

Annual Theme

The Yugoslav Wars and the Year 1995: Reflections. Resilience. Reverberations

Article

Shpresonë Grulaj*

The Transformation of Gender Roles and Women's Resilience in Postwar Rural Kosovo: The Case of the Krusha Cooperative

<https://doi.org/10.1515/soeu-2025-0048>

Received June 11, 2025; accepted August 19, 2025

Abstract: Postwar societies often show a shift in gender roles, especially in the labor market. This study focuses on the postwar social transformation from the perspective of women in postwar rural Kosovo. It employs a qualitative methodology involving semi-structured, in-depth interviews and participant observation. The author uncovers how the social transformation is reflected among the women living in the village of Krushë e Madhe. She finds that both the older and younger generations have supported women's inclusion in parts of society where they were previously marginalized. The older generation revealed a broad understanding of gender roles with their belief that women's role in society should not be limited in any way. Conversely, the younger generation, while supportive, exhibited a slight tendency toward more traditional ideas regarding the jobs deemed "suitable" for women. The author explores women's personal experiences in dealing with traditional gender roles and documents the challenges they faced.

Keywords: Kosovo; gender roles; postwar; women; Western Balkans

Introduction

Not only does postconflict reconstruction entail the rebuilding of physical infrastructure, it also necessitates the renegotiation of social structures – including gender roles. The 1998–1999 Kosovo War caused devastation across the country. Over

*Corresponding author: Shpresonë Grulaj, Institute of International Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic, E-mail: shpresone.grulaj@fsv.cuni.cz. <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0040-3152>

13,500 individuals are estimated to have been killed or gone missing, with Albanians constituting the vast majority of victims, including hundreds from villages like Krushë e Madhe (Great Krusha).¹ Krushë e Madhe, a village in the Rahovec municipality in western Kosovo, was the site of an infamous massacre, which resulted in the death of an estimated 241 Albanian men.²

Survivors of the massacre continue to endure the physical and psychological consequences of the 1999 conflict. In 2024, a memorial museum was established to document and commemorate the experiences of those affected. At the same time, families of the missing persist in their search for answers, reflecting the lasting social and emotional impact of the massacre.³ Once the war was over, the women, children, and other survivors had to rebuild their lives and contend with the postwar difficulties. Economic reconstruction was one of the main postwar challenges for Kosovar society, with such a task proving especially onerous for families who had lost men – traditionally the main breadwinners. The household structure in Kosovo is characterized by strong extended family networks, where men typically serve as the primary earners and play dominant decision-making roles (Hoti 2007, as cited in Osmani, Gorton, and White 2013). This issue was particularly prevalent in Krushë e Madhe because a significant number of households had experienced the loss of their male members due to kidnappings or murders during the war. The majority of war widows in Krushë e Madhe did not have formal employment (Këllezi et al. 2024).

Consequently, in Krushë e Madhe, as well as other villages in Kosovo with similar experiences of mass male casualties, women assumed the role of the head of the household. They shouldered the responsibility for rebuilding their homes, raising their children, cultivating the land, and handling domestic issues all at the same time.⁴

As part of this postwar reconstruction and in response to the situation, in 2005, a group of Albanian Kosovar women led by Fahrije Hoti, whose husband is among those

1 “31,600 Documents Undoubtedly Confirm Death or Disappearance of 13,535 Individuals during War in Kosovo.” The Humanitarian Law Center. 6 February 2015. <https://www.hlc-rdc.org/en/dokumentovanje-i-pamcenje-2/31600-documents-undoubtedly-confirm-death-or-disappearance-of-13535-individuals-during-war-in-kosovo/> (accessed 2 October 2025).

2 Hysenaj, Shkelqim. “Keqpërdorimi i masakrës së Krushës për ‘luftëra’ politike në Shqipëri.” *Radio Evropa e Lirë*. 19 November 2020. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/30958782.html> (accessed 2 October 2025).

3 Isufi, Antigone. “Muzeu që ruan plagët për të mos u shkrumuar në harresë.” *KALLXO*. 27 March 2024. <https://kallxo.com/gjate/reportazh/muzeu-qe-ruan-plaget-per-te-mos-u-shkrumuar-ne-harrese/> (accessed 2 October 2025).

4 Krasniqi, Elife. “Preliminary Project Report of the FWF Project ‘The Kosovar Albanian Family Revisited’.” Center for Southeast European History and Anthropology. 31 October 2012. https://static.uni-graz.at/fileadmin/gewi-institute/Geschichte/S%C3%BCdosteurop%C3%A4ische_Geschichte/Preliminary_research_results_of_project_on_Kosovar_Family_Eli_Krasniqi.pdf (accessed 2 October 2025).

missing, launched what has gradually developed into a business cooperative, the Krusha Cooperative (*Kooperativa Krusha*). Supported by international and local donors, these women began to preserve and pickle foods such as *ajvar* and *turshi*, two well-known Balkan pepper-based delicacies, and started selling these products to provide for themselves and their families. The cooperative has grown significantly over the past decade thanks to continued donor support. The main international contributors include the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the World Bank, the European Commission, the German Corporation for International Cooperation (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit*, GIZ), Swiss-Contact, and the Government of Denmark.⁵ In 2024, the Krusha Cooperative publicly acknowledged the ongoing support of these donors, as well as contributions from local businesses, farmers, and organizations such as the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) and the National Commercial Bank of Kosovo (*Banka Kombëtare Tregtare*, BKT). Their combined funding has been essential in helping the cooperative scale production and reach European and US markets.⁶ This study explores how initiatives such as the Krusha Cooperative have challenged traditional gender roles in postwar Kosovo and examines the women's experiences in assuming the roles typically assigned to men in both society and the household.

Gender Roles in Kosovo

Two of the main factors shaping the traditional approach to gender roles in Kosovo are the Code of Lekë Dukagjini (*Kanuni i Lekë Dukagjinit*) and religion. When it comes

5 Plesch, Valerie, and Verónica Zaragovia. "Pepper Co-Op Helps Kosovo's War Widows Reclaim Their Lives." *NPR*. 26 February 2018. <https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2018/02/26/588835459/pepper-co-op-helps-kosovo-s-war-widows-reclaim-their-lives> (accessed 2 October 2025); "In the Aftermath of War, Women Farmers in Kosovo Rebuild Their Lives." World Bank. 15 October 2015. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/725951638249555618/pdf/In-the-Aftermath-of-War-Women-Farmers-in-Kosovo-Rebuild-Their-Lives.pdf> (accessed 2 October 2025).

6 "EULEX's Donation to Support the Work of Fahrije Hoti's Agriculture Cooperative Krusha." Support4-Partnership. 3 September 2022. <https://support4partnership.org/en/news/eulexs-donation-to-support-the-work-of-fahrije-hotis-agriculture-cooperative-krusha> (accessed 2 October 2025); "BKT Kosova in Support of the Agricultural Cooperative KRUSHA." Banka Kombëtare Tregtare Kosova. n.d. https://bkt-ks.com/en/bkt_donations/bkt-kosova-in-support-of-the-agricultural-cooperative-krusha/ (accessed 2 October 2025); "Reagim në lidhje me refuzimin e aplikimit për grante nga Agjencia për Zhvillimin e Bujqësisë." "KB Krusha" Facebook page. 17 November 2024. <https://www.facebook.com/gratekrushes/posts/pfbid025rpp9HHq37QyA746EQ4XDTyqVN8vL6uMF5vroqpow1c95gngu1g9EGqrs9kG4Qpml> (accessed 2 October 2025).

to religion, around 93.49% Kosovar citizens identify as Muslim, according to the Agency for Statistics, although the country's structures are secular.⁷ While national identity is central to Kosovars, religious background remains a potentially influential aspect of cultural identity. This includes what is seen as the yardstick for women's behavior and roles in society and the household (Lehrer 1995).

The *Kanun* is named after a prince who ruled in northern Albania during the 15th century and codified the customary laws of the highlands (though the code is believed to be even older). The first complete written codification was in 1933 in Shkodër. Historically, the social and legal norms it governed were also observed in Kosovo. Women's roles within the family and in matters of inheritance were severely limited. Following the establishment of modern Albanian legislation after 1928, which introduced legal frameworks effectively promoting gender equality, the *Kanun's* authority diminished. In Kosovo, subsequent reforms further curtailed the *Kanun's* impact, especially by enhancing women's legal rights and participation in the public and economic sphere. The traditional restrictions imposed by the customary law were gradually abandoned (Lajci et al. 2024).

However, the *Kanun* had strict rules regarding women's behavior and role in Albanian society, and this also applied in Kosovo. As a customary social code of conduct, it traditionally played a significant part in shaping women's rights and gender roles (Cara and Margjeka 2015). However, as has been argued by various scholars, gender roles are likely to shift if the need arises. During and after the war of 1998–1999, such a need certainly existed. Both society's expectations and women's compliance had to adapt due to the absence of men in the household, and this was especially true for the women of Krushë e Madhe. Moreover, examining women's entrepreneurship is in itself compelling because this is not something that was seen very often in Kosovo (Ramadani and Camaj 2024).

The *Kooperativa Krusha* is thus a challenging topic to explore, not least because, despite the shift in attitudes, gender stereotypes continue to influence societal expectations. Besides the possible influence of the legacies of both the *Kanun* and religion, it is institutionalized policies, the language used in the media, and family structures that influence the persistence of traditional gender roles across Kosovo most. During the time of socialist Yugoslavia, gender equality was formally promoted. However, even then, the practical realities for women in rural Kosovo were also shaped more by enduring patriarchal structures and systemic inequalities than

7 Agjencia e Statistikave të Kosovës. “Regjistrimi i Popullsisë, Ekonomive Familjare dhe Banesave në Kosovë: Të Dhënat e Para Finale.” Prishtina. December 2024. <https://askapi.rks-gov.net/Custom/0657ff3e-ae62-4e85-a713-e6b55cc5b335.pdf> (accessed 3 October 2025).

by ideological commitments to emancipation. As Simic (2018) argues, while socialist policies encouraged women's participation in the workforce, structural and cultural barriers, especially in regions like Kosovo, severely curtailed their transformative potential. Moreover, although collectivization aimed to provide key services such as childcare and healthcare, these efforts were largely undermined, especially in rural areas, by inadequate infrastructure, limited resources, and a shortage of (medical) personnel (Simic 2018). Sijarina (2024) similarly notes that many young women did not pursue an education, not out of disinterest, but because their fathers forbade them from doing so. Even when they were employed, women remained responsible for unpaid care work, which was redistributed within the household, frequently falling to the daughters. These dynamics were further complicated by the intersection of gender, class, and nation, with Albanian women subjected to racialized narratives and discriminatory state practices that limited their autonomy (Islami 2008; Krasniqi 2021; Luci and Krasniqi 2006)

There are two main scholarly perspectives on gender roles in postwar settings, which seem diametrically opposite. The first states that gender roles are reinforced in postwar societies (Ahern et al. 2004; Di Lellio and McCurn 2013). The second suggests that gender roles blur as women take on what are typically masculine responsibilities, at least for a time (Roberts 2009; Sye 2010; Sulaiman, Verner and Polesny 2023; Sengupta and Calo 2016). Both perspectives are valid. Gender role reinforcement is commonly found in cases where war crimes – primarily rape or sexual assault – were perpetrated against women. Such crimes, often followed by trauma, highlight gender roles and reinforce an unequal power balance between men and women (Ahern et al. 2004; Di Lellio and McCurn 2013). In addressing such issues, external forces such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the European Union (EU), and the US have unintentionally reinforced patriarchal norms and traditional gender roles in postwar Kosovo (Krasniqi 2007). Given that women are traditionally marginalized in Kosovar society, such reinforcement presents a challenge to its modernization (Haug 2015). In fact, the traditional division of gender roles in Kosovo has become much more pronounced since the war, as the newly independent state was conceived by men from the very outset (Krasniqi 2009).

On a similar note, Liora Sion found that even peacebuilding activities governed by women tended to be based on traditional ideas of gender roles, and as such their contribution to postwar reconstruction was often stereotyped (Sion 2013). Moreover, research findings have highlighted the presence of traditional gender roles when it comes to voting and civic activism among women in Kosovo (Litchfield, Douarin, and Gashi 2024). More work could be done to achieve gender equality or provide women

with the space to move away from their traditional gender roles (Ariño Villellas and Redondo de la Morena 2008). As Holzner (2021) argues, successful gender governance necessitates a collaborative approach, strong partnerships, and ongoing efforts to combat gender discrimination.

The conflict between social norms and legal principles is an important one, Akgün, Boztaş, and Balci (2023) argue, because in the Balkans, or more specifically in Kosovo, social norms heavily influence legal principles regarding gender roles. Several projects established by nongovernmental organizations (NGO) are committed to supporting women workers in creating a new gender reality. Such NGOs include, but are not limited to the Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms (CDHRF) (see Desai and Perry 2011), the Agency for Gender Equality (AGE), the Kosovo Women's Network (KWN), and Woman to Woman (*Kvinna till Kvinna*, KtK).⁸ Key projects focusing on women and work include AGE's research on women in the media; the Dutch Embassy's support for rural women and young people; the Sida's women's empowerment grants; and the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) economic empowerment programs.¹¹

Part of the problem is that these initiatives are implemented specifically by NGOs and it is difficult for the women they support to secure jobs in government bodies or politics more generally. Research has shown that in Bosnia and Herzegovina too, women have found it difficult to apply the progressive ideas fostered by international programs (Pupavac 2005). Similarly, women's empowerment as promoted under the Women, Peace, and Security agenda often fails to apply the conclusions of the UN peacekeeping operations (Blanton, Peksen, and Blanton 2023). Projects implemented by the OSCE and UN in Kosovo faced similar challenges, with women remaining largely excluded from senior decision-making roles, and gender concerns often being overlooked (Abdela 2003).

Moreover, the mainstream media's interpretation of the war in Kosovo has stereotyped women's experience, depicting them solely as victims (Del Zotto 2002). Traditional gender roles are highlighted during wartime, when nationalism, typically perceived as a masculine trait, is strong. The interplay between nationalism, war, and gender role reinforcement has been emphasized by Munn (2008). Even programs that were designed to promote women's involvement in postwar society and their role in postwar reconstruction were directed, managed, and implemented by men (Abdela 2003). No women were directly involved in the projects, though they

⁸ Färnsveden, Ulf, and Nicole Farnsworth. "Gender Study in Kosovo: Review of the Implementation of the Law and Program on Gender Equality in Kosovo." Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). December 2012. <https://womensnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/20130430125203542.pdf> (accessed 2 October 2025).

could have provided a different perspective, a better understanding, and ensured the activities conducted responded more effectively to the needs of Kosovar women.

That being said, the opposite may also be true, with traditional gender roles shifting in response to economic necessity or a desire for societal change. In postwar France, precisely such changes occurred, although they were often met with skepticism, as society struggled with the blurring and redefinition of gender roles (Roberts 2009). Similarly, the Somalian case has shown a shift in gender roles mainly driven by necessity after the civil war (Sye 2010), and the same applies to postwar Uganda (Sengupta and Calo 2016). In Syria, too, once the conflict began, gender roles among women changed (Asaf 2017).⁹ A more recent study also confirmed shifts in gender roles in Syria with a focus on household food security practices (Sulaiman, Verner, and Polesny 2023). This echoes the case of the Kosovar war widows who have assumed the role of breadwinners (Aliu 2020).

Additionally, the position of women in the political sphere has significantly improved with their increased involvement, though they do still remain underrepresented (Szelag 2021). Women's participation in politics and entrepreneurship has benefited both individual families and entire communities by bringing new perspectives and skills to decision-making processes (Canaj 2021). Nepal, on the other hand, has been identified as an example where postwar shifts have enhanced women's political participation, while land ownership remains constrained by entrenched patriarchal norms and property rights institutions that are slow to change (Joshi 2025). Joshi highlights that although conflict can alter gender roles, meaningful economic empowerment, including land ownership, requires targeted institutional reforms. In Kosovo, women's increased participation in agricultural activities, as observed in Skenderaj, reflects the growing economic involvement of women in a postconflict setting (Sallahu 2022).

In Kosovo, women's activism was present long before the 1998–1999 war and can be traced back to Kosovo's Yugoslav era (Krasniqi 2021; Musliu and Mujika Chao 2024). This activism had different forms, including in pursuit of national emancipation and gender equality. In as early as the 1960s, women in socialist Yugoslavia participated in underground movements and illegal groups which called for Kosovo to become a republic within Yugoslavia rather than an autonomous province within the Socialist Republic of Serbia. Women highlighted the intersectionality of their struggle, which combined activities focused on gender equality, ethnic identity, and national liberation (Musliu and Mujika Chao 2024). Among the channels of female activism were the underground group *Ilegalja*, whose publication *Kosovarja e Re*

9 Batha, Emma. "Syrian Refugee Crisis Is Changing Women's Roles – Aid Agency." Thomson Reuters Foundation. 10 September 2016. <https://news.trust.org/item/20160910000323-ic0yp> (accessed 2 October 2025).

addressed women's political engagement around national emancipation and class issues (Krasniqi 2021). During the war, levels of activism fluctuated but nevertheless continued in refugee camps. As Farnsworth (2008) highlights, Kosovar women in refugee camps strengthened solidarity and reclaimed their activist roles through mutual support and organizing. However, post-Yugoslav feminism, initially intended to challenge nationalist discourses, became fragmented and depoliticized over the years. This emphasizes the urgent need to unify diverse feminist movements and effectively address persistent patriarchal and broader social challenges (Krasniqi and Petrović 2019).

Returning to the Krusha Cooperative, there has been limited academic research on this example of postwar social change. Durmishi et al. (2023) emphasize its role in empowering war widows, who faced restricted access to land, education, and legal rights. The cooperative offered employment, social support, and a way of challenging gender norms. Scholars have been more interested in the agricultural and economic perspective, meaning that the experiences of the women working in this cooperative have remained understudied. That said, Möllers, Pinkow-Läpple, and Dufhues (2025) do briefly mention the cooperative by recounting the story of Fatmire, who is a founding member. Their study highlights Fatmire's role in challenging gender norms and connects her entrepreneurial efforts to migration experiences and women's empowerment. However, the cooperative itself is not the main focus of their analysis, leaving its broader social, economic, and developmental impact underexplored.

My study aims to fill this gap by offering a comprehensive examination of the Krusha Cooperative as a collective initiative through the lens of individual stories. Efforts aimed at driving social change can even be detrimental if they do not include women's empowerment or individuals of non-normative genders (Hajdari Hajra and Rustemi 2023). Improvements in women's roles following conflict do not occur spontaneously or without opposition (Bakken and Buhaug 2021). Instead, such progress results from the continuous and deliberate efforts of women who have historically faced systemic marginalization. Building on this observation and the existing research, I focus on Kosovar women's experiences of the postwar reconstruction efforts. The question being addressed is thus not whether there is a change in gender roles but how exactly this change has been experienced by and reflected through women in society. More specifically, this study scrutinizes how gender roles shift by analyzing the testimonies of the women involved in *Kooperativa Krusha*, as well as how the evolving role of women as breadwinners underscores a broader narrative of empowerment and equality, reshaping perceptions of gender roles. The study hypothesizes that, while participation in the cooperative has functioned as a survival strategy, it has also served as a catalyst for reshaping traditional gender roles and fostering new forms of empowerment.

Methods

I conducted my case study of postwar gender roles in Krushë e Madhe, applying qualitative research methods such as semi-structured interviews and participant observation. I used semi-structured interviews to allow for flexibility in my data collection and to remain open to emerging themes and concepts. This method supports an inductive approach where the researcher does not strictly define all areas of inquiry in advance (Bryman 2012, 12). Participant observation was employed for its alignment with a naturalist approach, enabling me to engage with individuals in their everyday work settings (Bryman 2012, 494). Both methods allowed participants to express themes of interest organically, without external prompting. I analyzed my findings against the backdrop of the existing research literature, as laid out above.

Data collection took place in Autumn 2023 during an in-person visit to Krushë e Madhe. Interviews lasted between one and two hours. The first contact point was the head of the cooperative. During my visit, more cooperative members were introduced to me, while I approached others randomly during their working days.

I then employed analytic induction, working with the data gathered according to the methods suggested in qualitative research. This methodological approach is well suited for research where themes emerge during analysis rather than being defined in advance. It provided me with a deep understanding of the experiences of women in a postwar country where non-traditional gender roles are assumed. I conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with ten women who work at the *Kooperativa Krusha*. The cooperative had around 70 workers at the time of the interviews. The sample was chosen to acquire original data on their discussions and reflections on the impact of war on gender roles. The sample size of ten participants is justified by the group's homogeneity, following Bryman's methodological recommendation (Bryman 2012, 200). All participants had the same workplace, gender, ethnic background, and rural context, which supports the appropriateness of a smaller sample. The sample still allowed me to achieve thematic saturation as most participants expressed similar views, thereby supporting the reliability of the findings.

The in-depth interviews, too, provided qualitative insights that were ideally suited to identify recurring themes and shared experiences, consistent with the study's objectives. The interview data were analyzed manually through thematic coding using Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. Themes and patterns were identified by systematically organizing and reviewing the transcripts without the use of specialized qualitative data analysis software.

Purposive sampling was employed, as the participants were known and identified as widows or women who work at the cooperative. Half of the participants (five women) were between the ages of 40 and 55 years and were war widows or family

members of men who had been kidnapped or murdered during the war. The other half of the sample (five women) belonged to the younger generation and were aged between 20 and 35. They too worked in the cooperative. This group included young women whose families had not lost anyone during the war. This second group of participants was interviewed to scrutinize their perspective and agenda as a new generation that may further reinforce or break with gender roles.

The five women of the older group (ages 40 to 55) had all completed primary education. Three of them had been employed at the cooperative for over 15 years, while the remaining two had more than ten years of experience. Of the younger cohort (ages 20 to 35) four had attained high school-level education and had been working at the cooperative for at least three years. The remaining participant in this group held a bachelor's degree and had been employed by the cooperative for over six years.

To maintain confidentiality, specific participant identifiers are not used and demographic details are presented in aggregate form. To ensure participant anonymity, individuals are referred to by their age group (e.g., participant in the 40–55 age group). The American Sociological Association Code of Ethics was followed throughout the research process.¹⁰ In addition, verbal consent was consistently obtained from participants before each interview. All participants were thoroughly informed about the objectives and purpose of the research. Interviews were recorded, and notes were taken as a means of documenting the gathered data. The recorded interviews were later transcribed.

In addition to the interviews, the data collected during participant observation at the cooperative was also with the participants' consent. This data was collected by taking fieldwork notes. My observation focused on the women's relationships with each other. My aim was to gain insights into how the women work, to what extent the war was part of their daily talk, and how the role of the breadwinner was reflected in their discourse. Both the interviews and the participant observation were conducted in the Albanian language.

A Shift in Gender Roles: Women as Breadwinners

The narratives of women assuming the role of breadwinners after becoming widows reveal themes of resilience and adaptability. After the loss of their husbands during the war, many women had to step into the breadwinner's role, which not only showcased how they overcame personal and economic challenges but also

¹⁰ "Code of Ethics." American Sociological Association. June 2018. https://www.asanet.org/wp-content/uploads/asa_code_of_ethics-june2018.pdf (accessed 2 October 2025).

highlighted their adaptability to changing circumstances. One participant from the 40–55 age group, who had elementary school-level education, shared the following during her interview:

I didn't work before the war; I was a housewife; this was what we had been used to since we were children. Women did work, but this was rare, especially in our village. But, after the war, I knew I had to use the skills I had; I could no longer go to school and get a degree. I always prepared *ajvar* and other preserves. This is our tradition. Every fall, we prepare these foods to last for the year. When Fahrije started working in her yard, I was eager to join – it was the only way for me to earn some money. I had children to raise, I could no longer remain a housewife; I had to take care of the house, as my husband had done before I lost him in the war.

Another participant of the same age group shared a similar sentiment. In answer to the question of how she perceived women who focus on their careers, she expressed her support and shared that, for her, it was difficult because she needed money after her husband was murdered. However, assuming the role of the breadwinner was not always easy for these women, especially those of the older generation, none of whom had higher education, which limited their skillset and qualifications. One participant recalled the struggle she faced and how resilient she needed to be in order to be able to provide for her children:

Everyone had something to say; my in-laws, my brothers, and even people in the village had something to say. They criticized women for wanting to work; they said all kinds of things. Some people cannot understand our pain – we have already lost our husbands, and now we also have to hear them saying bad things about us. I don't understand why they would speak like that, but I know this is our society. We just wanted to sell preserves to make some money.

By examining these cases, this study uncovers the theme of how women's resilience to societal constructs on gender roles helped them navigate the immediate aftermath of war and how their adaptability contributed to long-term changes in gender roles and employment opportunities. The collected data underscore that these women adjusted to changing family dynamics, assumed leadership roles, and made a significant contribution to the financial well-being of their households.

Four of the five women aged between 40 and 55 stated that they had not worked before the war and that they assumed the role of the breadwinner once the war was over. The fifth participant within this age group argued that although she used to work before the war, she had not intended to raise her children and take care of the household finances at the same time. Rather, she had worked for what she called pocket money, which was not related to her family's needs. This changed when her husband went missing during the war.

All five of the younger women, aged 20 to 35, said that they worked and contributed financially to their households. Four of these women have no higher

education, while the fifth participant, at age 35 also the oldest of this group, has a bachelor's degree. She stated that both she and her partner were employed, and that her earnings were much higher than his, thereby contradicting stereotypical gender roles where the man is the main, if not sole, source of finances for the household:

What can I say? I earn more than my husband. I am happy to have such an understanding partner; he stays at home to care for the children when I can't, and we both try to do what we can of the chores. When we can't manage them, we just leave them for the next day, but he definitely doesn't sit around waiting for me to do everything after I finish my shift. I know some of my friends' husbands don't think like this, but he has a different view of things.

As illustrated in the above statement, this participant's answer reflects a shift away from the traditional gender roles in her household, as, due to her higher income, she is the main breadwinner. She reports that childcare and household chores are shared duties. This participant echoes previously documented cases around the globe where women making a large contribution to the family finances signified a decline in traditional gender roles (Boehnke 2011).

Generational Perspectives – A Bridge Between Eras

Within the narratives of the women from the older generation, a balance between traditional expectations and emerging modern ideals became apparent. While some expressed more conventional views regarding women's careers, they did recognize that women's roles were evolving beyond homemaking. This generation thus serves as a bridge, embodying the transformation of societal expectations and the gradual acceptance of women's layered identities. This was particularly documented through the language they used, opting for "must" and "need" when referring to young women's careers, a belief they aimed to pass on to their daughters and expected their daughters-in-law to hold as well. All five of the older generation participants argued that young women had to follow an educational path that provides them with a secure career and that "it is necessary for any woman, regardless of her family situation, to build her own independence and to be able to secure a living without depending on her husband, parents, or in-laws".

Similarly, two of the participants representing the younger generation believed that all women must follow a career path, with two stating that this should be done without considering any alternative ideas that might exist within society. In contrast, the three other younger participants said that while they liked working, they particularly liked their jobs in the cooperative, as it was close to home and was an all-women workplace. They felt more comfortable and safer than if they worked further

away from home or somewhere with a mix of genders and long working hours, which, according to them, were not very suitable working conditions for women.

Comparing these statements to those of the older generation participants, who believed that young women should follow their own paths without taking into account factors such as the distance from home or the gender of the workers, as long as their jobs were legal and respectable, this study reveals that it was in fact the older rather than the younger generation that adopted the more liberal position.

Economic Empowerment

The case of the younger woman who earned more than her husband illustrated shifting economic dynamics. This scenario not only challenges traditional gender norms but also represents another step toward women's economic empowerment. Such a narrative suggests that individuals become catalysts for change in their immediate environment and beyond. While talking about the arrangements with her partner, the woman whose salary is higher than her husband's brought up the theme of advocacy. She discussed with the other younger participants the importance of developing a decent marital relationship while bearing in mind that this should not be the center of their lives. The participant made the following comment to her colleagues, while they were sitting together cleaning up the peppers for making *ajvar*:

What do you think is more important, love or respect? Let me tell you, it is respect! You guys should keep in mind that love and everything else can be built over time, but as long as you respect each other, you will support one another, and as women, we should be mindful of having a partner who supports our goals.

Such interaction emerged with no intentional encouragement from me. It reflected the importance of talking about work, gender roles, and, hence, romantic relationships in the daily lives of these young women. The participant shared the belief with her peers that respect is the foundation on which love and other aspects of a relationship can grow. For women in a traditional society like Kosovo's, who often face extra challenges in pursuing their careers and dreams more generally, having a partner who respects and encourages them can be a catalyst for empowerment and redefining gender roles. This being a view shared by one of the slightly older participants with the younger ones highlighted the potential impact of women's interpersonal relationships on their role in society.

Adapting to the New Roles – Navigating a Traditional Society

While the women of the older generation were the ones who went through the process of having to adapt to new roles, the societal navigation that it took to become the breadwinner or a source of income for the household was reflected in both age groups. When asked about their families' perceptions of their employment, the older generation women gave similar answers. The husband of one of these participants was still alive. She explained that he had helped solve any potential arguments with her in-laws regarding her employment.

Three other women in this group had different narratives, however. They said that their own parents and/or brothers as well as their in-laws were initially not supportive of the idea of a woman whose husband was either dead or missing because of the war going out to work. In one case, the in-laws were somewhat supportive of their daughter-in-law's new employment but still expected that they would manage the income, and that their daughter-in-law would not neglect her childcare duties. Another participant shared that while her mother-in-law was rather open to her being employed, her father-in-law thought such a thing inappropriate and that a newly widowed woman should stay at home with her children. Later on, however, both in-laws shifted toward being more accepting.

The third case reflected an extreme example of the absence of support both from the woman's in-laws and her family of origin. The participant shared that her brother had been particularly against her getting a job, emphasizing that it was important for a mother to set a good example for her children, which, according to him, meant that she should stay at home all day. The participant talked about how this disagreement later spilled over in several arguments within her family. While she saw the situation as having now been resolved and the family relationship as respectful, she did recall that "while facing the loss of my husband, I also had to hear unsupportive words solely because I wanted to provide for my children".

Indeed, the lack of support on gender-related issues was not limited to her employment. When asked what she would like to tell the younger generation women, she stated that they must follow their desires and goals no matter how small they seem. She relayed how much she regretted not getting her driver's license. When courses were provided to support postwar citizens, she was unable to attend the driving lessons as her family members were against the idea. At the time, she did not object much. She only decided that she had had enough when they also wanted to prevent her from getting a job:

I asked my family if they could give me a monthly salary to raise my children, to which they said no. So I asked them, why do you think you have the right to choose for me? I will no longer listen to anyone. Now, my children are grown and they are my support, I would never allow anyone to

say anything bad to me, but back then I had no support because my kids were still too young. I only had my friends at the cooperative, women I knew from before who were from the same village.

The difficulties faced by this participant are based on the importance of her role as a caregiver and homemaker. The main concern raised by her family members lay in what they perceived as a neglect of motherly duties, or how her employment would impact her children. This addresses an ongoing theme about women's role primarily being motherhood. Kelmendi and Gashi (2022) documented a similar pattern of obstacles faced by women joining Kosovo's labor market. Others have argued, discussing the relationship between motherhood and gender roles, that women who have children tend to adhere to traditional roles more, and that this is not necessarily due to social influences (Boehnke 2011). This does not appear to be the case for the abovementioned participant, however.

The younger generation's preference for women-centric work environments reflects a desire for conditions they view as supportive and comfortable. The preference for a job close to home reflects the practical consideration of balancing work and familial and household responsibilities or the feasibility of commuting. However, it is noticeable that this preference is influenced by traditional Kosovar ideas on what a woman's job should be like, that is close to home, without too many men, and possibly gastronomy- and/or agriculture-oriented, just like the cooperative they worked in.

Given that such ideas were proposed by the younger women, a mindset influenced by patriarchal notions still seems to be the norm in the village of Krushë e Madhe. Admittedly, such a mindset could be due to various influences, such as media discourse, family upbringing, and personal awareness of or education about gender roles. However, none of the participants mentioned these influences directly. Scholarship has shown that ideas from society and culture shape what individuals think men and women should or should not do, for example when it comes to a gender-based limitations regarding careers (Dicke, Safavian, and Eccles 2019). Illustrating the complexity of certain settings, many young Chechen refugee women in Europe, for example, adopt patriarchal gender roles not as a revival of pre-migration Chechen traditions, but as a result of war, displacement, and anti-Muslim racism (Szczepanikova 2012). It were largely these three factors which restricted their education, public participation, and exposure to diverse gender norms. This echoes my findings from Krushë e Madhe. The fact that four out of the five younger participants did not pursue higher education demonstrates a repeated pattern of such limited education and its positive relationship with the tendency to maintain patriarchal gender roles.

Mental Health and a Safe Space

In the midst of the economic and social difficulties that particularly the older generation participants have experienced, an important part of their discourse and this study is their mental health. Understanding the impact of war on any civil society must always include the psychological and mental damage that has been done. For example, when I was approaching potential participants, one of the women, before knowing more details, stated that she would rather not talk about the events of the war as she had not been feeling good lately, and this would be overwhelming for her.

While four of the women refrained from mentioning their postwar psychological state, one participant recalled the time after the war and how difficult it was for her to explain to her children what had happened to their father, and other Kosovar Albanians. She shared how besides having to process her personal pain, she listened to others' stories and tried to support her friends and in particular her own children. She also spoke about having recurring dreams about her missing husband and the emotional burden of seeing her daughter holding his photograph. However, she also stated how important the cooperative had been in enabling her to connect with other women, discuss the war, and feel glad not to be alone. Moreover, for some time, the women received professional help to teach them how to cope with their trauma and pain. The participant did not specify who provided this psychological help, but did recall it being one of the international organizations involved in postwar Kosovo. When asked to what extent the war was a part of the daily conversations in the *Kooperativa*, she answered: "Not a single day goes by where we do not remember something related to that period, sometimes over coffee breaks, sometimes with our hands in the peppers, cleaning, cutting, and arranging the vegetables."

This statement illustrated how the war has become a part of the women's identity. Their trauma was inseparable from their daily life, despite the time that has passed since the war ended and the life changes all the women went through. Their experiences are consistent with the findings of Durmishi et al. (2023) that the women in the cooperative have faced persistent trauma and limited social support. Their involvement in the cooperative has been essential to their recovery because it has provided social connections, collective experiences, and purposeful activities, all of which have aided their empowerment and alleviated their trauma. At some point, the participant in my study asked for a break from the interview, as it had given her a headache. She revealed how she often had this headache when she talked about the war and that professionals had explained to her that it was induced by her war memories. Moreover, she, like other women, reported having had problems with high blood pressure and heart issues, which they saw mainly as a consequence of their war experiences and losses.

Another participant of the older age group confirmed that it was the cooperative that had kept her mind off the war the most, while still enabling her to remember and honor her own and others' suffering. While she talked with several other women about the war, she also stated how helpful it had been to be able to work on a daily basis, and "lose myself in being stressed about peppers, produce, and work-related tasks, and to forget – although not really – about my suffering". She said that if she had had to stay at home, she would not have survived. She needed the socializing, the mixing with other women, and their conversations about different topics to escape her memories.

The younger generation participants had no or very few memories related to the war, but they still considered it part of their identity and something that they too engage in commemorating, both on official occasions and as part of what they hear from their families or other people. The importance of a support system for women in a postwar context becomes apparent not only in terms of professional psychological assistance, but also in terms of the help that is incorporated into their daily lives, via employment and an involvement in society that goes beyond therapy sessions.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study contributes to current scholarship by providing data on the state of gender roles in an underresearched geographical setting. The case study has analyzed how women working at the Krusha Cooperative (*Kooperativa Krusha*) in the village of Krushë e Madhe have navigated and reshaped traditional gender norms in postwar Kosovo.

To date, the research literature has addressed gender roles in postwar settings predominantly through two lenses: one that focuses on the reinforcement of traditional roles as a result of war, and another that highlights the blurring of these roles when women assume the economic responsibilities of the men that went missing during the war. In addition, much of this research has either concentrated on broader societal perspectives or remained limited to women as victims of conflict. This study instead offers a view of how gender roles have evolved in the specific context of Kosovo, showing how the two abovementioned changes have been entangled here and how empowerment has been a critical moment in women's postwar lives. The study thus fills a critical gap in understanding the dynamics of postconflict gender role transformations, and not only in the understudied case of Kosovo.

The women who participated in this study initially played traditional home-making roles, to then increasingly become the primary income-earners in their

households as a consequence of the war. This shift in gender roles is exemplified by the Krusha Cooperative initiative, where war widows became breadwinners and created a supportive community. The case illustrates how economic necessity and social support can challenge traditional norms, contribute to broader discussions on gender equality, and ultimately be the driver of significant changes.

The study strengthens the findings of previous scholarship (e.g., Asaf 2017; Sengupta and Calo 2016; Sye 2010) in confirming the influence of conflict in reshaping gender roles in traditionalist societies. In addition, it adds an intergenerational perspective by providing an understanding of how different age groups perceive and react to such changes. Interestingly, the older generation, who actually lived through the war, proved generally more accepting of women's expanded roles, viewing challenges as obstacles to be overcome, while the younger generation, despite endorsing economic participation, struggled when faced with traditional notions of gender-appropriate roles.

Adding a new dimension to the literature that suggests that postwar gender roles are either reinforced or blurred, this study has underscored that the war-induced transformation of these roles is multifaceted and context specific, and intergenerational differences, including a return to more traditionalist notions of social norms, are part and parcel of this. Second, individuals with similar stories experience the transformation differently, as was illustrated by the five women in the older age group, who lived through the war and faced nuanced challenges when it came to assuming the role of the breadwinner. The tension between external agents wanting to help the women and the dominant social norms in their families became obvious, for example in the case of the participant who did not attend driving lessons when she had the opportunity, due to her family's objections. Third, there were differences in the family structures of the participants, as contrasting this example with another participant and her supportive male partner shows. Experiences of gender role transformation are thus shaped by multilayered influences in the women's social contexts.

The case of *Kooperativa Krusha* demonstrates that, while the women took on roles traditionally held by men, the process of doing so has involved ongoing negotiation and resistance from their social environment. Here participants highlighted the need for comprehensive support systems beyond the family capable of addressing both economic and social barriers. This study thus provides a foundation for developing more effective strategies to foster gender equality in postwar settings that have predominantly traditional perceptions of the "appropriate" roles for women and men.

In conclusion, this study documents how women have navigated varied expectations and embraced new roles and responsibilities. The interplay between generational perspectives, economic dynamics, family bonds, and individual choices

reveals a complex narrative of the changing role of women in Kosovar society. They went from being unemployed or homemakers before the war to the main breadwinners afterwards. These narratives transcend the women's individual journeys, contributing to a broader dialogue on gender roles and challenging societal expectations.

The *Kooperativa Krusha* has played a pivotal role in this process. Participation in it served as both a survival strategy and a catalyst for reshaping traditional gender roles and fostering new forms of empowerment, through both social support systems and financial independence. Thus, this study offers valuable insights into mechanisms and strategies employed by both governmental and nongovernmental organizations aimed at helping women in postwar settings. The importance of providing women with access to resources, support systems, and platforms for their voices to be heard cannot be emphasized enough. Moreover, the reflections and lessons derived from their journey are not confined to their local context but contribute to a broader global discourse on gender equality. What can be learned from the women of Krushë e Madhe is that gender equality is a critical component of rebuilding and reimagining thriving societies in the aftermath of conflict.

Acknowledgments: I would like to thank Ms. Fahrije Hoti and all the participants from the *Kooperativa Krusha* for sharing their time and experiences. This research would not have been possible without their valuable contributions. I am also grateful to Dr. Ondřej Žíla for his insightful and critical feedback, which improved the quality of this article.

Informed consent: Informed consent was obtained from all individuals included in this study.

Research funding: This work was supported by the SVV project of the Institute of International Studies, FSV UK, No. 260726.

Declaration of interest: No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

References

- Abdela, Lesley. 2003. "Kosovo: Missed Opportunities, Lessons for the Future." *Development in Practice* 13 (2–3): 208–16. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4029592>
- Ahern, Jennifer, Sandro Galea, William G. Fernandez, Bajram Koci, Ronald Waldman, and David Vlahov. 2004. "Gender, Social Support, and Posttraumatic Stress in Postwar Kosovo." *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 192 (11), 762–70. <https://doi.org/10.1097/01.nmd.0000144695.02982.41>
- Akgün, Sibel, Asena Boztaş, and Emine Balci. 2023. "Being a Woman in Kosovo: Key Issues and Norms for Change in the Perspective of Feminist Legal Theory." *Journal of Management and Economic Studies* 5 (2): 66–80. <https://doi.org/10.26677/TR1010.2023.1307>

- Aliu, Albonita. 2020. "Widows of Civilian Victims of War in Kosovo." MA thesis. University for Business and Technology, Prishtina.
- Ariño, Ana Vilellas, and Gema Redondo de la Morena. 2008. "An Approach to the Kosovo Postwar Rehabilitation Process from a Gender Perspective." *Quaderns de construcció de pau* no. 2 (Working Paper). Escola de Cultura de Pau. Bellaterra. <https://escolapau.uab.cat/img/qcp/qcp02i.pdf>
- Asaf, Yumna. 2017. "Syrian Women and the Refugee Crisis: Surviving the Conflict, Building Peace, and Taking New Gender Roles." *Social Sciences* 6 (3): 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci6030110>
- Bakken, Ingrid Vik, and Halvard Buhaug. 2021. "Civil War and Female Empowerment." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 65 (5): 982–1009. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002720983409>
- Blanton, Shannon Lindsey, Dursun Peksen, and Robert G. Blanton. 2023. "The Impact of Peacekeeping Missions on Women's Empowerment." *Political Research Quarterly* 76 (4): 1872–87. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10659129231181594>
- Boehnke, Mandy. 2011. "Gender Role Attitudes around the Globe: Egalitarian vs. Traditional Views." *Asian Journal of Social Science* 39 (1): 57–74. <https://doi.org/10.1163/156853111X554438>
- Bryman, Alan. 2012. *Social Research Methods*. 4th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Canaj, Kimate. 2021. "Gender Equality Policies and Gender Mindset in Kosovo." *International Journal of Social Sciences* 10 (1): 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.52950/SS.2021.10.1.001>
- Cara, Arben, and Mimoza Margjeka. 2015. "Kanun of Leke Dukagjini Customary Law of Northern Albania." *European Scientific Journal* 11 (28). <https://ejournal.org/index.php/esj/article/view/6383>
- Del Zotto, Augusta C. 2002. "Weeping Women, Wringing Hands: How the Mainstream Media Stereotyped Women's Experiences in Kosovo." *Journal of Gender Studies* 11 (2): 141–50. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589230220139773>
- Desai, Sapna, and Melissa J. Perry. 2004. "Tracking Gender-Based Human Rights Violations in Postwar Kosovo." *American Journal of Public Health* 94 (8): 1304–7. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.94.8.1304>
- Di Lello, Anna, and Caitlin McCurn. 2013. "Engineering Grassroots Transitional Justice in the Balkans: The Case of Kosovo." *East European Politics and Societies* 27 (1): 129–48. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325412464550>
- Dicke, Anna-Lena, Nayssan Safavian, and Jacquelynne S. Eccles. 2019. "Traditional Gender Role Beliefs and Career Attainment in STEM: A Gendered Story?" *Frontiers in Psychology* 10 (5): Article 1053. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01053>
- Durmishi, Ledianë, István Bazsik, and Tibor Farkas. 2023. "Community Support and Collaboration in Women's Social Cooperative Krusha E Madhe." *European Countryside* 15 (1): 49–65. <https://doi.org/10.2478/euco-2023-0004>
- Farnsworth, Nicole. 2008. *History Is Herstory Too*. Prishtina: Kosovar Gender Studies Centre.
- Hajdari Hajra, Florentina, and Agron Rustemi. 2023. "Enhancing Gender Public Participation in Newly Established Democracies: Exploring the Influence of Social Norms on Women's Proactivity in Kosovo and North Macedonia." *Women, Gender & the Law eJournal* 18 (164). <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4517214>
- Haug, Hilde Katrine. 2015. "Gender Equality and Inequality in Kosovo." In *Gender (In)Equality and Gender Politics in Southeastern Europe*. Edited by Christine M. Hassenstab and Sabrina P. Ramet, 147–68. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Holzner, Brigitte M. 2021. "Engendering Governance After Armed Conflict: Observations From Kosovo." *Frontiers in Sociology* 6. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2021.574225>
- Islami, Hivzi. 2008. *Studime Demografike: 100 vjet të zhvillimit demografik të Kosovës*. Botim i dytë i plotësuar. Prishtina: Akademia e Shkencave dhe e Arteve e Kosovës.

- Joshi, Madhav. 2025. "Civil War Induced Social Rupture and Transformative Changes: Women's Political Participation and Land Ownership in Postwar Nepal." *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 38 (3): 1–35. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10767-025-09507-7>
- Kelmendi, Kaltrina, and Liridona Jemini-Gashi. 2022. "An Exploratory Study of Gender Role Stress and Psychological Distress of Women in Kosovo." *Women's Health* 18 (1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/17455057221097823>
- Këllezi, Blerina, Juliet R. H. Wakefield, Mhairi Bowe, Aurora Guxholli, Andrew Livingstone, Jolanda Jetten, and Stephen Reicher. 2024. "The Impact of Holistic Justice on the Long-Term Experiences and Wellbeing of Mass Human Rights Violation Survivors: Ethnographic and Interview Evidence From Kosovo, Northern Ireland and Albania." *European Journal of Social Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.3124>
- Krasniqi, Elife. 2021. "Same Goal, Different Paths, Different Class: Women's Feminist Political Engagements in Kosovo from the Mid-1970s until the Mid-1990s." *Comparative Southeast European Studies* 69 (2–3): 313–34. <https://doi.org/10.1515/soeu-2021-0014>
- Krasniqi, Vjollca. 2007. "Imagery, Gender and Power: The Politics of Representation in Postwar Kosovo." *Feminist Review* 86 (1): 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.fr.9400354>
- Krasniqi, Vjollca. 2009. "The Gender Politics of Postwar Reconstruction." In *Gender Dynamics and Post-Conflict Reconstruction*. Edited by Christine Eifler and Ruth Seifert, 155–68. Berlin: Peter Lang.
- Krasniqi, Vjollca, and Jelena Petrović. 2019. *Notes on Post-Yugoslav Women's Activism and Feminist Politics*. Belgrade: Fondacija Jelena Šantic.
- Lajci, Dardan, Gani Asllani, Gentiana Gega, and Simon Grima. 2024. "The Position of Women in Kosovo. Perspectives and Socio-Economic Challenges." *International Journal of Sustainable Development and Planning* 19 (1): 221–8. <https://doi.org/10.18280/ijssdp.190120>
- Lehrer, Evelyn L. 1995. "The Effects of Religion on the Labor Supply of Married Women." *Social Science Research* 24 (3): 281–301. <https://doi.org/10.1006/ssre.1995.1011>
- Litchfield, Julie, Elodie Douarin, and Fatlinda Gashi. 2024. "Angry Men and Civic Women? Gendered Effects of Conflict on Political Participation in Kosovo." *Feminist Economics* 30 (2): 257–96. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13545701.2024.2323657>
- Luci, Nita, and Vjosa Krasniqi. 2006. *Politikat e Kujtesës dhe Përkatësisë: Historitë Personale të Grave Shqipëtare në Kosovë*. Prishtinë: Center for Research and Gender Policy.
- Möllers, Judith, Janine Pinkow-Läpple, and Thomas Dufhues. 2025. "Conceptualising Rural Migrant Entrepreneurship: Lessons from Kosovo." *Migration and Development*. OnlineFirst 20 June. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21632324251345622>
- Munn, Jamie. 2008. "The Hegemonic Male and Kosovar Nationalism, 2000–2005." *Men and Masculinities* 10 (4): 440–56. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X07306744>
- Musliu, Vjosa, and Itziar Mujika Chao. 2024. *Feminist Encounters in Statebuilding: The Role of Women in Making the State in Kosovo*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Osmani, Faton, Matthew Gorton, and John White. 2013. "Agricultural Households, Poverty and the Rural Labour Market in Kosovo." *Post-Communist Economies* 25 (2): 241–52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14631377.2013.787756>
- Pupavac, Vanessa. 2005. "Empowering Women? An Assessment of International Gender Policies in Bosnia." *International Peacekeeping* 12 (3): 391–405. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13533310500074507>
- Ramadani, Albina Drançolli, and Kujtime Boshtrakaj Camaj. 2024. "Albanian Women in Kosovo in 1989–1990: Difficulties in Obtaining Employment and Political and Gender Discrimination in the Workplace." *Contemporary Southeastern Europe* 11 (1): 71–90. <https://doi.org/10.25364/02.11:2024.1.5>
- Roberts, Mary Louise. 2009. *Civilization without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917–1927*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Sallahu, Sokol. 2022. "The Role of Women in the Development of the Rural Areas of Kosovo: Evidence from Skenderaj Municipality." *Economic and Regional Studies / Studia Ekonomiczne i Regionalne* 15 (2): 206–19. <https://doi.org/10.2478/ers-2022-0014>
- Sengupta, Anasuya, and Muriel Calo. 2016. "Shifting Gender Roles: An Analysis of Violence against Women in Post-Conflict Uganda." *Development in Practice* 26 (3): 285–97. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09614524.2016.1149151>
- Sijarina, Liridona. 2024. *Riprodhimi shoqëror me punë dhe kafe: monografi e punës dhe shoqërimit të grave fshatare para, gjatë dhe pas luftës në Kosovë*. Prishtina: Artini.
- Sion, Liora. 2013. "Can Women Make a Difference? Female Peacekeepers in Bosnia and Kosovo." *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 47 (4): 134–51. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14662040903375083>
- Simic, Ivan. 2018. *Soviet Influences on Postwar Yugoslav Gender Policies*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Sulaiman, Naji, Vladimir Verner, and Zbynek Polesny. 2023. "Socioeconomic Dimensions of Wild Food Plant Use During the Conflict in Syria." *Economic Botany* 77 (3): 267–81. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12231-023-09579-6>
- Sye, Heather Veronica. 2010. "The Impact of Civil War on Gender Roles: A Somaliland Case Study." MA thesis. University of the Fraser Valley, Abbotsford, Canada.
- Szczepanikova, Alice. 2012. "Becoming More Conservative? Contrasting Gender Practices of Two Generations of Chechen Women in Europe." *European Journal of Women's Studies* 19 (4): 475–89. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506812466611>
- Szelag, Paulina. 2021. "The Political Engagement of Women in Post-Conflict Kosovo." *Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej* 19 (4): 127–49. <https://doi.org/10.36874/RIESW.2021.4.7>

Bionote

Shpresonë Grulaj is a PhD Candidate in International Area Studies and a member of the Post(Wars) Research Center at the Institute of International Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences at Charles University in Prague. Her research interest focuses on postwar societies. She merges postwar, nationalism, gender, and feminist studies as aspects of defining social reconstruction in postwar settings.