

**Preliminary Project Report of the FWF Project
“The Kosovar Albanian Family Revisited”**

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**Family, Kinship Relations and Social Security in Kosovo:
The Case Study of Isniq**

by

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Introduction

My report focuses on the preliminary results of fieldwork carried out in the village of Isniq in West Kosovo in spring and summer 2011, where Backer (2003 (1979)) had collected empirical evidence almost four decades before. Isniq, administratively part of the Deçan Municipality, belongs from a geographic-ethnographic point of view to the Plain of Dukagjini. This plain should not be confused with the Dukagjini region, which is located in North Albania. The Plain of Dukagjini shares borders with territories settled by Albanians in Albania proper, Northern Albania and Eastern Montenegro. Isniq is located very close to the town of Deçan. The Lumbardh (Bistrica) River constitutes the border between the two localities. Isniq is one of the largest villages in Kosovo and stretches along the main road from Gjakovë to Pejë; left-hand to this road the Mountains of Isniq and other Deçan villages ascend. The people of Isniq say that they are descendants of three brothers of the tribe (*fis*) of Shala, who have lived here for more than ten generations together with a few families, who belong to the tribe of Thaq (these families are called Bojku). Actually, there is no exact evidence on the number of the village's households¹ but by referring to my interviewees, Isniq comprises approximately 700-800 households.

The social organization of Kosovar Albanians has permanently attracted researchers such as anthropologists, sociologists and historians. Some of them have analyzed their family structures and family life in specific regions. The most valuable studies concentrate on the Plain of Dukagjini and the remote region of Opoja. Whereas the Kosovar sociologist Rrapi (Rrapi 2003 (1995)) investigated family structures in the Plain of Dukagjini in the 1970s and at the same decade, the Norwegian anthropologist Backer (2003 (1979)) concentrated on one of its villages, Isniq. The US-American anthropologist Reineck (1991) conducted fieldwork in Opoja in the late 1980s. Moreover, a few scholars such as the Austrian historical anthropologist Kaser (1994, 2000, 2008, 2012) who has been focusing on the family in the Balkans generally as well as on Albanian family structures in particular, also has significant impact on the findings of my research. Robert Pichler (2012a (2002), 2012b), Siegfried Gruber (2008), Gentiana Kera and Enriketa Pandelejmoni (2012 (2008)) have been analyzing family and household structures in Albania proper on the basis of the first regular census taken among Albanians (by Austro-Hungary) in 1918. Since family structures in North Albania seemed to be very

¹ The most recent regular census was taken in 1981. It is expected that in September 2012, the detailed data of the 2011 census will be published.

similar to the neighboring Kosovar region at that time, their research results should not be ignored when studying historical family structures among Albanians in Kosovo. Likewise, Kahreman Ulqini (2003) has analyzed the structure of Albanian traditional society. Begolli's (Begolli 1987) research undertaken shortly before the Serbian oppression began is worth mentioning. After approximately two decades of almost no family research – due to political turmoil and social unrest – Halimi's (Halimi 2011) study constitutes a positive sign of a recurrent interest in what constitutes the most pronounced social institution of the Kosovar-Albanians – the family.

Before we started with our fieldwork we had prepared ourselves by reading literature about family studies in comparative, regional and theoretical perspectives under the guidance of Kaser and Leutloff-Grandits from September 2010 to March 2011. Krasniqi's and my most considerable problem – living in very tough family and kinship networks in Kosovo – was to understand household and family as tasks of social research. This problem was exponentiated by the fact that our point of departure was grounded theory. Having securely known about Kosovar Albanian family from my own personal experience, it was not so easy to explore topics coming up “from the ground” (fieldwork site). Still, we paid special attention to grounded theory². In March 2011 we launched a test phase of fieldwork (three weeks). To summarize this phase, we collected topics coming bottom-up in unstructured interviews in order to give priority to the general emic perspectives of current developments (most important things in the life-course of individuals, which are the most important problems to be solved, what are the most important problems of family-life). At this stage of research my intention was to contact people knowledgeable of local settings such as teachers, political activists, historians, elder people, who could inform me on the characteristics of the village and on how to establish contacts with additional potential informants. The most important thing was to talk to them in an open atmosphere sometimes using additional equipment (recorder, camera). At the same time I was surprised and not surprised. Several of the problems I was familiar with from my own experience, while others were new for me.

The second phase of fieldwork in the summer of this year lasted about three months. I conducted in-depth- or unstructured interviews using the qualitative data collection technique without using any kinds of questionnaires. I rarely recorded talks by voice recorder, so during

² Grounded theory means the development of theory from data systematically obtained from social research, in our case fieldwork (see Glaser, Barney G. and Strauss, Anselm L. 1967).

the conversation most of the time I would take notes because the transcription of recorded interviews was rather time-consuming. After every talk or series of conversations I have written field notes about things people are concerned with as well as about my impressions. Villagers talked about their everyday life, the changes of the social structure of the village before and after the war of 1998-99³ and the relationships between family members as well as with their close and distant kin. Therefore, the following report is mostly descriptive and does hardly include interpretations by myself. However, I will provide statistics and literature that contextualizes my conversations. Theory-building will come into focus after having concluded this year's fieldwork by the end of September (2012). However, this will not prevent me from the formulation of first tentative hypotheses at the end of my report.

Thus, the focus of my report is to highlight the changes in household structures and the meaning of the concept of household and family as well as the relations between family members including changing gender roles as revealed in my conversations after the war of 1998-99. This will be supported by quantitative data. My report also describes the changing family and kinship relations in the context of a significantly changing political environment and how social security is still considered a family affair. In this context, also the relationships of an individual to maternal and paternal kin will be described. Additionally, there are other significant aspects that came up in my conversations such as the effect and persistence of customary law (*kanun*) despite the stipulation of modern public regulations in the previous years. However, the dimensions of overlap of customary and public laws need more investigation and therefore this field will not be tackled in my report. My talks have also revealed the effects of destruction caused by the armed conflict of 1998-99. People were induced to rebuild their houses, which had been burned and destroyed during the war. Being a country just emerging from the war, it was impossible for most of the population to establish new homes. This was only made possible by the support of many international organizations and by labor migrants to western countries. Whereas the help of international organizations soon vanished, remittances continue and keep family economy alive. This bridges also the high level of unemployment in the country. According to statistical data the official unemployment rates vary from 35% to 39% (Kalludra 2012: 9) – actually, they seem to be higher – and determine the standard of living with a GDP per capita and year hardly more than € 2000 (which is half of

³ The term “war”, which is officially suggested by Kosovar-Albanian authorities, does not completely fit with the classical understanding of warfare. Basically, the conflict between Serbs and Albanians was carried out by irregular armed forces on both sides. NATO airstrikes forced the Serbian (officially Yugoslavian) side to conclude an armistice and to withdraw its regular and irregular troops from Kosovo in June 1999.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's and about one third of Macedonia's and Albania's). Kosovo and Moldova are Europe's poorest countries (UNDP 2012: 23).

The following pages will concentrate, firstly, on the post-war changes and their impact on family and household structures. The second section will indicate changing family and gender relations with an indicative outlook to the problem of upcoming generational relations and the third section will address factors of stability and the fragmentarity of relations between close and distant, patrilineal and matrilineal kin.

1) Post-war Changes and Their Impact on Family- and Household Structures

Before the armed conflict of 1998-99 and the withdrawal of Yugoslav (Serbian) regular and irregular forces from Kosovo, most of the Kosovar-Albanian population did not consider the state they lived in to be their state. Although socialist modernization and industrialization had an impact on the family, Albanians were not affected by socioeconomic changes with the same intensity as the most of the Yugoslav populations. The reason for this was basically not deeply rooted conservatism and patriarchalism (Kaser 2008: 175) but the lack of inclination of integration in the institutions of the socialist state of the South Slavs. Instead of working in the industry, Albanians preferred labor migration to western countries and/or to remain in agricultural production. Statistical data indicates that at the end of World War II, 80% was rural population; this percentage decreased only to 63% in 1991 (Statistical Office of Kosovo, Statistics on Agriculture in Kosovo 2001: 10). Especially on the fertile Dukagjini Plain, the rural population preferred agricultural production instead of moving to industrial labor.

After the collapse of Socialism in East Europe and the Balkans, a new era of transition and exertion for integration began in the democratic world for the post-socialist states. However, this was not the case for Kosovo – on the contrary. In March 1989, Kosovo's autonomous status was abolished by the Serbian Milošević regime, which was followed by Serbian domination and finally by the armed conflict of 1998-99. My interviewees underlined that the process of change of household structure and organization originated already in the 1990s and accelerated after the war.

Family and household in general anthropological and sociological literature are considered two different social units. Family does not necessarily denote a co-resident domestic group, whilst the household particularly indicates the fact of shared location (Laslett 1972: 28). Bender differentiates between family and household in the following way: “There are two basic grounds for making an analytical distinction between families and households: first, they are empirically different. As to the first point, the referent of the family is kinship, while the referent of the household is propinquity or residence” (Bender 1967: 493). With respect to the Balkans and Anatolia, Kaser states that there was hardly any difference between belonging to a family and to a household in pre-modern times and that “the family consisting of a group of immediate kin, the household as a unit of consumption, consisting of a shared roof, shared income and expenditure, shared usage rights, such as pastures, woodland, springs, or the communal soil, and shared property, such as field, animals, or working tools” (Kaser 2008: 36).

As Kaser indicates there is no clear-cut division between household and family in the Balkans in pre-modern times; household as well as family were constituted exclusively by a group of kin. This was and still is the case with Kosovar Albanians. In this regard, Albanians used and still use the terms ‘house’ – *‘shpi’ (shtëpi)* and ‘family’ – *‘familja’* interchangeably and thus these terms comprised family and household as kin group. Almost four decades ago, Backer mentioned with regard to the village of Isniq: “The concept of ‘family’ and ‘household’ have been used as interchangeable terms, and in reality they are. ‘Family’ and ‘household’ used for Isniq refer to exactly the same group of people, but to different systems they are part of. The household as a system defines people in terms of the tasks they perform. It says nothing about their structural relations to each other, independent of this purpose-oriented status definition” (Backer 2003: 50). Referring to Isniq, Backer used the term ‘family’ to indicate the relationship based on kinship between members of a household group, and labels any kindred outside the residential unit ‘kin’, ‘relatives’ or ‘lineage members’. A household consists of people with a focus on joint management and production, division of labor, income sharing and consumption, and is recruited on the basis of kinship (ibid. 50). In her period of fieldwork there was no *shtëpi* (household) without a male head, who was the administrator of the patriline’s property and who entered a relationship with the *fis* (tribe), *mahalla* (quarter) and the family (Ulqini 2003: 16).

The traditional Kosovar Albanian family or household as well as the family and household in the Balkans generally are characterized by a household cycle consisting of multiple and nuclear family relations: sons remain in the household, whereas daughters are married out. By marrying in wives, father and sons constitute a multiple household consisting of two or more couples. After an indefinite period the sons would divide the household property into equal shares and thus establish a nuclear household and the cycle of fusion and fission continues. The traditional multiple household was characterized by a clear hierarchy of seniority and gender. Mostly, the eldest man was the household head and the agnatic group (father, brothers, sons, grandsons, cousins and nephews) jointly owned the household's property. Women remain without property. This household type was widespread in the Balkans until the middle of the 20th century and therefore Kaser introduced the term 'Balkan family' (Kaser 2012: 441-443; Laslett 1972: 30). In the case of Albanians in Kosovo, a household with two married brothers represents two *hise* (two conjugal units). In case a family/household divided into nuclear ones, they constituted according to Laslett (1972: 29) a *simple family* or an *elementary family*. This family type consists of a married couple or a married couple with unmarried offspring or of a widowed person with offspring.

In Isniq the multiple family household was quantitatively dominant at least until the census year of 1981 (in this year the average household size in Isniq was 9.8, see Appendix 1) with two or three generations living together. The multiple household had an economic as well as a political function. Given sufficient access to soil and pastures, the male labor force of a multiple household could be active in agriculture as well as in husbandry. The political dimension consisted in its efficient protection vis-à-vis of hostile state institutions as well as in conflicts within community. As Backer mentioned, a large family unit meant power and strength (Backer 2003: 43).

Of course, household size as well as family structure has changed over time. In 1932, 22 families with 30 or more family members (or 18% of the total) were counted; until 1975 this number shrank to four. Moreover, nine of these 22 families in 1932 had between 50 and 70 members. The smallest group with one to four members represents approximately 10% of the total number of families in 1932 as well as in 1975. The category with five to nine members varied between 32% in 1932 and 41% in 1975. The category 10 to 14 members comprised 18% in 1932 and 32% in 1975 (Backer 2003: 48-49).

Comparing the census data from 1948 to 1981, in all census years the average household size of Isniq was never lower than 8.0 and higher than 9.8 members. In 1948, the village comprised 1,768 inhabitants and 216 households, while in 1981 it comprised 3,393 inhabitants and 345 households. The highest average household size was reached in 1981 with 9.8 members, while the lowest was 8.0 in 1948⁴ (see Appendix 1). At this stage we do not yet know the actual average family size. The preliminary results of the most recent population census published in June 2011 indicate an average household size of 6.8 for the municipality of Deçan.⁵ The result at village level will be published in September 2012.

Demographic data for the years from 1948 to 1973 indicates instability in terms of population growth. Table 1 reflects natural population growth in the period of almost three decades. The peak of population growth was reached in 1961; in the years that followed, natural population growth began to decline.

Table 1: Natality and Mortality, Isniq 1948-1973

Year	1948	1953	1961	1971	1973
Natality	37.9	42.2	41.7	37.5	35.3
Mortality	14.1	20.6	12.1	08.2	07.9
Population growth	23.8	22.0	29.6	29.3	27.4

Source: Backer 2003: 63.

Nowadays, there are only several households with two or more married couples. According to Kosovo standards and conditions, Isniq families have good houses and enjoy an average economic standard. Today, the central room for men and women is the living room. In cases of ceremonial occasions, this room is dedicated to women, while men are sitting in the *oda* (people in Isniq use also *soba e burrave* – men’s room), the traditional central room. Before the war women and men used to live in separate spaces. The *oda* was reserved for men, while women lived in the ‘*shpia e zjemit*’ (or *shpia e robve* - slave room, that means a room where women lived), which was a room where women and children stayed during the day, and at the same time they utilized it for cooking. The *kulla* (traditional fortified tower house) as well as the *oda* constituted central institutions of the traditional culture of Kosovar Albani-

⁴ Statistical Office of Kosovo, *Population, households according to settlements and territorial organization of Kosovo until 2008*, September 2009, Prishtinë.

⁵ <http://esk.rks-gov.net/rekos2011/repository/docs/REKOS%20LEAFLET%20ALB%20FINAL.pdf>

ans. These were the places, where the important political, social, and cultural events took place. Additionally, they played an educational role in the 1990s, when Albanians were expelled from public schools; *oda* and *kulla* were used as classrooms.

In the pre-war period of the 1990s, the basic economic resources were farming and remittances of labor migration. Nowadays the population continues to be dependent on remittances, but instead of farming many people work in public institutions or run their own businesses. Still in the 1990s, a household ideally constituted a corporate group with a joint budget. Partially this is still the case, especially when the whole family is involved in farming and husbandry. One of these families is family M. It consists of two married brothers; they live and work together. Their income is based upon approximately 200 sheep, six cows and one horse. In addition they own a tractor and a jeep. The elder brother, whom I interviewed in September of 2011, explained that their income primarily stems from the sale of sheep and lambs as well as of cheese. Whereas milk does not pay, cheese achieves a good price with 3 € per kilo.

Nowadays, Isniq people are working for private businessmen (some of them have their own businesses) and public institutions. Since salaries are usually low, people are looking for additional resources. Thus, for instance, public employees complement their salaries with agriculture or herding. In summer of 2011, I visited a math teacher at Isniq's school. Until 2010 he lived together with his two married brothers, but then the household got divided and he lives now with his mother and his own nuclear family, while his brothers established their own nuclear families abroad. His brothers do not send remittances regularly (anymore). In addition to his primary work as teacher, he also works in agriculture: "Salaries are low. My brothers have bought agricultural machines and I can work with them." This example shows that thanks to the investment of his brothers in agricultural machines, the household in Isniq manages to finance its expenses by the combination of various sources, one of them being agriculture, even after the fission of the joint household. Others, however, argue differently, when it comes to the question of combining income resources. A frequently heard argument is 'we are living in a village and it is not reasonable to buy elementary agricultural or dairy products in the store' (interviews conducted in August 2011).

Although before the war there were only few women working in salary work, after the war women greatly began to earn money – something that was previously rather men's privilege. They work today for public institutions and some of them even run their own businesses. Together with Leutloff-Grandits I conducted an interview with a woman, who is engaged in

political and professional life, in March 2011. She was 46 years old at that time and worked as a teacher of Albanian language and literature at the Secondary School in Deçan and was deputy in Deçan's municipal council. Of course, this example is not representative for the majority of women in Isniq, but it demonstrates that well-educated women are able to take leadership roles. Other women work in small shops (*shitore*), two of them even run their own shops, and another one produces and sells national costumes. Moreover, some women run hairdressing salons. At the Secondary School of Deçan there are 70 teachers employed, however, only 17 of them are women. This indicates that the percentage of participation in the labor market in Kosovo remains very distinctive by sex. In 2009, the employment rate of women was 11%, while the male rate was 36% (Statistical Office of Kosovo, Women and men in Kosovo 2011: 36).

Almost every family has one or more members working as labor migrants, and more than 100 houses are empty because the entire family lives abroad and returns only once a year. Labor migrants invest in new houses and in most of the cases they financially support their close family on a regular basis. As already mentioned, unemployment rates are high, and therefore remittances keep traditional family life intact - not only in Isniq: "Migration and remittances have been a lifeline, but they have not brought about development. In doing so, they have helped to preserve one of Europe's oldest and most conservative institutions: the traditional, patriarchal household" (ESI 2006: II).

The above mentioned *kullas* have lost their traditional meaning. Some of the approximately 19 *kullas* were burned and destroyed during the war, and only some of them were rebuilt afterwards. Two of the most important, the *kulla katërkatëshe* (the four-story *kulla*) and Kukleci Kulla (three story) were reconstructed by a Swedish Foundation in 2002. Some of the *kullas* are rented out for seminars, conferences and other meetings and thus contribute to the family budget.

2) Changing Family- and Gender Relations

In past and present, the household economy has been dependent on the remittances sent by labor migrants to a significant degree. The remittances are alleviating poverty, provide for economic balance and social security at a low level, since the poor state is not able to take

care of its citizens. This system has impact on at least three important dimensions: gender relations, generational relations and the question of the future of the remittance transfers. As far as the latter question is concerned I would like to point to Leutloff-Grandits's report.

With regard to gender relations, Agani describes two concepts of the relationship between the state and the family: "In public and political discourse, there are two rival concepts about how families should live, and how they should be supported in doing so by the state: one is traditional or conservative; focusing on private responsibilities and traditional family values taking into consideration gender specifics, and the other one is a modernistic approach, focusing on public responsibility and gender equality" (Agani 2009: 12).

Kosovo's legislation determines the equality between the sexes. In reality, the Kosovar society is far from being equal with respect to gender relations. However, there are indications that speak for a weakening of patriarchal relations, especially if we compare the contemporary situation with the situation in the 1970s, when Backer conducted fieldwork in Isniq. In her time of research, only adult men were considered contributors to the family budget. Also the responsibility to provide the family with its basic needs was exclusively attached to men. Women were responsible for the household, for bearing and rearing children and for keeping their own nuclear unit clothed (see Backer 2003: 118).

This situation in many cases does not exist any longer. As already mentioned before, an increasing number of women who contribute to the household budget appear. Additional factors should not be overlooked. Since the war some families in Isniq consist only of women and their children and therefore exclusively women take care of their families. Walking outside of the home and shopping without being accompanied by men or children has become possible for women. Meanwhile many women own cars and are, of course, in possession of a driving license. Women are equally represented in the educational system, except rare cases, where girls are not allowed to continue with secondary or tertiary education. Until now I have heard about one case only, in which a girl was not allowed to continue her education.

Regardless of all these changes, the head of household formally used to be the father or husband, in multiple households the elder brother, if the father has died, although his power has declined being no longer the authoritative as in previous times. He has lost his position to direct his family and to collect and to distribute the family budget. As a result, each family member somehow manages his/her income and is not forced to submit the earned money to

the household head – husband, father or elder brother – and in rare cases to the mother (if her husband died or is abroad). This phenomenon is visible in almost every family, regardless of how or where they live; for instance, if the family is not divided but a part of it lives abroad. Concerning the position of the household head and the relations to other family members, a teacher, who works at the Secondary School in Deçan told me:

From a family that has been very patriarchal and has functioned through a system of ‘hehe’, almost as a military regime in terms of responsibilities, duties and obligations that have kept the family together, we have now a high degree of freedom in action, in activity. Until six years ago, every cent that I earned I handed over to my father. My father returned a part for my needs. At that time he was engaged with other works. Now by reason of his old age perhaps he felt that he cannot manage the household any longer. I don’t know why, I don’t go into deeper analysis; however, today I managed with those that I have, but I managed for the house. That means he used his incomes for family needs. (Interviewed: March 2011).

In Backer’s time the family was identified with the head of household (*i zoti shpisë*), who was the formal owner of the property. A household was a corporate unit and only men were considered full members (Backer 2003: 52). The household was passed over to the next generation only in male line. Women had neither property nor inheritance rights.

Backer gives a good description of professions and the sources of income. She mentions that only four men had salary work before WW II, while in 1970s this group consisted of one fourth already. Half of them were migrant laborers. Another group included the students as prospective wage earners with 13%, and thus almost 40% of the male population expected to have some kind of salaried employment in the future. Moreover, half of the male population over 18 years was ‘peasants’. Not all of them were working on their own estates but as day laborers in agriculture and construction (Backer 2003: 95-96). At the moment, I have no data about the exerted professions available. As already mentioned, in September 2012 the final results of the 2011 census including data on professions will be published.

Another problem is the relation between generations. Kosovo has the youngest population in Europe. According to data of the Statistical Office of Kosovo, 28% of the population in Kosovo is under 15 years old, while nearly two thirds (65%) belong to the age group 15-64 (Statistical Office of Kosovo, *Women and men in Kosovo* 2011). However, this constellation

will change in the next years, because fertility decline will continue and life expectancy will increase. The average fertility rate in Kosovo indicates a considerable decline of the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) from 2.9 births per woman in 2002 to 2.03 in 2009. This is a decline of nearly one child per woman (Statistical Office of Kosovo, *Women and men in Kosovo* 2011).

Caretaking is based on solidarity between the generations. Taking care of the elderly has been considered a family obligation. The great question is how people will react to the new constraints of a declining young- and growing generation of elderly people. This question needs further exploration.

Today the multiple households are still very widespread, but compared to the pre-war time the household structure is changing. Such a household does not encompass more than three generations, or to be more concrete, the father living with his sons and grandchildren, but not with his father or his brothers and/or his uncles. The family extension is changing from the horizontal to the vertical line. This is in clear contradiction to previous decades. In 1975 the horizontal family extension was up to the first cousin, while in 1932 it was up to the second cousin (Backer 2003: 58-65). This orientation towards vertical extension will shift the focus to the relations between generations instead of within generations.

3) Stable and Fragmental Relationships between Close and Distant Kin

Cultures differ, amongst other things, by their kinship relations expressed by a specific kinship terminology. “Kinship is defined in terms of genetic relatedness or the probability the two individuals will share a gene from a common ancestor” (Hruschka 2010: 78), or as a group of persons linked through a male descent and/or marriage (Kaser 2008: 37). The Albanians use the terms *fis* and *farefis* to express kinship relations. Referring to Backer’s definition, the *fis* is “a group of related households tracing descent in the male line from a common ancestor... or because of this wide variety of usage of the term *fis*, it can only be translated as a ‘patrilineal descent group’ or shortened to ‘agnatic kin’ (Backer 2003: 143-144). A similar definition is offered by Ulqini, who makes the point that the popular concept of the term *fis* means the origin of a certain group of people from a male ancestor regardless of the distance between him and the descents (Ulqini 2003: 34). Common to Kaser’s and Ulqini’s definitions is that kinship relations are created exclusively by a male descent line but not by marriage.

This, however, is not a specific phenomenon of the Albanian population but was widespread in the Balkans and in Europe east of the Hajnal line (see e.g. Kaser 2000). Depending on specific historical, economic and political contexts this kinship system has been turning into a system based on a combination of descent and marriage in the course of the twentieth century. Among the Albanians of Kosovo, because of the hostile political contexts until the liberation of the country from Serbian domination, this tendency is still not very expressed but will be getting stronger in the future. This means that the patrilineal relations will be weakened and the in-law bonds strengthened.

At that time when Backer researched in Isniq the patrilineal kinship system was still strong. She differentiated three categories of descent and solidarity: first, the widest group of kin consists of people who belong to the Shala tribe (*fis*) with agnatically related males residing together in various localities. These people know that they belong to Shala and consider themselves to be of the same extended kin, but in practical terms the solidarity among all Shala people is relatively weak because of its wide distribution and Shala men from Isniq can marry Shala women except from Isniq. The second category is the maximal lineage, which includes the descents of the three founding brothers of Isniq (Cana, Nika and Preka). These lineages were originally living in three *mahalla* or *lagje* of Isniq. The lineages do not marry with each other because of their common ancestor – the father of the three founding brothers. Thirdly, there are the minor lineages – *bark* ('womb' or 'stomach'), which will be analyzed later (Backer 2003: 186-195). The US-American anthropologist Reineck mentions more differentiated categories in the context of the Opoja region: *fis* – the tribe; *fshat* – the village; *farefis* – the patrilineal descent group (maximal lineage); *kusherinjtë* – the cousinship (major lineage); *axhallarët* – the father's brothers (minor lineage); *shtëpia e madhe* – the multiple family; *familja e ngusht* – the nuclear family (Reineck 1991: 40-46). Reineck's category of the major lineage (*kusherinjtë* – cousinship) is interesting. In her opinion the definition of *kushëri* (cousin) varies slightly throughout Kosovo. Among some people it is a vague concept generally referring to the paternal relatives one actually knows from meetings at weddings, funerals and other ritual occasions. In other regions *kushëri* specifically refers to paternal relatives who live in one's own village and the patrilineal females who have been married out into other villages. So, referred to Reineck, in Opoja *kusherinjtë* (the *-njtë* ending indicating the definite plural form) usually includes the descendants of a man in the patriline five or six generations distant from ego (ego's paternal FaFaFaFaFa) (Reineck 1991: 45). In small villages of thirty to fifty houses one's cousins may make up the whole village. In other cases, the cous-

ins make up one subdivision (*mahalla*) of the village or one section of mahalla (Ibid: 45). I would like to add that this category is very vague; in some cases where a village is settled by one *fis*, the people, even if they live neither in the same *mahalla* nor in the same *farefis*, call themselves cousins. Moreover, people of the same tribe call themselves cousins regardless of the location they are living in. Hence, in this context Reineck's definitions of the maximal and major lineages are interchangeable (a *farefis* can be smaller than the group of *kusherinjtë*) due to specific historical circumstances, geographical location, size and spatial extent of the respective *fis*.

Coming back to the *bark*, according to Ulqini two types of the closest kin group should be differentiated: *shtëpi të një barku* and *shtëpi me barqe* (Ulqini 2003: 20-21). *Bark* (plural *barqe*) literally means a woman's 'womb' or 'stomach'. Her sons constitute the group of *bark*. A *shtëpia e një barku* consists of the father and his sons or only of the sons. In vertical line this type comprises three generations, rarely four. The *shtëpia me barqe*, however, comprises the male offspring from the second to the fourth cousin. In case the father and head of the household dies, the first type passes to the second one (ibid: 21). Whereas the second type, *shtëpia me barqe*, tends to stretch horizontally, the first one extends vertically.

In the case of Isniq, *bark* has a different meaning. People say that they are 18 *barqe*. Almost four decades ago Backer counted 26 *barqe*. The approximately 700-800 households are descendants of the already mentioned three brothers; the vertical extension of a *bark* can comprise more than 10 generations on the vertical level and people beyond the sixth cousins. This means that a *bark* significantly transgresses the boundaries of a father and his sons and even the borders of a *shtëpia me barqe* defined by Ulqini.

As already mentioned, the traditional Balkan family is characterized by a household cycle consisting of multiple and nuclear family constellations, and only the patriline constitutes kinship relations. For Reineck, in the context of Opoja, people see their social world as a patrilineal one in which name, property and blood are passed on through males in the father's line. In the view of Albanians "blood comes from the father, and like most patrilineal groups, Albanians acknowledge important affective ties to maternal relatives and they feel matrilineal ties in important ways, especially in the individual's relationship to their or her maternal kin" (Reineck 1991: 46-49). Since marriage is exogamous, in-married wives belong to another patriline and therefore cannot become kin of the husband's patriline, and her relatives can only become friends or allied people of the husband's group. Marriage can create 'alliances'

or ‘networks’ (Backer 2003: 196) between two families. Wives’ networks provided access to other communities and families beyond the patriline and beyond spiritual kin in previous times (Backer 2003: 195). When marriage arrangements were concluded, the family used to be primarily interested in becoming allied with a well-known and reputed family (*familje n’za*); the secondary question was what the *nuse* (bride) or *dhëndri* (groom) looked like. Under the condition of communities, who considered themselves exposed to a hostile political framework, the creation of alliances through marriage was crucial. In this context, Albanians use the phrase ‘*miku i mire n’kohë të vështira*’ (friend in need is friend indeed), which means, if you have any problem or trouble, you can rely on your best friend (*mik*).

In previous times the relationship between boys and their mother’s brothers (*dajet*) – maternal uncles – used to be very close, whereas relations to their father’s brothers – paternal uncles – were characterized by severity and authority. The contrasting relationships with paternal and maternal uncles reveal much about the nature of the patriline and matriline among Albanians (Reineck 1991: 49) and the Balkans in general. Another dimension is the brother-sister relationship, which usually is a very close one because the brother is the only man of her own age she has been really close to, and there are many stories of how brothers have sheltered and defended their sisters against unfair decisions made by the rest of the family (Backer 2003: 198).

In the previous decade or so the relations to maternal relatives have changed. Isniq’s medical doctor ascribes this to a previously unknown dynamic of life. People visit each other less frequently, which is also due to new communication technologies. This has been confirmed by the already quoted teacher: When we have occasions such as fortunes (e.g. birth of a child) or in cases of condolences, we are still very careful with visits but otherwise not so much. Also with regard to the mother’s sisters (*teze*, pl. *tezet*) we retain the relationships by calling them constantly on the phone and visiting them sporadically – probably once a year.

Whereas maternal relations are declining, paternal ones still seem to be very strong. In this respect it should be called to mind that the overwhelming majority of Isniq’s male population originates from three brothers; this means in practical terms village exogamy. When asked whether there is any case of village-endogamous marriage, some of the informants told me about one case, but they did not like to discuss it; this couple is isolated from their families and the village community.

The solidarity of kin relations in many cases transgresses the village borders. The significant increase of population so resulted in the foundation of some villages in Podgur (Istog municipality) and two in Mitrovica with people from Isniq (Maksutaj 2002: 65). These are places, where people from Isniq already owned land before they established new settlements. Regardless of the geographic distance between Isniq and these villages, the patrilineal kinship ties are still very strong and faithfully preserved. As in the past, a family primarily celebrates with its relatives; only recently neighbors, friends and colleagues have been included. People say that it is a necessity to increase and preserve strong relationships within the kin. With regard to this, a secondary school teacher said (2011):

Especially after the war kinship relations have strengthened, they are even stronger than before. We lived under highly normal circumstances even earlier, because we have ancestor's relations to each other. However, after the war approximately 60% of our "vllaznia" (brotherhoods) had spread across European countries and even to America, and now we are fewer here and because we are less, it seems to be necessary to be closer and mobile in any case. This has unified us. We are still nicely functioning; we still rely on each other even in working activities (interview: March 2011).

Actually, also the relationship between Isniq-people, who migrated to Prishtina, to their homeland (Isniq) are well-preserved – even if somebody had left for Prishtina more than 40 years ago. In September 2011, I went to Prishtina in order to visit families from Isniq. This visit was very impressive. The first contact was established with a friend of mine by phone, who works at the Institute of History and we have met. Then he suggested meeting a journalist from Isniq, whom I have known from even earlier times. When I called him, he asked: Do you want to meet with a group of intellectuals from Isniq? I can organize a meeting. Oh I would be happy about that – I replied. Thus, we made an appointment at one of Prishtina's restaurants. Within one hour approximately ten intellectuals born in Isniq and working and living in Prishtina dropped in. All of them have made careers and achieved good positions such as medical doctors (two), journalists (one), professors at University (four), teachers (one) and engineers (one). One of them was a woman who is an anesthetist. They said also, the others who were not present maintain good relations to their village of origin. Some of them go to Isniq every weekend. There are practical reasons to maintain relations, for instance to find a job or to get support for a professional career. In this context the social network is assessed in terms of practical and social support, that means how many potential helpers a person has,

how easy they are to contract, how much they are willing to help and what kind of help they are prepared to offer (Heady 2010: 16).

Conclusions

Kosovo's post-war period is characterized by significant transformations in all spheres of its Albanian society. These transformations have effected also family and kinship relations, its organizational and structural form. Kosovo, neither in form of an autonomous province nor in form of a relatively independent state has the capacity to offer substantial support to its citizens.

The inability of the poor state to offer social welfare mechanisms to its citizens, it is primarily the family and the kin who still provide care and security for each other, especially for elderly people, people who are unable to work, as well as for unemployed ones. In this respect, Bott states: "Ties among kin are likely to be stronger if the kin are able to help one another occupationally. Although kin groups do not form the basic units of the economic and occupational structure, and the kinship status does not automatically entitle one to a livelihood and there are variations in the extent to which relatives can help one another to find jobs" (Bott 1971: 124). Thus, on the one hand, the lack of efficient economic policies of Kosovo's governments in order to create the opportunities for sustainable stability and, on the other hand, the weakness of the state to offer its citizens care and appropriate social security, affects and somehow predisposes the maintenance of strong kinship relationships and reciprocal help within and across the generations. Reciprocity means that parents take care of and support their adult children in education, marriage and finding a job. On the other side, after the parents have retired their children feel obliged to take care of them. According to a teacher of Albanian language and literature, in the village there are just a few families in which the elderly (meaning parents or grandparents) live alone without enjoying the support of sons or grandsons.

Nowadays as well as in previous decades the household economy of Isniq-families continues to be dependent on the remittances of labor migration. Remittances alleviate poverty, maintain economic stability on a low level and provide the basis for a kind of social security. Kinship relations and mutual support have not only a moral component but also a material

one. As long as remittances bubble, this system will continue working. However, what happens if the remittances dry up? Will the family- and kinship cohesion remain strong enough to let remittances bubble and to keep solidarity upright?

In the case of Isniq the multiple household, although eroding, continues to be present. However, this process of erosion will continue given the fact that the traditional patriarchal model of its internal structure is questioned. Isniq is by far no isolated village. Its proximity to the town of Deçan has stimulated an ongoing redefinition of family relations as well as of gender roles. Isniq households are in a process of getting a more simple structure. Whereas the focus of extension of the pre-war household was a horizontal one, the post-war household tends towards a vertical extension by losing complexity. A multiple household does not encompass more than three generations, or to be more concrete: the father shares his household with his sons and grandchildren but not with his father or his brothers and/or his uncles.

Wives and daughters constitute another dynamic factor. In Isniq, contributing to family incomes and the responsibility to provide for the family is not any longer only men's duty. Today, an increasing number of women enter the previously exclusively male labor market and they contribute to the household budget. The question remains whether this new constellation will increase family cohesion or will contribute to its decline. Whereas considerable dynamics emanates from women's side, men constitute an element of stability. Their kinship ties seems to be still very strong and faithfully preserved, which includes their ties to neighboring villages of Isniq origins as well as to the others who migrated to Prishtina.

Hypotheses

In order to explain the post-war changes and family life in Isniq, I would like to express some hypotheses which practically could be open questions for the next fieldwork stage in summer 2012. Some of the hypotheses I have tried to answer in this report but I need more empirical data to contextualize them. In this context, here are the six hypotheses which are related to the six research questions of our project "Kosovar family revisited".

1. The household structure and organization have changed significantly. In Isniq there are some families with two or more married couples within a household. In most of the fami-

lies the father lives with his sons and grandchildren, but not with his father or his brothers and/or his uncles, so the tendency is going on from horizontal to vertical line. The horizontal line goes until the first cousin. The following questions shall be explored further in the next phase of research:

- Starting from the emic perspective, how do people of Isniq perceive family life before and after the war?
 - Are there any differences in multiple and nuclear families in terms of living standard, quality of life and relationships between family members?
 - Why do multiple households split or fragment?
 - Which is the average family size in Isniq and how many generations live in a family?
 - Which are the dominant occupations and the sources of income?
 - What about fertility rates as well as the natural population growth in Isniq?
 - What about abortion and family planning?
2. The remittances are continuing to keep the family alive. There are many families there, in which the basic economic sources are migrants' deliveries, even if some of them have the supplementary incomes as well. In order to prove this hypothesis, I will have to examine the following questions in the next fieldwork phase:
- Which are the effects of remittances in reducing poverty in Isniq?
 - Referring to the Kosovo Remittance study 2010, remittances have directly affected unemployment rate as well as education level. Households receiving remittance have higher unemployment rates as well as a lower level of education (UBO Consulting 2010). In this context, which are the effects of remittances on unemployment rate as well as on the education level?
 - How wide is the transnational family spread and which are the relations between the migrant family and their part of family in the country of origin?
 - How much do migrants remain socially obligated to their families?
 - In which form do migrants invest in family needs and in capital investments such as opening up a new business or building houses?
 - What would happen without having remittances at disposal?

3. The relations between family members in connection to the post war changes appears to be very different compared to the pre-war time. Therefore, I will try to answer the following questions in this summer.
- Which are the differences and practical functions in terms of gender- and intergenerational relations in family?
 - What about the authority of elder men over men and what about the relations between family members in terms of the generational- and gender perspective?
 - Which is the position of father or elder brother in the family and who is the decision-maker in family? What is the decision-making process like?
 - In which respects does secondary or higher education of husband and wife have impact on the representation of the family in the public compared to couples with only primary education?
 - In cases where both parents work, who takes care of their children? Is it mainly elder people (mostly great-grandparents) taking care of the children or do the families engage (pay) babysitters to care for their children or do they send them to kindergarten?
 - What is the relation like where husband and wife do not have the same educational background?
 - What is the relation like between spouses (and inside families) when one remains at home and the other does wage work?
 - Are decisions negotiable between men and women?
 - Which are the activities of women in the public sphere, especially of those who have a higher education background, and how do people in Isniq estimate the position of women in the community? Can women have political/managerial positions? Which are men's activities in the public sphere – do they perform differently from women in the public sphere?
 - Do women have personal cars and driving licenses?
 - How many women are the head of households and which are the differences between women and men who are the household's heads, in terms of managing and administrating the family budgets?
 - How do women who are working in public institutions or in private business administrate their own budgets? When both husband and wife work, how does the family administrate their budget? Do women have their own account or an account together with the husband? Do they manage their income by themselves?

- Who takes care of children and elderly, of sick and disabled, what does it mean to have a disabled child in a household?
 - What about caretaking as a question of generational- and gender relations?
 - What about generational relations as a question of demography (including gender-biased abortion)?
4. Customary law is still crucial. Regardless of the post-war changes and the respective public laws, people practice more customary law (i.e., inheritance). Regardless of some data from previous fieldwork phase, I need to have full empirical evidence about customary law. In this respect there are some questions which I shall explore in this summer.
- In which way do customary law and public law interfere? In terms of customary/public laws, which are the distinctions between rural and urban areas (I have to compare with people from Isniq who emigrated in Prishtina)?
 - Why is customary law still crucial and which are the domains where customary law is more applicable?
 - What about inheritance and division of property?
 - In which way does customary law affect the family structure and relations between family members?
5. Paternal kinship ties are still very strong. Regardless of geographic distances, relationships between relatives appear to be very well preserved, even if some of them have gone to Pristina, Mitrovica, Istog or elsewhere more than 40 years ago. These relations normally could be one of the main factors that influence mutual assistance and altruism between kin. The following questions shall be explored by fully empirical evidence in next stage of fieldwork.
- Are there indications of a change from the patrilineally based kinship system to a conjugally based kinship system – horizontal instead of vertical extension of kinship group?
 - How are the relations between husband and wife with their children on the one side and their parents/parents-in-law on the other side?
 - Which are the relationships today between boys and their uncles (father's brothers) as well as with *dajet* (mother's brothers)?

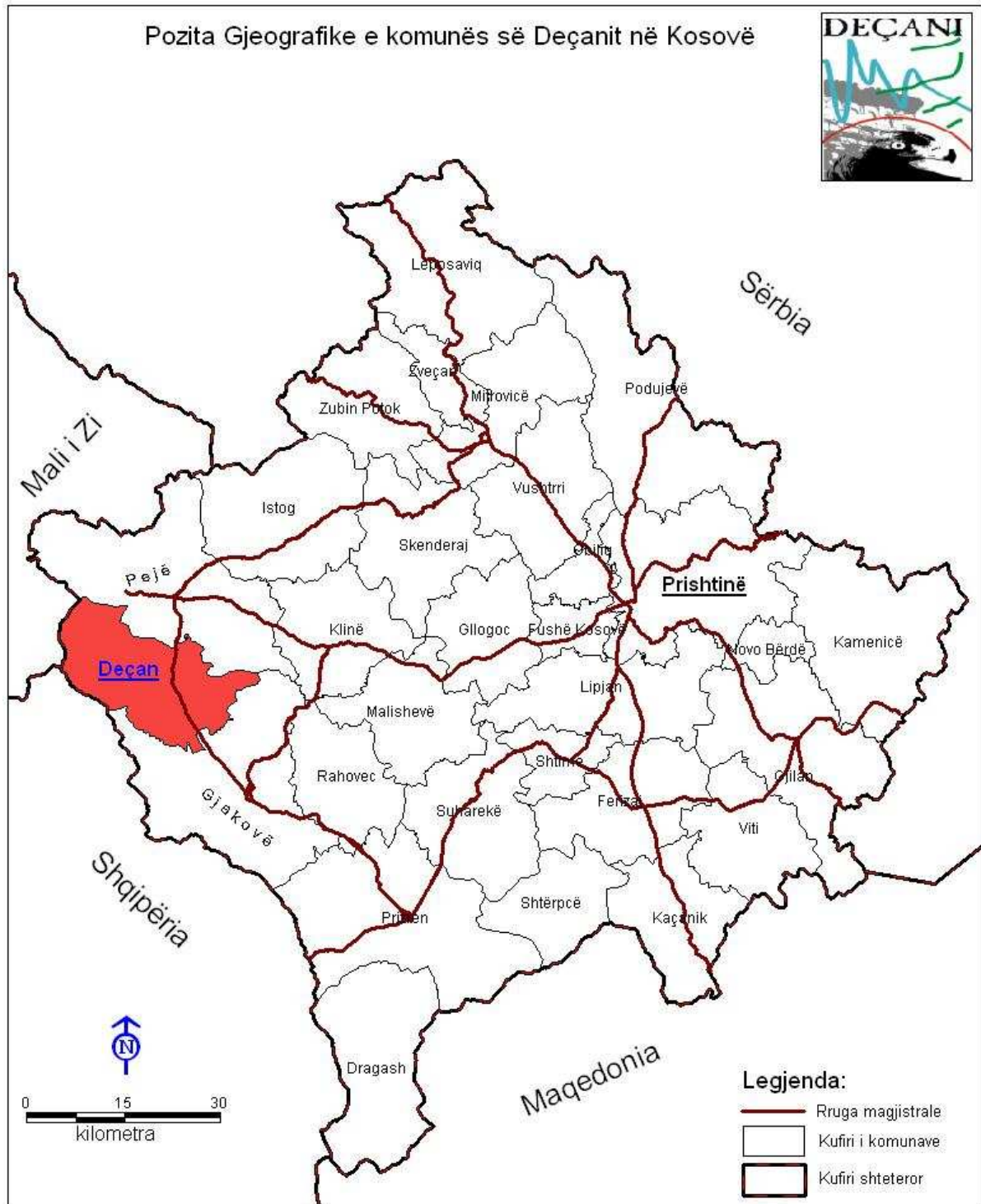
- How strong are relations with relatives on the mother's side preserved? How often do they visit their relatives or in which cases do they do it? How strong are the relations kept to relatives of the parental side (fathers, brothers, sisters)?
 - How do people organize ceremonies such as wedding, *Kanagjegj* and *Synetia* and how much does the respective ceremony cost? What about arranged marriages? Is it still important to create alliances through marriage? How is the selection of partners for couples done today? Arranged, with *misit* (intermediator-matchmaking)? Or based on love and free choice? In which way do parents still play a role? What is the meaning of wedding today? How do maternal and paternal relatives or relatives of the bride and the groom play a role? How did this role transform? Who are the guests? How long do they stay? In which way are they involved in the preparation of the festivals, in which way do they help? How often do they visit each other apart from these larger family festivals?
 - Which are the factors that hold on the strong relationships between paternal kinship?
 - In which way do they show solidarity and mutual reciprocity and in which way is this solidarity fragmented?
 - In which way has network connectedness/friendship impacted maternal/paternal kinship relations?
6. The relatives (kinship) provide care and security for each other. The lack of appropriate state policies as well as the inability of the state to offer its citizens guarantee and social welfare, family, kin or relatives still provide care and security for each other, especially for older people and others who are unable to work or are unemployed.
- In which way do people in Isniq sustain mutual assistance and care for each other? How do people in Isniq calculate the cost of helping and in which way do they provide care and security?
 - What about family policies and how does the Kosovo legislation framework adjust the categories which need assistance from the state?
 - How many people/families in Isniq do receive various kinds of assistance from the state?
 - How have the post-war changes affected the relations between men and women and how is the lack of public social security specifically experienced by them?

Appendix 1

Decan and its villages	Population, Households and average family size in Decan (1948-1981)											
	1948		1953		1961		1971		1981			
	Inhabitants	Households number	MHS	Inhabitants	Households number	MHS	Inhabitants	Households number	MHS	Inhabitants	Households number	MHS
Baballog	509	69	7.4	521	71	7.3	559	80	7.0	697	82	8.5
Beleg	378	52	7.3	430	53	8.1	455	56	8.1	637	73	8.7
Belle	5	1	5.0	5	1	5.0	6	1	6.0	7	1	7.0
Carrabreg i Epërm	744	105	7.1	798	108	7.4	887	117	7.6	1010	129	7.8
Carrabreg i Poshtëm	673	70	9.6	698	80	8.7	898	108	8.3	1247	132	9.4
Dashinoc	389	77	5.1	382	77	5.0	400	79	5.1	405	75	5.4
Decan	1205	188	6.4	1339	226	5.9	1829	327	5.6	2585	431	6.0
Drenoc	736	89	8.3	795	93	8.5	883	107	8.3	1049	129	8.1
Dubovik	487	56	8.7	479	60	8.0	570	66	8.6	728	65	11.2
Dubravë	172	30	5.7	190	29	6.6	194	28	6.9	245	32	7.7
Glllogjan	504	56	9.0	493	58	8.5	602	75	8.0	753	81	9.3
Gramaçel	499	71	7.0	590	80	7.4	738	98	7.5	877	92	9.5
Hulaj	72	9	8.0	87	10	8.7	84	9	9.3	99	10	9.9
Irzniq	646	63	10.3	709	64	11.1	887	101	8.8	1021	107	9.5
Isniq	1725	216	8.0	1768	204	8.7	1955	228	8.6	2499	270	9.3
Kodrall	380	58	6.6	406	52	7.8	428	59	7.3	527	63	8.4
Lebushë	380	54	7.0	443	59	7.5	507	60	8.5	597	69	8.7
Lumbaradh	448	60	7.5	477	65	7.3	505	76	6.6	580	70	8.3
Llogan	508	82	6.2	547	80	6.8	592	94	6.3	596	89	6.7
Llukë e Epërme	573	62	9.2	598	68	8.8	680	74	9.2	848	91	9.3
Llukë e Poshtme	267	34	7.9	267	27	9.9	291	29	10.0	339	35	9.7
Maznik	385	42	9.2	409	42	9.7	464	47	9.9	508	57	8.9
Papiq	80	12	6.7	99	14	7.1	209	27	7.7	160	24	6.7
Pobërxihtë	667	62	10.8	702	62	11.3	721	61	11.8	917	96	9.6
Pozhar	249	39	6.4	262	38	6.9	314	41	7.7	393	45	8.7
Prapaqan	351	60	5.9	469	76	6.2	563	88	6.4	621	80	7.8
Prekolluk	174	19	9.2	196	18	10.9	233	22	10.6	247	26	9.5
Prilep	755	92	8.2	840	94	8.9	981	108	9.1	1261	123	10.3
Rastavice	461	61	7.6	505	63	8.0	525	69	7.6	685	77	8.9
Ratishë e Epërme	152	28	5.4	172	31	5.5	198	38	5.2	209	37	5.6
Ratishë e Poshtme	254	51	5.0	291	60	4.9	298	52	5.7	361	45	8.0
Sllup	153	22	7.0	160	22	7.3	180	22	8.2	246	26	9.5
Strelle i Epërm	1430	177	8.1	1516	172	8.8	1721	202	8.5	2190	266	8.2
Strelle i Poshtëm	718	86	8.3	814	91	8.9	1013	112	9.0	1365	138	9.9
Shaptej	254	36	7.1	269	37	7.3	305	50	6.1	351	42	8.4
Voksh	337	50	6.7	362	46	7.9	407	51	8.0	468	56	8.4
Vranoc i Vogël	120	16	7.5	135	16	8.4	148	20	7.4	150	17	8.8

*Statistical Office of Kosovo, *Popullsia, ekonomitë familjare sipas vendbanimeve dhe organizimit territorial i Kosovës deri në vitin 2008*, Prishtinë 2009

Appendix 2



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