1. The Local and the Translocal: An Introduction

> In the age of speed we no longer have a home. We constantly have to build one, like the three little pigs in the fairly tale, or have to carry it on our backs like snails. (Melucci 1997: 62)

Walking through post-war Beirut and its devastated city centre in the summer of 1995, I felt torn between images of the past and the future. Pictures of the vibrant pre-war city, on the one hand, with its buildings in the ancient Roman, Islamic and Ottoman styles as well as those from the French Mandate and post-independence periods emerged through the skeletons of haunting ruins. On the other hand, I was confronted with the envisioning of a post-modernist city and the impressive ventures that reconstruction plans conveyed on large billboards throughout shattered Beirut. Suddenly, my eye was caught by a huge advertisement with the words "The Global Village, literally at your fingertips". A telecommunication firm advertising for the "First National On-line Data Network" had taken up the expression "global village", made popular by the media theorist Marshall McLuhan in the early 1960s. It was intended to account for the new cultural situation worldwide and express the increasing global interdependence through modern mass media. McLuhan made the term "global village" prominent with his theory that the new electronic interdependence recreates the world in the image of a "global village". (McLuhan 1962: 31)

In contrast, Patricia Nabti proposes the use of the term "global village" for the field of anthropology on Lebanon (1989, 1992, 1995). Her aim is to convey a concept of the village that combines the intensity of its overlapping social networks with the global dimensions that have developed as a result of emigration. Nabti traced dispersion from one Lebanese village empirically over time and uncovered a vast international network of people in over forty different countries. Thus, her topic is not to see the world as a village but to study a village that has virtually expanded into the world:

Because of the wide dispersion of its emigrants, I have chosen to identify Bishmizzine as "a global village" since it is simultaneously a spatially bounded, hence territorial village whose geographical boundaries serve as the source of community identity, and a completely unbounded "non-territorial community" whose "socially determined space" encompasses the whole globe. (Nabti 1995: 2)

This statement raises crucial questions about the interrelations of "social space", "place" and "identity". These issues have recently attracted attention in the context of describing and analysing changes in the social world and put established sociological and anthropological conceptualisations under strain.

Giddens, for example, depicts the difficulty of operating with society as equated with the nation state (1990: 64). Gupta and Ferguson (1992) have stated that the distinctiveness of societies, nations and cultures is based on a seemingly obvious division of space. It is often implicitly taken for granted that they occupy "naturally" discontinuous spaces, which is best exemplified in the school atlas representation of the world as a collection of yellow, green, red and blue countries that make up a global map with no vague or fuzzy spaces. It is taken for granted that each country embodies its own distinctive culture and society, such as when a tourist visits Thailand to experience "Thai culture" or the United States to live "American culture" (Gupta and Ferguson 1992: 7). Classical "ethnographic maps" have tried to illustrate the spatial distribution of peoples, tribes and cultures as transcending nation states. Thus, the Nuer are depicted in "Nuerland" and the Igbo inscribed in "Igbo-land". Nevertheless, in all of these cases, space is the unquestioned central organising principle. But what happens, one is tempted to ask, when people start to move outside these fixed spaces that even social science has ascribed to them? What happens when the Lebanese move all over the world and the Igbo move out of "Igboland"? Throughout human history, people have been on the move. Today, in an era of rapidly expanding mobility, whether of migrants, refugees, tourists, or business men and women, the cultural certainties and fixities related to space are in an even greater state of turmoil and profoundly questioned. Gupta and Ferguson expressed this in the following words:

In a world of diaspora, transnational culture flows, and mass movements of popu-
lations, old-fashioned attempts to map the globe as a set of culture regions or home-
lands are bewildered by a dazzling array of postcolonial simulacra, doublings and
redoublings, as India and Pakistan apparently reappear in postcolonial simulation in
London, prerevolution Tehran rises from the ashes in Los Angeles, and a thousand
similar cultural dreams are played out in urban and rural settings all across the globe.
In this culture-play diaspora, familiar lines between "here" and "there", center and
periphery, colony and metropole become blurred. (Gupta/Ferguson 1992: 10)

Similarly, "little Beiruts" have begun to emerge all over the world, in Abidjan/
Côte d'Ivoire as well as in Dearborn/USA, Berlin/Germany and Sydney/
Australia. Famous Lebanese dishes such as *tabbuleh, kufteh, mlukhiyeh* and
bamiyeh are served in Lebanese households all over the globe. Music by the
famous Lebanese singer Fayruz and the *dabkeh* dance is not confined to an
area mapped out as "Lebanon", a small, compact, closely-knit country with a
population of four million people and encompassing barely 4,000 square
miles but spread among Lebanese migrant communities all over the world. In
addition to the mobility of "cultural traditions", Lebanese religious, political
and social expression, and its associated conflicts are disseminated beyond

local and national boundaries. Accordingly, people from the South Lebanese village under study, with their social, political and economic practices, are no longer tied to one territorial location but are scattered around the four corners of the globe.

These empirical observations question anthropological definitions of "local communities" hitherto taken for granted. As a rule, concepts of locality and local communities have predominantly been associated with a bounded entity, where people's interaction is marked by face-to-face relations and repetitive enactment of daily practices. In this context, "local communities" often stand for a disappearing world of traditions, solidarities and values, a relict from a pre-modern era (cf. Albrow 1997: 39). The influence of these assumptions, which go back to the works of Durkheim and Tönnies, can be retraced in a wide range of empirical studies on "local communities". The classical studies carried out by members of the "Chicago School" on local communities in the United States between 1920 and 1970 (cf., for example Trasher 1927, Wirth 1928) are worthy of mention here.

"Community studies" developed as a tradition in post-war Britain, where the local community was generally depicted as a homogeneous neighbourly small world (cf., for example Rees 1950, Brennan/Cooney/Pollins 1954, Stacey 1960). This image has, in fact, been reproduced in a large variety of community studies that ignore non-resident visitors, outside travel, national events, and above all, population inflows and outflows (Albrow 1997: 41).

Ahead of their time and contrary to this kind of community study, Elias and Scotson (1965) focused particularly on questions of mobility and migration in their study on Winston Parva (Britain). They rejected images of communities as ideal pre-industrial villages with no mobility. Albrow calls the work of Elias and Scotson "a forerunner of globalization research" because they treated geographical social mobility as normal, thus opening up paths to reconceptualise the sociological category of "community" (Albrow 1997: 42). But despite this somewhat new approach to the understanding of community put forward by Elias and Scotson, the concept lost much of its prominence after the 1960s, as it was seen to be inherently bound up with a discredited functionalism and "guilty of being traditional and premodern" (Day/Murdoch 1993: 83).

Despite the unpopularity of the term "community", questions concerning place and location as a significant dimension of social relationships remained important in social science and found renewed interest especially in the 1980s (Day/Murdoch 1993: 85). Researchers like Philip Cooke, involved in studying socio-economic restructuring in Great Britain, suggested the term "locality" as a strong candidate for replacing community and thus filling the conceptual gap (Cooke 1989: 10-19). Cooke and his colleagues, working in the British project dealing with the changing urban and regional system, principally regard "locality" as the space within which the larger part of most

citizens' daily working and consuming lives is lived (Cooke 1989: 12). By studying individual and social mobilisation on a local level in modern society, they demonstrated how locality can be a base from which subjects exercise their capacity for activity within and beyond that base (Cooke 1989: 12). Thus, it is Cooke's main concern to give voice to people's local interests in the light of regional, national and global political forces.

In the context of recent debates on globalisation and transnational migration, it was Arjun Appadurai who put forward the argument that locality can no longer be perceived as a given social reality placed in a bounded site. In contrast, he suggests that one should focus on the question of how locality is in fact produced (1995)[1]. In his view, producing locality is a constant struggle. Different social actors are continuously involved in ongoing negotiations to define and produce locality (1995: 213). By emphasising the role played by migrants and tourists in the process of locality production, he leads up to the question of "What is the nature of locality as a lived experience in a globalised deterritorialised world?" (Appadurai 1991: 196). He argues that due to global technological communications, people can virtually be involved in struggles about locality, despite living their everyday lives in different places all over the world. Appadurai speaks of "virtual neighbourhoods" that are created through new forms of electronically mediated communication.

These virtual neighbourhoods are able to mobilise ideas, opinions, social linkages which often directly flow back into lived neighbourhoods in the form of currency flows, arms for local nationalisms, and support for various positions in highly localised public spheres. (Appadurai 1995: 219)

By sending e-mails, chatting on the phone, sending video- and audio-tapes, people can exchange news, information, ideas and gossip that bypass local, regional and national boundaries and leave influential marks in the process of constructing localities from a distance. In fact, it is an irony of the times that, on one the hand, genuine places and localities become ever more blurred and indeterminate, while on the other hand, ideas from culturally and ethnically distinct places become more salient (Gupta/Ferguson 1992: 10). Indeed, (imagined) homelands, remembered and revisited places of origin, have become more and more important for the dispersed, in a world that increasingly seems to deny such firm territorialised anchors. Malkki has shown, for example, how Burundi refugees who lived in exile for many years constructed their "homeland" from a distance (1992). Depicting how places are constructed from a distance has challenged the anthropological habit of equating people and a unity of place.

Taking the empirical case of the South Lebanese Shi'ite Muslim village of Zrariye and the migration of its inhabitants to Abidjan/Côte d'Ivoire, my study will show how people are involved in constructing and producing their

village "away from the village". I will argue that as a field of social relations, the village has developed into a "translocal village-in-the-making" that emerges from the narratives and practices of social actors dwelling in different places and moving between them. A variety of communication means makes it possible to keep in touch constantly and redefine kinship, neighbourhood, friendship, and generational and gender relations beyond local, regional and nation state boundaries. Belonging to one of the village's patrilineal kin groups is the essence of the translocal circuit. These patriclans are no longer tied to a specific geographical place but unfold their power, control and dominance in the emerging translocal sphere. In calling this social space a "translocal village-in-the-making", I want to clarify that it cannot be taken as a fixed, stable or bounded social reality. The translocal village is in the making and remaking, as it emerges from the various practices and narratives of social actors. It appears as a contested social arena where actors continuously relocate themselves and others, remake their "place of origin" through narration and practice, and struggle for loyalties, power and spaces to manoeuvre. I will show that for the translocal villagers involved, their place of origin continues to be of great importance, since it has become a vital economic, political, social and psychological resource in an age of mobility, change and insecurity.

Exchanging and sharing narratives of place, whether traumatic, nostalgic or political in nature, has the potential to create and redefine local kinship groups and identities, as well as to revitalise local struggles and create a sense of common history for people "at home" and "abroad". Finally, shared and contested struggles over place contribute to the overall process of producing translocal social fields. Thus, it is my interest to show that even in times of globalisation and transnational migration, people always find themselves in some relationship to the places they move through. They are never "nowhere". In this context, I understand "place" not so much as a fixed and stable given but rather as a process of construction and reconstruction. People understand, narrate and engage with "their places" in different ways, depending on the specific time, place and historical situation as well as on their gender, age and class, and on their social and economic environment.[2] It is, therefore, my specific interest to explore how narratives of place and processes of place-making are linked to movement and migration experiences. How does people's perception of their "place of origin" change from a distance and/or over time and how do places change through people's movement? Finally, it is my interest to analyse perceptions of place and migration through a gendered lens. How are narratives of place gendered and how are gender relations expressed in places?

Ethnographic description of male and female associations with different spatial domains in one place has been a staple topic of anthropological research. Researchers described houses, for example, that were physically or

conceptually divided into two parts, as distinct male or female spaces (cf., for example, Bourdieu 1973; Humphrey 1974; Pellow 2003). Spatial dimensions were used and interpreted to theorise about gender differences. In this context, Shirley Ardener has argued that the organisation and uses of space express the hierarchy of social structural relationships (1993). Rosaldo has argued that women's subordination to men can be found in their primary association with the "domestic sphere", while men are associated with the "public sphere" (Rosaldo 1974). Since then, the study of gendered spaces has moved away from fixed territorial and symbolic associations to consider more complex understandings. With her research on factories mainly run by men, for example, but employing a large female workforce, Ong has shown how "non-domestic" space is gendered (Ong 1990), while Friederike Stolleis has demonstrated how "female private spaces" can be temporarily transformed into "female public spaces" (Stolleis 2002).

In my study, I want to investigate the question of how gendered identities are negotiated from a different angle. Particularly interested in understanding how female identities are produced and reproduced in translocal social contexts, I will explore the ways in which gender and place are mutually constituted within the translocal social fields that link people "at home" and "abroad".

Rethinking Migration

Up to the late 1980s, migration studies were mainly interested in answering the question of why people leave their country of origin and migrate, and what problems arise for them and for members of the countries they move to (and to a lesser extent for the country of origin) (Pries 1999: 20-21). Migration was generally considered as a one-time, unidirectional and permanent process from one (national) society to another, caused by the imbalance of push-and-pull factors acting on the individual from the place of origin and the place of destination (Todaro 1969, 1976).

Accordingly, primary attention in classical migration research was paid to the social problems and processes associated with the (irreversible and assimilative) integration of migrants in the new society and the consequences this had for the country and region of origin (Pries 1999: 27).

This direction in migration research was strongly questioned in the late 1980s. In studying people's everyday involvement in migration processes, more and more researchers began to realise the multifaceted dimensions of migration. Anthropologists like Nina Glick Schiller and her colleagues, Linda Basch and Christina Blanc-Szanton, called attention to the fact that migration processes across borders cannot be exclusively seen as a more or less permanent state (1992). They have shown that a significant proportion of

immigrants who settle in the United States still maintain home ties. By focussing on the social networks that extend across international borders, they questioned the long-held assumption on migration as a move between essentially autonomous (national) societies. Within the "assimilist" framework, immigrants to the United States have primarily been seen as people who uproot themselves, leave home and country behind them and face the painful process of incorporation and integration in a different society and culture. In their studies on "transnational migration", Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton (1992, 1995) have shown that in contrast to the "uprooted" migrant image, many generations have upheld persisting connections to their home countries, even when these are geographically distant. Pointing to this empirical evidence, they proposed "transnational migration" as the new paradigm for the study of migration across the borders of nation states.

Transnational migration is the process by which immigrants forge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. (Glick Schiller et al. 1995: 48)

In this way, transnational migration approaches try to understand the ongoing and continuing ways in which current-day migrants construct and reconstitute their simultaneous embeddedness in more than one society. Since the initial works by Glick Schiller and others, transnational migration studies has emerged as a vital and flourishing field of research, as evident from the large number of books and articles published in the last couple of years[3].

Coming from various disciplinary and national backgrounds, researchers have taken different approaches to theorise and analyse the concrete social relationships that immigrants maintain and construct across borders. Different concepts and terms have been introduced to describe the old and new transnational social realities in an increasing globalised world. As there is an absence of a clearly defined set of terms that can be utilised in research, I will point to various authors and their terminology to clarify the concepts that will run through my study.

"Transnational migration" was first of all promoted by Nina Glick Schiller et al. (1992), who specified that the term would be deprived of use, if taken as a synonym for any movement across international borders (Glick Schiller 1999: 96). Not all migrants are transmigrants and transnational migration cannot be equated with the immigrant sense of longing for home, if this sentiment is not translated into continuous movement across borders. For Glick Schiller and many others, the main dimension of transnational migration is expressed in people's ongoing movement back and forth between places in different nation states, in which they are incorporated as social actors. By maintaining or establishing familial, economic, religious,

political or social relations beyond international borders, transmigrants establish "transnational social fields". Glick Schiller defines "transnational social fields" as an unbounded terrain of interlocking egocentric networks. It is a more encompassing term than that of network, which is best applied to chains of social relationship specific to each person (1999: 97).

As the term "social field" focuses on human interaction and situations of personal social relationships, this concept facilitates analysis of the processes by which migrants are linked to their home societies and become involved in the receiving countries (Glick Schiller/Fouron 1999: 344). Glick Schiller prefers the term "transnational social field" in contrast to the widely used expression of "transnational community", which was made popular in particular by scholars related to the British "Transnational Communities Programme", led by Steven Vertovec.[4] Similar to the arguments that were put forward in the general debate on the usefulness of the term "community", Glick Schiller argues that "community" stresses affinity, solidarity and cultural homogeneity and leaves unmarked the exploitative class relations and divisions of wealth and status that stratify a population (Glick Schiller 1999: 97). Further, the term "transnational community" evokes an imagery that fosters the false impression that immigrants create their own autonomous cultural spaces outside of either sending or receiving states (Glick Schiller 1999: 97).

Moreover, the term "transnational community" has been used to describe very different units of analysis. Some scholars use the word "transnational community" to refer to a specific locality in which local relationships expand across borders (cf., for example, Goldring 1996; Levitt 2001; Smith 1998; Georges 1992). Others refer to the term to relate to a specific region migrants identify with in transnational contexts, such as Mixteca in Mexico. This region has become an important point of reference and identity for transnational migrants in the United States (Nagengast/Kearney 1990). Furthermore, some researchers use the term "transnational community" in its broadest sense when talking of groups of people originating from the same nation state and engaging in transnational activities, such as "the Sudanese transnational communities in Cairo" (Häusermann Fábos 2000) or Mexican migrant communities in the US (Roberts/Frank/Lozano-Ascencio 1999).

Apart from "transnational community" and "transnational social field", the term "transnational social space" was introduced and made prominent by Ludger Pries, in particular, in the debates on transnational migration (1996, 1999, 2001). Pries' argumentation is embedded in the broad discussions of sociological and geographical concepts of space and has called attention to recent reconfigurations of space. He argues that until recently, sociological migration research has mainly worked with an elaborate concept of "container space" where the move from one "container space" to the other was studied (1999: 20). Pries states that this "container model" can no longer be applied.

At present, extended geographic spaces (of the "nation state" and its "territory") do not necessarily coincide with the relevant social spaces. He states that this congruence of geographic and social spaces has begun to diminish intensely (1999: 27). Transnational social spaces, then, are understood as new social "interlacing coherence networks" (Elias cit. in Pries 1999: 26).

> They are spatially diffuse or pluri-local at the same time comprising a social space that is not exclusively transitory. The social space serves as an important frame of reference for social positions and positioning and also determines everyday practices, biographical employment projects, and human identities, simultaneously pointing beyond the social context of national societies. (Pries 1999: 26)

Despite the wide variety of terms that have been introduced to describe transnational migrant experiences all over the world, it seems that most of the scholars in transnational migration share a fairly similar starting point despite the different disciplinary backgrounds and national contexts they were trained and worked in, and from where their distinct terminologies originated (Al-Ali/Koser 2002: 2). Accordingly, most of the scholars in transnational migration are interested in what Michael Peter Smith and Luis Guarnizo (1998) have called "transnationalism from below", which examines people's everyday grounded agency across nation state borders. Other scholars share the opinion that there is a distinction between transnationalism and globalisation, although the concepts may overlap. Generally speaking, contemporary transnational processes reflect globalisation but are more limited in scope. The term "global" is best reserved for processes that are not located in a single state but happen throughout the entire global world (Glick Schiller 1999: 96). Transnational migration processes are a dimension of globalisation that expands beyond the borders of particular states but are at the same time shaped by the policies and institutional practices of a particular and limited set of states (Glick Schiller/Fouron 1999: 344).

Further, transnational migration approaches differ from the transnational cultural studies that focused primarily on the growth of global communications and media (Featherstone 1990, Hannerz 1992). Many of these cultural study theorists praised transnational migration, which was depicted as an active strategy by ordinary people to escape control and domination and simultaneously weaken the power of nation states. This argument has been deconstructed by a range of well-researched studies that demonstrate how transnational social networks develop beyond a specific nation state but are at the same time strongly influenced by the legal, social, political and economic contexts of the nation state in their home country as well as in the place of migration (cf., for example, Basch et al. 1994; Glick Schiller/Fouron 2001a). In fact, the specific relation of transmigrants to the various nation states and the borders they transcend is an important topic in transnational migration

studies that became apparent through the work of Nina Glick Schiller. Drawing on the example of Haitian migrants in the United States, Glick Schiller and Fouron (2001) show how migrants become involved in national-ist projects in their ancestral homeland and how political leaders in Haiti try to reincorporate them into their politics. Glick Schiller and Fouron call these processes long-distance nationalism.

Long distance nationalists may vote, demonstrate, contribute money, create works of art, give birth, and fight, kill, and die for a "homeland" in which they may have never lived. Meanwhile, those who live in this land will recognize these actions as patriotic contributions to the well-being of their homeland. (Glick Schiller/Fouron 2001a: 20)

Taking the Lebanese case, we are confronted with very similar social realities. We know that during the civil war, militias and political actors were support-ed financially and morally by refugees and migrants abroad. In the post-war era, Lebanese politicians and politically motivated religious figures are some of the frequent travellers who visit Lebanese abroad and appeal for financial and moral support for their nationalist and confessionalist projects. They also motivate migrants to travel home for elections and become involved in local and national politics. Drawing from this, one can argue that the overall reconstruction process of post-war Lebanese society profoundly transcends nation state borders and is strongly influenced by the Lebanese who live all over the world. Hence, it is not possible to fully comprehend Lebanon's reconstruction practices and policies on a local and national level without understanding how they are intertwined with the agency of transnational Lebanese migrants.

However, without ignoring the relevance of long-distance nationalism and confessionalism, I will approach the overall topic of transnational migration by concentrating first and foremost on questions of producing (trans-)locality.

However unique the case of Zrariye may sound, it stands for many Lebanese villages with a high percentage of transnational migration. Never-theless, constellations of transnational migration and place-making do differ from village to village, since they developed from a background of different political, confessional, historical and migratory contexts. Thus, wherever possible, I will include comparative data, such as on the multi-confessional village of Joun, located in the southern part of the Shuf mountains.[5]

Gender in the Translocal Village

Transnational and translocal migrants are not gender-neutral, although there is a tendency in theoretical accounts on migration to hide this fact. Migration is always gendered. Up to the mid-1970s, women were totally invisible in migration studies. When they finally emerged, they were described merely as the dependants of active male migrants, expressed in the common phrase "migrants and their family" (Morokvasic 1983: 16). Weyland stresses the male bias in many publications that implicitly understands migration as a male issue (1993: 7). Referring to Egyptian migration to the Gulf States, Weyland shows that despite the absence of literature, a substantial number of Egyptian female migrants work abroad as professionals or unqualified workers (1993: 7). In recent years, the need to provide a gendered account of migratory processes has been increasingly recognised. Despite this recognition, many contemporary studies on migration, including transnational mobility, have been somewhat gender blind. The works that tackle gender issues have shown how the gender variable structures transnational migration and influences migrant lives (cf., for example, Salih 2002a/b; Glick Schiller/ Fouron 2001b; Glick Schiller/Fouron 2001a: 130-154; Georges 1992; Al-Ali 2002).

Given the empirical case of South Lebanese migration to West Africa, a high number of transmigrants are women. Today, many South Lebanese women follow their husbands into migration rather than staying behind. This contradicts examples from Egypt and Sudan where the majority of women stay "at home". In my study, I want to focus on the gendered nature of South Lebanese migration to West Africa and describe the specific experiences of female migrants, remigrants and the women who stay behind. By giving a detailed picture of women's lives, I want to contribute to the main question raised in the context of transnational migration. Does gender as it is lived sustain gender hierarchies and inequalities, or do these transnational gender experiences help build more equitable relations between men and women?[6] I will argue that, on the one hand, maintaining connections with the home locality and being part of translocal kinship, religious and political networks can renew old gendered structures. On the other hand, I want to show that gender relations, norms and orders are constantly being redefined, contested and negotiated, thereby opening up potential spaces for female manoeuvre.

Clifford gives the example of Mexican women who migrate to the United States independently of their men. While they often do so out of desperation, under strong economic or social compulsion, they may find their new diaspora predicaments conducive to a positive renegotiation of gender relations (Clifford 1994: 314). Aihwa Ong (1995) illustrates the complexity, moral ambivalence and female "strategic ways" that Clifford speaks of. Describing the lives of two Chinese American women, Ong portrays two

specific female "strategies". Whereas one woman relocated and anchored herself in the overseas community and in her family in Beijing, the other was more affected by American middle-class aspirations and sought to remake her identity by defining a private self and her own place in the United States (Ong 1995).

With an actor-centered approach, this study aims to analyse the multiple means and strategies used by South Lebanese Shi'ite women in building their lives and identities in a translocal village and the constraints and changes they experience. I will argue that the intensified process of globalisation has threatened and uprooted many of the local gender identities once taken for granted. New identities have to be forged. I will endeavour to analyse the multiple identification processes that take place in a translocal village and through which it is at the same time constituted. Translocal Lebanese women and men are engaged in redefining and reconstructing their local gender identities.

The meaning of proper religious practices and attempts to redefine gender relations and behaviour for Muslim women are, for example, the subject of ongoing negotiations. Women take up these controversial discussions themselves by manifesting their religious and gender identities in the form of fashion and specific life-styles. At the same time, ideologies concerning the question of how a woman "should be" are in fact "used" to demonstrate a particular kinship or confessional identity. Ideas about women are thus used as symbols in the political and religious struggle for power and loyalty. But as I hope to show, women are not only symbols, they are social actors manoeuvring between choices and constraints. Using the gender-relations analysis as my lens I will examine the overall practices of subjects who position themselves in complex relationships that constitute the translocal village-in-the-making. It is, therefore, the task of this book to explore – at least partially – the ways in which gender and place are mutually constituted in the translocal social fields that link the village of origin and the place of migration.