

## Chapter 9

# Adolescents' Migration Aspirations in Kyrgyzstan: A Migration Project as a 'Collective Project' of the Family

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### Abstract

This chapter considers adolescents' migration aspirations in Kyrgyzstan. The discussion is based on the data obtained from 14 semi-structured interviews with adolescents as part of a qualitative study devoted to changes and continuities in biographic projecting across three generations. The study reveals the tendency towards having aspirations to move abroad for studies, work and/or life. Thus, the objective of this chapter is to consider the adolescents' motivation and to trace opportunities and challenges which may promote or hinder the realisation of individuals' migration projects. Special attention is paid to the role of an adolescent's family in this process. Adolescents' aspirations oriented towards future life in foreign countries are analysed with the help of two theoretical concepts – the concept of intergenerational solidarity and the concept of individualisation.

The analysis has shown that in Kyrgyzstan, adolescents' plans concerning going abroad are often framed by their extended families' interests and expectations. Adolescents' migration aspirations become a collective project of every family member for the sake of the family's future well-being. Parental expectation of care and support in their older age is one of the main limitations on adolescents' aspirations to move abroad. Those adolescents whose migration aspirations do not correspond with parental expectations may experience strong ambivalence, when they face the conflict between their individualised biographic projects oriented towards promising global opportunities and intergenerational solidarity norms.

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## Introduction

This chapter is devoted to Kyrgyz adolescents' migration aspirations. The discussion is based on the empirical data obtained within a larger intergenerational qualitative study on changes and continuities in biographic projecting. The data analysis within that study has revealed a high tendency among adolescents towards aspiring to move abroad (Chicherina, 2021). Fourteen out of twenty-six respondents in the age group from 12 to 15 declared a wish to migrate for study, work or life to neighbouring countries or farther afield in the future. The objective of this chapter is to give an insight into adolescents' migration aspirations in Kyrgyzstan. This is done by considering adolescents' motivation and tracing opportunities and challenges, which may promote or hinder the realisation of their migration projects. Special attention is paid to adolescents' families and their resources that might be considered and used by adolescents to plan and organise the realisation of their migration aspirations.

The number of migrants leaving Kyrgyzstan for educational or employment reasons is increasing (IOM Central Asia, 2019). The deterioration of the education system and poor prospects within the current labour market in the country are among the most important factors influencing the rising level of migration from Kyrgyzstan to other countries (IOM Central Asia, 2019; Suvanov & Ukueva, 2021). Since its independence in 1991, Kyrgyzstan has become more open to the global community, international connections and opportunities for migration. In spite of this, the main destination points for migration from Central Asia are within the borders of the post-Soviet space. The majority of migrants are workers, and the main destination countries are Russia and Kazakhstan (IOM Central Asia, 2019). According to UNICEF (n.d.), 11% of children under the age of 17 in Kyrgyzstan have at least one biological parent currently living abroad.

The number of educational migrants has also grown. This can be attributed to numerous problems in the education system which have been identified by the researchers (Abdoubatova, 2020; Steiner-Khamsi & Teleshaliyev, 2020), alongside new-found educational opportunities brought by modernisation processes in the last decades.

The educational system is faced with challenges such as a lack of resources for education, a teacher shortage, low quality education, a lack of public schools and poor facilities, as well as never-ending changes in school curricula (Steiner-Khamsi & Teleshaliyev, 2020). The number of higher education institutions has rapidly increased from nine universities in 1990 to 52 in 2018, and most of them offer fee-based study programmes (Platonova, 2018). There is a mismatch between the number of university graduates and the needs of the labour market in the country (Galeazzi, 2016; Tilekeyev et al., 2019). Recent data from youth studies show that 31% of adolescents and young people are concerned about their future (UNICEF, n.d.). All of these local conditions are pushing young people to seek a quality education abroad (Brück & Esenaliev, 2013; IOM Central Asia, 2019). The top three

countries for educational migration are Russia, China and Turkey. More than 15,700 Kyrgyz citizens were studying abroad in 2018 (IOM Central Asia, 2019). In addition, the rising number of educational migrants has a negative effect in the form of brain drain. Many educational migrants who receive a high-quality education abroad do not return to their homeland (IOM Central Asia, 2019).

Under the effects of all the processes mentioned above, pluralisation of educational institutions, low labour market opportunities, enhanced offers from abroad and adolescents' migration aspirations in Kyrgyzstan are worthy of special attention. In contemporary studies, individuals' aspirations related to migration are often considered to be a weak factor determining their actual migration in the future (Carling, 2014). Carling (2014) suggests that actual migration should be seen as 'the tip of the iceberg of aspirations, which for the most part remain unfulfilled' (p. 5). However, even unrealised migration aspirations play an important role. In the countries with a high level of migration aspirations among the population, the dream of migrating is an important aspect influencing internal societal processes and national development (Carling, 2014). People with aspirations to move abroad are less interested in making any efforts or any investments into obtaining skills or managing relationships in the local context. This may have negative consequences not only on the personal level but also for the society at large, especially if migration aspirations do not actually become real mobility (Aslany et al., 2021). That is why it is especially important to pay attention to adolescents' migration aspirations and their formation, irrespective of whether they are realised or not in the future. This is the aim of this chapter, with particular focus on the adolescents' family networks and family nexus, subjects that are always mentioned and prioritised by the studied adolescents in their narratives about their life plans.

## **Conceptual Framework**

Adolescence is the period when individuals start planning their transition to adulthood (Schoon, 2001; Shanahan & Hood, 2000). One of the essential dimensions with regard to an individual's life planning is their aspirations. Schoon (2012) suggests considering adolescents' aspirations and expectations as 'an aspect of life planning, reflecting subjective assessments of how far in the education system young people expect to go' (p. 335).

When talking specifically about migration aspirations, it is important to consider them on both macro and micro levels (Carling, 2014). 'The particular emigration environment' (Carling, 2014, p. 3) with its social, political and economic conditions plays an important role in the formation of migration aspirations. In Kyrgyzstan, as already mentioned in the introduction, the deterioration of the education system and unfavourable labour market are considered to be the main reasons for migration (IOM Central Asia, 2019; Suvanov & Ukueva, 2021). At the same time, individual characteristics play an important role, and migration aspirations must be considered as a part of an individual's overall biographic project (Carling, 2014; Schewel, 2015). In this chapter migration aspirations are

also studied as part of overall biographic project including aspirations concerning other areas such as education, career and family.

The aim of this chapter is to consider adolescents' migration aspirations in relation to opportunities and limitations, with special focus on the family's range of opportunities, which on the one hand, may provide valuable resources for adolescents in terms of fulfilling their own aspirations, but at the same time may impose restrictive expectations. That is why, in this chapter, the adolescents' aspirations concerning their future lives, work or studies in a foreign country are discussed with the help of two theoretical concepts – individualisation and intergenerational solidarity.

In some Western societies, researchers have observed a trend towards a loosening link between the aspirations of children and those of their parents (Schoon, 2012). That is why some researchers suggest that to consider adolescents' aspirations today, the concept of individualisation (Beck-Gernsheim & Beck, 2002) should be applied (Fuller, 2009). The Beck's concept of individualisation (1992) implies that class biographies have been transformed into reflexive biographies which are more dependent on individuals' own decisions. Individuals have been set free from class and gender commitments, and families have transformed to negotiated families (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991). However, in the meantime, social uncertainties and risks have appeared as consequences of a 'risk society or 'late modernity', which in turn may cause the destandardisation of lifestyles and biographies (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991). Empirical data confirm that in modern society biographies have become more individualised, and young people consider their lives to be filled with risks and uncertainties (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997). However, the distribution of these risks and uncertainties is unequal and still framed by class and gender (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997). Thus, all individuals are affected by social changes, but differently, and this may lead to the exclusion of the less advantaged from new opportunities (Schoon, 2012).

This growing individualisation has been primarily observed and reported in Western societies. The researchers highlight the essential role of the education system and the opportunities it provides in further developing individualisation (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991). However, we should keep in mind that Kyrgyz society differs from the Western societies discussed by the researchers mentioned above. That is why, in addition to the concept of individualisation, I have also applied the concept of intergenerational solidarity. Using this concept, I explore adolescents' migration aspirations in the context of Kyrgyz society, where multi-generational extended families represent a common form of household, and intergenerational relations play an important role (Zholdoshalieva, 2016). In Kyrgyz society, which is considered to follow collectivist norms, a child's individualised activities and desires are restricted by a strong hierarchical structure (age and gender) within the family (Bühler-Niederberger & Schwittek, 2014). Bühler-Niederberger (2021) defines two main patterns regarding generational relations – an 'independence model' and an 'interdependence model'. She explains these patterns using the example of material and non-material intergenerational transfers. The 'independence model' in childhood is characterised by a child having few obligations to fulfil and focussing on their self-development. For the

parental category, the same pattern implies parental support and investments (both financial and non-financial) in a child's self-development. The 'interdependence pattern', which according to [Bühler-Niederberger \(2021\)](#) dominates in Kyrgyzstan, promotes children's active work both inside and outside of the household. Parents are considered to be life-givers who are supposed to meet basic needs such as food, clothes and upbringing. In the interdependence model, as they enter adulthood, children bear many responsibilities towards their parents, and this is considered to be their duty, proof of their respect ([Bühler-Niederberger, 2021](#)). Thus, the context, which is oriented towards the fulfilment of intergenerational obligations at present and in the future, has to be taken into account in the discussion of adolescents' aspirations. All this leads to a sub-question: can the interdependence pattern also be observed in adolescents' migration aspirations, and if yes, how does it interact with processes related to the pluralisation of educational opportunities, offers from abroad and global promises of success?

## **Sample and Study Design**

The discussion in this chapter is based on the empirical data from 14 semi-structured interviews conducted with adolescents in the age group from 12 to 15 years old in the largest cities in Kyrgyzstan – Bishkek and Osh. Fourteen adolescents out of the sample of twenty-six respondents declared that they had aspirations to migrate. The remaining respondents did not mention any thoughts, intentions or aspirations concerning any sort of migration in their narratives about the future and that is why their cases were not included in this discussion.

The focus of the interviews was on school and family life, relationships with parents, educational and career aspirations and choices and motivation in the transition to adulthood and did not include any specific questions about migration or going abroad. The topic of migration was raised during the interviews by the adolescents themselves, without any questions on this topic. These adolescents, when talking about their life plans, clearly declared their aspiration to leave their homeland and to go abroad to study, work or live in the future. This makes adolescents' migration aspirations especially important and relevant for discussion.

The adolescents that raised the topic of migration in their interviews come from families with different socio-economic statuses and from different ethnic groups. Ten out of the fourteen adolescents who expressed a desire to move to another country in future attended public schools. The socio-economic status of their families varied from lower-middle to middle class. Four respondents, who come from families of upper-middle class socio-economic status, studied in private and elite public education institutions.

The interviews with adolescents were supported by the use of an additional research tool – Vidaview Life Story Board ([Stewart-Tufescu et al., 2019](#)). Furthermore, the study applied the ethical protocol proposed by the Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC) project ([Graham et al., 2013](#)). This protocol insists on the consent of parents and children for their participation and full confidentiality during data processing and presentation of the results. Thus, for confidentiality purposes, the respondents' names have been changed in this chapter.

## Results

### *Adolescents' Migration Aspirations*

The data obtained from the interviews with adolescents in Kyrgyzstan revealed a tendency towards migration aspirations (Chicherina, 2021). This chapter is dedicated to the consideration of this topic in relation to the interplay between an adolescent's individualised migration projects and intergenerational solidarity within their family system. The reasons and explanations for migration aspirations given by the adolescents vary. One of the most common reasons, which is often seen as the nearest opportunity for adolescents to go abroad, is post-secondary studies:

Ok, honestly, I don't want to study in Kyrgyzstan. The quality of studies is not so good here. My older brother and sister chose other countries for their university studies. But we will always be connected to each other through our common home. (Aidana, female, 12 years old)

No, I don't want to stay in Kyrgyzstan. To promote myself I should study at university, but not in Kyrgyzstan. (Aibek, male, 14 years old)

Not all adolescents could provide a well-argued answer to the question 'why do you want to go abroad?' Some adolescents' migration aspirations are purely status-oriented, for example, in case of Alikhan (male, 14 years old):

Alikhan.: Yes, I was thinking about this. I was considering England. It would be great to study in Oxford.

Int.: Why would you like to go to Oxford?

Alikhan: I don't know. I just like it.

Int.: Is there a medical school in Oxford? You told me you want to become a doctor.

Alikhan: I don't know if there is a medical school there or not. I just want to study in Oxford.

In the case of Aidana (female, 12 years old), a carefully planned migration aspiration based on personal interests was more the exception in the sample:

There is a system in Korea... there are some organisations in Korea, which choose children for a kind of traineeship that lasts between 2 and 7 years. They teach people to perform on stage. Usually, they have bands in Korea. So, me and my friends, we applied for this programme. But I also want to become a film-director, to make movies. My parents say that they will support my activities.

The interviews with adolescents allowed to identify several informational resources about opportunities abroad. The children, who declared a wish to leave for Turkey or Korea, gladly spoke about their hobby of watching Turkish and Korean film series or listening to popular Turkish and Korean music groups and stars.

Without Korean film series, I don't know, I am addicted to them [. . .]  
When I grow up, first I will go to Korea, I will work there, but I will need to learn the Korean language first. (Bermet, female, 15 years old)

I like Turkey, its culture and I've watched many Turkish film series. That is why I like it and the Turkish language is quite nice. That is why I started to learn it. (Daulet, male, 15 years old)

Another source of information is the school environment – some education institutions promote their international cooperation with schools and universities abroad.

Yes, they all talk about this. In news, various foreigners come to our college. Turks, Englishmen, they represent their university. Here we have such and such, here we have such, state employees, everything will be fine. As a student you will have free accommodation. Then you listen to them and think, maybe it is a good idea to go to Europe? (Aibek, male, 14 years old)

However, the source of information represented by international visitors and international cooperation between education institutions is available to only a limited number of adolescents in Kyrgyzstan. Such activities take place mainly in private or elite public schools. Adolescents who study in public schools are mostly deprived of this kind of resources and information.

### ***Adolescent Migration Projects as a Collective Project of the Family***

In addition to the influence of mass media and foreign education actors, the data analysis has revealed that family kinship networks play a special role within and outside the country of residence in the formation of adolescents' migration aspirations. Migration experience within adolescents' kinship settings does not always lead to well-structured and precise aspirations. However, adolescents who have connections within personal family networks abroad, which might be considered mobility capital, tend to present more reflection regarding the advantages, disadvantages and benefits of migration, compared to their peers without such connections:

Most likely to leave, I don't know yet, but I plan to. My aunt has suggested that I study in Moscow. This is a good possibility, but I am still holding on to this place (Bishkek), because this is my refuge. I think about it, but I'm not sure. But she says that even if I don't want to study in Moscow, I should just visit her next summer and we will definitely go to St. Petersburg. (Olga, female, 15 years old)

Parents often take an active part in the organisation and promotion of their children's life projects (Chicherina, 2021). This has also been confirmed with regard to children's migration projects. An adolescent's migration plan is often initiated by family members, namely, parents:

Because I like learning languages, to visit other countries and cities in the future. My mom says: "If you learn English, then you can go to any country." To learn their traditions, their lifestyle and so on. But now I am also learning French on YouTube. (Kanyshai, female, 13 years old)

I also wanted to become a doctor, but my parents won't allow me. They say... my mother says... she wants me to become an English teacher. She also wants me to go to the USA and stay there. To live there. [...] So, if my mother says, I agree with her. (Aigul, female, 13 years old)

Projects about going abroad are often framed by adolescents' extended families' interests and social capital. However, as we can see from the following examples, parents' ideas of the countries that are suitable for migration do not always correspond with the adolescents' own aspirations.

Int.: And where do you want to study?

Bermet: In Korea, oh no, in Moscow

Int: Why Moscow?

Bermet: That's where my parents have advised me to go.

Int.: Why?

Bermet: The education is good there. (Bermet, female, 15 years old)

Int: Why did you choose the Czech Republic? Was it your independent choice or did someone suggest this country to you?

Elina: No, not independently. I was told – we are moving, and we moved. I was told – you will go to the Czech Republic, and I am going. Well, in the beginning I felt like: oh, my God, I am moving to a new place again... Again, I will have to look for new friends – and I do not like this. On the other hand – this is Europe. I am moving to the Czech Republic, not many people have such an opportunity. And... I have forgotten to say that I like to take photos. I do not have a camera, and this is my small dream. I can say I am a mobile photographer. And I think, there are so many beautiful places there. So, all my doubts went away. (Elina, female, 15 years old)

Elina wishes to go abroad and does not want to stay in Kyrgyzstan. But she is not very happy about her family's decision to send her to the Czech Republic for post-secondary studies. Still, she accepts this option and tries to adjust her own aspirations to this opportunity. Elina's case is a good example of how adolescents manage their individualised aspirations within the boundaries defined by adults and adapt their personal interests to parental expectations.

Talking about their life plans, not only adolescents refer to their parents as the main advisors regarding this question but their parents are also included in adolescents' projects for their future adult lives.

My future. . . I am sure that I will become an economist and will work and earn very good money. I will help my parents in everything, I will buy them things, clothes, a car. I will travel. When I grow up, first I will go to Korea to work. But to do this I will need to learn the Korean language. (Bermet, female, 15 years old)

Adolescents' narratives show the awareness of the parental expectations that adult children will take care of their elderly parents. This issue was also noticed frequently in the interviews when they spoke about their migration aspirations. For some adolescents, this expectation concerning intergenerational obligations was a clear reason for planning only a short-term stay abroad and then returning to Kyrgyzstan after achieving their main goal, such as obtaining a high-quality education or earning money.

I will work there. And then I'll come back. I can't leave them (parents and sister) here. I want to be around [. . .] No, I can't take them with me, they won't go. We are close, close to my cousins. We all want to be together. (Nuskayim, female, 11 years old)

Others make an attempt to negotiate with their families and find a way of combining their individualised aspirations concerning permanent emigration with fulfilling this social norm of filial piety.

Yes, they want me to study abroad [. . .] Hm, sure, London would be great. [. . .] I will stay there. Later I will invite my parents. They ask me why I want to stay there, who will take care of them later. But I will take them with me. This is my opinion. (Aibek, male, 14 years old)

A good future would have everything that I want in it. And I should become whom I want to become. I want to become an interpreter. Also, my parents should be nearby, my relatives. So, if I stay in the USA, I want to take my parents with me. (Aigul, female, 13 years old)

In the context of the traditional hierarchical structure within the family, adolescents tend to accept family norms regarding the formation of adult life. However, my data show that not all adolescents are ready to accept the traditional social norms common for the Kyrgyz society. The sample includes one case that presents a migration aspiration as an ‘escape strategy’.

To tell the truth, I would not like to come back here and to live here. Not because I do not like the country – in any place you can find something interesting. Just the European way of life is closer to me [...] But here (Kyrgyzstan) I have to follow the norm, how I should behave, not saying some things, respecting older people and so on [...] And in the future, I do not like to live this way. I hope that I will stay in the Czech Republic at least, or somewhere else, not here – where I have to live under a certain pressure. (Elina, female, 15 years old)

Elina’s migration aspirations are driven by her unwillingness to conform to the social normative system, which implies the compliance with traditional social norms and expectations with regard to mutual intergenerational obligations. Unlike the stories of other adolescents in the sample, her narrative does not include any plans to take care of her elderly parents in the future.

## Discussion

The conditions of the current labour market in Kyrgyzstan have led to the increase in unemployment and external migration of young people to other countries for work (IOM Central Asia, 2019; Suvanov & Ukueva, 2021). The data presented above confirm that many adolescents do not see appropriate educational and career opportunities in Kyrgyzstan. Better quality of education and the employment market abroad are among the most popular explanations for the adolescents’ migration aspirations. The destination countries in the adolescents’ migration aspirations in this study tend to correspond with the migration reality of the country. The adolescents with more precise and well-argued answers named Turkey, Russia or Korea as countries where they would want to work or study. And according to the IOM report from 2019, these are the main destination countries for educational migration. Considering the destination countries in adolescents’ migration aspirations was not the aim of this study, but this issue deserves further investigation.

There is empirical evidence from other studies about the correlation between the level of educational attainment or the socio-economic status of the family of origin and the country to which individuals aspire to migrate (Elbadawy, 2011; Ramos, 2019). In my study, due to the limited number of cases, I did not trace a similar correlation. However, the data obtained made it possible to observe a trend towards ambitious migration aspirations among adolescents who do not have appropriate opportunity structures for realising them at this time. According

to studies in other countries, there are various factors which might affect the formation of migration aspirations, as well as the actual migration ability (Cummings et al., 2015). Among those factors is a migrant experience within an individual's social network or personal migration experience (Elbadawy, 2011; Ramos, 2019). The adolescents in my sample, who spoke of very ambitious aspirations to migrate to European countries and the United States, do not have any personal experience abroad or connection within their social networks to these countries. The adolescents with ambitious migration aspirations tend to present vague arguments and little reflection on their wish to go abroad and cannot provide any specific information about how they will achieve this, where exactly they will study or what they will do there. Moreover, these adolescents are from lower-middle socio-economic status families and have poor school performance. Thus, the adolescents' aspirations about Western European countries and the United States are currently not supported by available resources. In times of economic insecurity and instability, in order to increase investments into human capital, in many countries the state promotes the discourse among youth to aspire high (Zipin et al., 2015). This might be one of the reasons for the Kyrgyz adolescents to have high aspirations to migrate to high-income countries with strict migration policies.

However, this finding also supplements another inference of my study about high educational aspirations of adolescents irrespective of their school attainments or family's socio-economic capital (Chicherina, 2021). Even those adolescents, who recognise that they perform poorly in school, expect to study at university in the future and obtain academic degrees. In previous research on early childhood in Kyrgyzstan, Bühler-Niederberger (2016) highlights the 'success leitmotif' in parents' and children's life planning. She argued that both children and parents tend to declare very ambitious plans without considering their current economic and cultural resources. My study shows that adolescents seem to be quite ambitious regarding migration aspirations as well, and their aspirations do not always correspond to opportunity structures available to them at present. The key initiators and advisors for adolescents in developing ambitious aspirations are their parents (Chicherina, 2022). And as we have seen from the adolescents' narratives, their migration aspirations often include intention to ensure parental well-being at the destination point of their life project, namely, to take their parents with them to a destination country or to come back to Kyrgyzstan in order to be close to their family of origin and being able to take care of elderly parents. Thus, children's dreams about moving abroad are an integral part of their ambitious overall educational and career projects, which are aimed at improving not only their own lifestyles but also ensuring the possibility of taking care of and providing financial support to their parents in old age. This fully corresponds to the 'interdependence pattern' of the intergenerational solidarity emphasised by Bühler-Niederberger (2021).

Furthermore, the fulfilment of intergenerational obligations is one of the reasons why adolescents plan to return to Kyrgyzstan after working and studying abroad. In her study on the life world of Kyrgyz pre-schoolers, Bühler-Niederberger (2016) suggests that ambitious parental expectations regarding their children's university

education and successful careers might be motivated by their offsprings' potential contributions to the future welfare and prosperity of their immediate families. In the context of the risks and uncertainties of today's reality and state social welfare conditions, parents expect their children to be their main subsistence resource in the future, maintaining life-long obligations towards elderly parents (Bühler-Niederberger, 2021). The results of my study show that this also works the other way around. The same risky and unstable local context pushes adolescents to consider their immediate families as their main source of support and the only economic and social capital they can rely on in achieving their aspirations. That is why if there are certain discrepancies between parental expectations and the adolescents' own aspirations, the latter often choose to adapt or transform their own projects.

While most of the parents support and even instigate their children's desire to go abroad, at least for a short period of time, there are other cases when adolescents' aspirations about migration are not in line with their parents' expectations. In addition to the norm of filial piety, another important determining factor is a child's gender. The interviews with the adolescents' parents show that girls are less likely to be allowed to go abroad to study than boys (Chicherina, 2021). Parental unwillingness to let their daughters leave Kyrgyzstan might be caused by traditional norms and strengthened by the prioritisation of traditional women's roles and normative expectations for girls – to get married and to take care of children. And education abroad might become an obstacle on the way to starting a family. According to Schröder (2020), there is a view in Kyrgyzstan that without appropriate family supervision in a foreign environment, the image of a girl, her innocence and moral purity will be damaged, and this might affect her future chances of getting married and forming a family. This is similar to what Schewel (2015, p. 10) calls possible 'non-economic repelling factors' for individuals' aspirations to stay in the homeland and not to migrate to another country. She refers to the study conducted by Gardner in Bangladesh, where one of the subject's explanations for not leaving their homeland was 'the perceived moral deprivation of Western countries' (Gardner, 1993, as cited in Schewel, 2015, p. 10). Gender norms are strongly interlinked with such non-economic aspects as family relationships or religion (Schewel, 2015). Schewel (2015) insists that norms regarding gender affect the formation of individuals' priorities and choices and must be considered as 'intrinsic constraints' (p. 26) in the realisation of migration aspirations. As we have seen from the example of my data, adolescents' understanding and perception of parental expectations regarding intergenerational obligations, which can be strongly gendered, should be also considered to be the inner aspect limiting adolescents' choices and ideas about migration.

At the same time, my finding of a strong tendency towards migration aspirations among adolescents leads to the assumption that the context of economic, social and political risks and uncertainties in Kyrgyzstan is one of the driving forces effecting the formation of aspirations related to studying, working and living abroad. Empirical data from some other studies also confirm that concerns and insecurities about future well-being is one of the main factors forcing individuals to consider the possibility of migration (Elbadawy, 2011).

The analysis of my data has also shown that the adolescents, whose migration projects are based on real personal or other family members' experience and available social networks, tend to present migration aspirations which are more reflective in terms of advantages and risks compared to those respondents who do not have any connections outside of Kyrgyzstan. This corresponds to the results of other studies, which highlight social networks abroad and experience of migration within personal social networks as one of the main factors influencing the development of migration aspirations (Elbadawy, 2011; Ramos, 2019).

## Conclusions

The analysis has shown that adolescents' plans to go abroad for the purpose of studying and working are strongly interlinked with their ambitious educational and professional aspirations, and desire to ensure higher financial prosperity for themselves and their family. Adolescents' projects to go abroad to study or work are often framed by parental expectations and family social capital. Thus, adolescents' migration aspirations become a collective project of all family members for the sake of the families' future well-being. One of the main limitations on how adolescents plan a long-term or permanent migration project is parental expectations of care and support in their old age. The adolescents' awareness of these expectations and their readiness to accept them is observed in the interviews conducted in this study. Two main tracks of adolescents' plans regarding this issue stand out in the respondents' narratives. Some of the adolescents plan a short-term period of studying or working abroad in order to obtain a high-quality education, earn money and then later return to Kyrgyzstan to be close to their families and support their parents. Others plan to move their parents to the destination country at a later stage should their migration be successful in the long term. Both tracks correspond to the 'interdependence pattern' of intergenerational solidarity observed by Bühler-Niederberger (2021) and show the complex interrelationship of an adolescent's individualised aspiration and opportunities offered by the family and the state. Those adolescents whose migration aspirations do not correspond to parental expectations, and who are not ready to accept them, may experience strong ambivalence, when they face the conflict between their individualised biographic projects oriented towards promising global opportunities and intergenerational solidarity norms.

I believe that the formation of adolescents' migration aspirations in Kyrgyzstan deserves further and deeper investigation in a broader context, considering gender aspects and individuals' intergenerational extended family relationships, which as we have seen in this study play an essential role in this process.

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