, the migrant worker becomes a tourist and a host simultaneously, and this also gives them the opportunity to see the place they now live in from new and multiple perspectives. In most cases, those who live in open-market accommodation are not legally restricted in terms of who can come to visit and stay with them, as long as the visitors remain within the stipulated three-month limit for tourism and visiting purposes.

Often, it was clear that visitors from Latvia came not just to engage in 'pure' VFR, but also out of curiosity about future working opportunities, leading to possible migration later on. Below, Jekaterina and Lauma relate their respective experiences of this kind of exploratory visit, both of which had a clear work-finding objective:

> I had six weeks free and came to visit my mother. I also had the idea to work a little. My mother said that many people do that; they come for a short while and work. It's not difficult to find work. … Almost all [of the friends and relatives who want to] find something (Jekaterina, 29).

> I already had friends here and I came with the idea to find work within one week. I had dry soups with me and money to survive for only ten days. If I didn't find anything, I would have to leave. But I found a job on exactly the last day (Lauma, 51).

In the case of Lasma (25), her visit to her mother triggered a more general desire to move there:

> Mum was already working in Guernsey when I visited her. … I came back with a completely different view of the world. And from that moment I knew I wanted to get out of Latvia.

As Williams (2009: 315) has pointed out, accompanying mobility as described above can be enfolded with other types of mobility and be a source of labour for the wage economy. Visitors from Latvia who work range from

grandparents who come to lend a hand looking after grandchildren, thereby releasing both parents on to the labour market, to the school-age children of migrant workers, as well as brothers, sisters, cousins etc. Children come to visit Guernsey mainly in the summer, when they are officially on school holidays in Latvia, and they pick up short-term and casual work, as related by one of the employers interviewed for this research:

> If children visit their parents for the summer, it is not a problem; we provide them with a spare room if possible. But we also employ children who have grown up and come and start working for us.

The employer perspective reminds us that the international (im)mobilities of migrant workers are tied to various legal regulations and, in some cases, the immobility of a migrant stipulated by law can turn out to be an asset when later applying for benefits, tax recalculation or, above all, citizenship. Not everyone can follow the labyrinth of regulations, so they learn about their significance only when they encounter a concrete situation. Olegs told us that he visited Latvia only rarely during his initial years as a migrant worker; his brother and some of his friends from the same town in Latvia were working on the island, too, and he did not feel the need to go home. During his first six years in Guernsey, he visited Latvia for a total of only five weeks. But then:

> When my child was born in Guernsey, it turned out to be an unintential benefit, since I could claim British citizenship for him. [This happened] because I, as the father, could prove that I had been living here permanently.

The reversal of VFR and the way that the intense scale of emigration from Latvia to Guernsey takes place within two relatively small-scale spatial settings [Latvia is a small country and Guernsey a small island] mean that sociability amongst migrants is high and that chance encounters can take place with friends and relatives unexpectedly. Several participants reported how surprised they were to meet cousins or school friends in Guernsey. Although this is an indirect, rather than direct, manifestation of 'reverse VFR', it can increase the sense of belonging to the migrant destination and serve as a kind of replacement for infrequent co-presence and overcome the sense of geographical distance from home. Below, Silvija (45) describes how she met her best friend from schooldays during her first week in Guernsey:

I was walking on the street and suddenly I heard a whistling and a cheerful shouting of my nickname, one used only by friends from vocational school. It felt so strange; nobody had called me by that name for many years.

In this way, a faded bond of friendship was renewed, after nearly thirty years, in a spontaneous meeting with an adolescent friend on the street in St Peter Port.

Thus, visiting and meeting friends and relatives abroad, whilst not so deeply embedded in networks as they are in Latvia, are still frequent and meaningful practices, and are multiply linked to both international migration and tourism, most notably as 'search time–spaces' for work and migration under cover of tourism.

## Conclusion

This paper is one of the first to bring together the twin, or at least closely related, phenomena of migration and visiting friends and relatives, and to study and exemplify how these two forms and rhythms of mobility are enfolded with each other. We argue, in synthesis, that, for nearly all forms of migration, VFR is constitutive of that migration. The previous neglect of VFR probably reflects how it falls into the interstices both between various disciplines (sociology, geography, economics etc.) and between the interdisciplinary fields of migration and tourism studies. As Janta et al. (2013: 2) point out, VFR is a shining example of Sayer's (1992) notion of a 'chaotic concept': it is certainly richer in terms of empirical analysis (even if the research is hardly extensive) than it is in terms of theoretical formulation. Conceptually, it is 'enmeshed in the web of relationships around diasporas, transnationalism, inter-generational transitions, and the reaffirmation and re-creation of (hybrid) identities' (Janta et al. 2013: 2).

The diversity of types of migration, and the fact that VFR is itself a quite diversified phenomenon, inevitably means that there is a complex array of interlinkages between the two phenomena. A preliminary typology of linkages was mapped out in the first section of this paper. The three subsequent case-studies of German, Kosovan and Latvian migrants in different parts of the UK/Britain illustrated further aspects of this diversity, not only in terms of the contrasts between the three cases but also as examples of how the interlinkages can themselves dynamically change. As well as different migrant types (labour migrants, wealthy expats, lifestyle migrants, refugees, circular migrants etc.) being a defining and categorising variable, it is also important to recognise how VFR is enfolded within the

lifecourse, both demographically (e.g. first- vs second-generation Kosovans) and in terms of prior and ongoing mobility history (e.g. German bi-local vs multi-local migrants).

The enfolded temporality and inherent spatiality of VFR and migration suggest a fruitful connection with the time-geography of Torsten Hägerstrand. This was most explicitly argued with reference to the Latvian case, but such an approach is equally applicable to the other two examples examined here, and indeed to other forms of spatial mobility evident around the world. Time-geography maps the combined 'space-timeness' of all spatial mobilities, and recognises, too, the inherent 'biographicity' of individuals' lives, and the connectedness, through, for example, co-presence or what Hägerstrand calls 'bundling', of different combinations of household formation, kinship, generations, gender, friendship etc. The place-specific nature of such relational links and their attached mobilities and separations is brought out via notions of translocality and transterritoriality, evidenced in the German and Kosovan cases respectively, whilst the more regular, rhythmic nature of migrations which were, at least in their initial stage, more circular and time-based, is illustrated by our Latvian example.

The 'mechanical' nature of time-geography, and the framing of all mobilities as events of time, space and place, should not be allowed to obscure the fundamental relationality of migration and, especially, of VFR; nor their combined embeddedness in legal, economic and gendered power geometries. Each of the cases considered here sheds light on how these geometries act as constraining and channelling factors, preventing or facilitating both migration and the subsequent ability to engage in VFR.

To conclude, this working paper is exactly that: a statement of work-in-progress. It reflects our attempt to synthesise results from three research projects and we acknowledge that more needs to be done to achieve that synthesis, especially at a theoretical level. At the same time, efforts are underway to develop each of the three case-studies into more in-depth, separate, published studies in their own right.

## Endnotes

1 A major step forward in bringing together the two 'mobilities' of migration and VFR travel was the 'Think Tank' on 'Reconceptualising Visiting Friends and Relatives Travel' which took place at the University of Surrey, Guildford, UK, on 13 June 2013. This workshop explored a range of wider linkages of VFR; our paper was one of a small number of invited presentations related to these wider linkages, in our case the link between VFR and migration. In what follows, we also draw on the opening 'position paper' to the workshop – a substantial overview paper which, like ours, addresses some of the conceptual and practical linkages between VFR and migration (Janta, Cohen and Williams 2013).

2 We are aware that some might find this definition overly restrictive in that it seems to exclude short-term migrations such as seasonal or circular migrants. This is where the 'conceptuology' of 'migration' and 'mobility' becomes blurred (Geoffroy and Sibley 2007: xii); also because, as we shall see later, there are some forms of circular or 'shuttle' migration/mobility where the VFR and migratory functions are combined together rather than exhibiting separate and distinctive rhythms of space-time movement.

3 For a vivid portrait of this annual summer return see the study by Cornelisen (1980) of a south Italian town, Torregreca (a pseudonym).

4 In many respects Germans in London and England have similarities to the French studied by Ryan and Mulholland (2013); similarities with Italians (Conti 2012) and Eastern Europeans like the Poles (Ryan et al. 2008, 2009; Burrell 2009) also exist in that these groups are also intra-EU migrants, but the young highly educated migrants coming from Southern and Eastern European countries are somewhat different in that their migration is at least partly, if not wholly, economically motivated – they are escaping unemployment and low incomes in their own countries.

5 On guilt see also Conradson and Latham (2005b, 2007) on New Zealanders in London, Baldassar (2001, 2007) on Italians in Australia, and O'Connor (2010) on Irish in Australia. In these cases, however, the guilt is of a different spatial context, given the distances involved – the guilt of not being able to visit at all, or only very rarely, and about missing out on key rite-of-passage events back home.

6 This pattern of 'recruitment-stop' was especially true for Germany. In low-unemployment Switzerland, which boomed in the 1980s, renewed labour migration from Kosovo took place, with more than 40,000 Kosovan men recruited into the construction sector alone (Iseni 2013: 229).

7 See King et al. (2013: 131, Table 1) for more comprehensive data on south-east European countries' economic and migration profiles.

8 According to Kostovicova (2003: 67-68), the Kosovan Albanians have a stronger community identity than the 'Albanian Albanians' in the UK; although they come together to celebrate certain occasions, there are fault-lines which replicate their political fragmentation in their Balkan homelands. There is also the added complicating factor that some Albanians gained refugee status in the UK by presenting themselves as Kosovans (Haxhikadrija 2009: 30).

9  A similar interim limbo status characterised migrants coming from 'Albania proper' who often remained in an irregular state for many years pending the time that they were able to 'get papers' (see Vathi and King 2013).

10  For accessible accounts of Hägerstrand's time-geography see Hägerstrand (1975, 1982, 1985); also Pred (1977) and Ellegård and Svedin (2012).

11  We appreciate that breaches of family solidarity within the Kosovan context may be 'silenced' in interview narratives because of the attendant shame of making such problems public.

12  There has been a substantial literature on gender relations, political transition and post-socialism. See amongst others Einhorn (1993); Funk and Muller (1993); Gal and Kligman (2000); Jähnert et al. (2001); Luki et al. (2006); and specifically on Latvia, Novikova (2006).

13  Approximately 8 per cent of housing in Guernsey is so-called 'open-market' accommodation, which is at least 50 per cent more expensive than the local market. From the viewpoint of a migrant, the most important advantage of accessing open-market accommodation is that it provides the right to reside without regular compulsory departure. Moreover, residing in this kind of accommodation gives a time-space of manœuvre in the event of a person being unemployed. Unemployment in the local market can mean that a person must exit the island at short notice. However, these isues are overshadowed by the very high price of accommodation and by work-contract limitations.

14  For one specific example, see the interview narratives of Italian graduate emigrants in London collected in King and Conti (2013: 20).

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