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**The Albanian Second Migration: Albanians Fleeing the Greek Crisis and
Onward Migrating to the UK**

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Abstract

Greece has been one of the countries hardest-hit by the global economic crisis since 2008. This has led to the emigration of both native Greeks and Albanian migrants living in Greece, pushing the latter to onward migrate to mainly European countries, such as the UK. This study aims to explore the actual impacts of the prolonged economic recession on the Albanian immigrant population in Greece and the strategies those migrants adopt. Empirically this paper is based on the in-depth narratives of 10 Albanian onward migrants to the UK, who previously lived and worked in Greece. My findings indicate that (1) there is an immediate link between the current crisis in Greece and the out-migration of Albanian migrants; (2) Albanian immigrants demonstrate a remarkable adaptability and they are a dynamic part of the host societies of countries they inhabit; (3) their identities are neither unified nor static, but are constantly renegotiated. This research is important as the Albanian onward migration is a consequence of the Greek financial crisis and is a recent and still ongoing topic. It is also emblematic of other onward or 'second' migrations of other migrant groups dislodged by economic crisis in Europe's weaker economies. There is considerable policy interest in this type of secondary movement, not only on the part of the wealthier receiving states, but also for the first migration country, the country of origin and the migrants themselves.

Keywords

Albanian migration, Greek financial crisis, onward migration, UK, Brighton

Introduction

The Greek debt crisis since 2008, also known as the Greek depression, holds a central role in the Eurozone crisis and the broader global financial crisis. The consequences of the crisis are not only economic but have also led to political and social changes in the country. One of the most worrisome results of the crisis, with multifaceted implications, has been the growing emigration of human capital. The impact of the economic crisis on both the Greek highly skilled and the Albanian migrant population has become more and more evident, pushing the former to emigrate and the latter to either return migrate or onward migrate. Although several significant studies have been published on the impact of the Greek financial crisis on Greeks and more specifically its effects on the highly skilled (Labrianidis and Vogiatzis 2013; Labrianidis 2014; Theodoropoulos et al. 2014), very few studies have investigated the impact of the crisis on the immigrant population in Greece, and more specifically on Albanians, the main immigrant group (Barjaba and Barjaba 2015).

This study aims to explore the actual impacts of the Greek financial crisis on the Albanian immigrant population in Greece. The people at the centre of this research are those who originated in Albania, migrated to Greece after the fall of communism, and then onward migrated to the UK after the financial crisis and its aftermath. Therefore, the focus will be on people whose lives span multiple countries. Secondly, this study will examine the Albanian onward migrants' motives and strategies. In terms of motives, what are the reasons and stimuli

inciting them to onward migrate? And in terms of strategies, which is the plan of action undertaken to achieve their goal?

Tracing their experiences from Albania to Greece and then to the UK, I will investigate the reasons behind this onward move and the choice of country to move on to. Furthermore, I seek to understand how the interviewees attach meaning to different places, and how they conceive and live their lives across space and time. Different places might meet different economic, social and cultural needs of migrants at different times, and their notions of home can be complex and multiple. Therefore, it is important to consider how their identities in the UK (Albanian and Greek) are re-negotiated and how social capital and networking are used as a migration strategy. Finally, I explore how they locate their social and ethnic positioning within a multi-ethnic Britain versus an ethnocentric Greece.

This research is based on existing theoretical frameworks on onward migration and the Greek financial crisis, and on data collected from qualitative research. I draw on the in-depth narratives of 10 Albanian migrants who were involved in onward migration from Greece to the UK. Comparing the findings of this study with the conceptual framework will help shape new concepts and explanations to the original conceptualisation of onward migration and the impacts on the three countries.

The paper first provides a brief description of the Albanian migration to Greece after the fall of communism, and the subsequent Albanian migration to Britain following the Greek financial crisis. The following section offers a brief theoretical framework and literature review on onward migration. Next there is a description of the methodology, followed by the three main empirical sections of the paper. The first of these explores the pre-migration life of the migrants, their migration to Greece, and their life in Greece. The second section looks into the impact of the financial crisis on this particular group and the decision to onward migrate to the UK. Finally, the third section focuses on issues of identity, belonging, notions of home, labour adaptation, and social networking. These three 'results' sections are based on the data collected by the 10 in-depth interviews with Albanian onward migrants to the UK.

The Albanian migration is a very interesting and unique case due to its proportions in relation to the size of the country, its central role in the economic impact at both individual and national level, its dominant role in shaping migration debates in Greece and Italy, and its dynamic and fast-evolving character (King et al. 2005). More specifically, this research is important as the Albanian onward migration is a consequence of the Greek financial crisis and is a recent and still ongoing phenomenon. It is interesting to see the impacts of a prolonged economic recession on the migrant population of a country. There is also considerable policy interest in this type of secondary movement, not only on the part of the wealthier receiving states, but also for the first migration country and the country of origin.

Background: Albanian migration and the Greek financial crisis

Albania became a communist state after its liberation from the Nazi occupation, subsequently experiencing 40 years of extreme isolation. The fall of the Communist regime in 1991, the transition to democracy and the economic and social consequences of this transition were accompanied by mass emigration, mainly towards neighbouring Greece and Italy (Barjaba 2004). Migration has been the chief coping mechanism in response to poverty in Albania.

Albania currently has the highest out-migration flow in Central and Eastern Europe, relative to its population, as one third of the population has left the country in the last 25 years (Barjaba and Barjaba 2015). Albania's current population is 2.8 million (INSTAT 2011), whilst the stock of emigrants exceeds 1 million and may be as high as 1.4 million.

The majority of Albanian migrants, especially during the early years of the exodus, settled in Greece and Italy. Their total number in Greece is estimated at 600,000 and they constitute by far the largest immigrant group in the country (Barjaba and King 2005: 13). Data on Albanian migrants in Greece, though, is limited, as much of this migration was initially irregular. One of the main sources of data collection on immigrants in Greece came from the regularisation programmes that took place in 1998, 2001, 2005 and 2007 (Vullnetari 2012). Most of those migrants were employed in low-status jobs. Former engineers, teachers and artists found employment as gardeners, painters, cleaners and construction workers, without the chance of upward labour mobility (King et al. 2005).

The UK was not among the initial destinations for Albanian migrants. Albanians in Britain came from northern Albania in the late 1990s following the Kosovo crisis and the ensuing destabilisation this northern region of the country bordering Kosovo. The collapse of Albania's pyramid investment schemes, which bankrupted many households in the country, and the subsequent political and social consequences, also prompted lots of people to flee to the UK in the late 1990s. Furthermore, Albanian migrants also came to the UK as onward migrants from Greece and Italy, searching for better job prospects as well as less 'Albanophobia' in society (King and Mai 2009).

In the past 60 years, Greece has swung from being an emigration nation to an immigration country, and now back to experiencing a strong pattern of emigration. After the Second World War and throughout the 1960s and 1970s there was a large emigration of Greeks towards Europe, Australia, Canada and the US. However, in the 1980s a reversal of these flows was observed as Greece began to see rapid economic growth, partly helped by its accession to the European Community in 1981. From the 1990s to the mid-2000s, Greece was a country of immigration, attracting migrants mainly from Eastern Europe following the fall of the Communist regimes. These migrants were searching for a better life away of the political and economic instability (Karamanidou 2015). The principal source of migrants to Greece originated from Albania but they also came from Ukraine, Russia, Georgia, Bulgaria and Poland (Triandafyllidou 2009).

Since the 2008 economic recession and the austerity measures that followed, Greece has again become a country of emigration. Greece's overall unemployment rate reached a quarter of its employed population, and much higher than that for unemployed young people – the highest rates in the EU. According to one estimate, 427,000 individuals have left Greece since the beginning of the economic crisis in 2008, mainly the young and educated (Bank of Greece 2016; Karakasidis 2016). However, exact figures for the actual number of Greek emigrants are still uncertain, and in fact estimates are highly variable. EUROSTAT (2016) figures indicate, between 2010 and 2013, 1.2 million Greek citizens left the country. Meanwhile the Bank of Greece (2016) estimates that during the same period the number of departing young highly skilled to be 223,000.

The dual impact of the crisis has become apparent both on highly skilled Greeks and on the immigrant population of the country. The financial crisis has raised new challenges for

many Albanians in Greece. The proportion of unemployed Albanians living in Greece increased, reaching twice the national rate (Barjaba and Barjaba 2015). It is estimated that between 2008 and 2014 between 150,000 and 180,000 emigrants returned to Albania, the majority from Greece (Barjaba and Barjaba 2015). Others have onward migrated to European countries such as the UK. The 2011 UK census (UK census 2011) identified 13,415 Albanian-born residents in England and Wales, constituting individuals from both Albania and Kosovo. Although there is very limited information regarding the numbers of Albanians in the UK, the estimated number of ethnic Albanians by community leaders was between 70,000 and 100,000 (IOM 2008); note that this latter figure refers to the beginning of the economic crisis. This may indicate dual nationality from the EU, UK – naturalised Albanians or irregular migrants.

Although the phenomenon of out-migration is not new to Greece, it is now acquiring a new momentum and is likely to continue in the near future (Labrianidis and Vogiatzis 2013). This is not only due to the present economic crisis but also to the inability of the Greek market to absorb highly skilled workers (Karamanli 2008).

In the 2000s Greece also became a transit country for migrants coming from South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa (Triandafyllidou 2009). It is also one of the main receiving countries for refugees coming from Iraq, Somalia, Afghanistan and most recently from Syria. It is estimated that during 2015 around 857,000 refugees arrived in Europe through Greece (IOM 2015), which has turned Greece into a ‘storage house’ for immigrants unwanted by the Northern European countries (Labrianidis and Pratsinakis 2016). Therefore, changes that took place in recent years following the financial crisis have created a ‘complex mobility landscape from which we can start to interrogate conventional assumptions about clear-cut categories and linear transitions in migration research’ (Pratsinakis et al. 2017). One aspect of this complexity of ongoing Greek migration trends is onward migration.

Literature review on onward migration

Migration is not a linear and static event which always results in settlement, but a dynamic process that may be re-examined several times over the life-course. This assertion is important for the general message of the present paper, for, as several authors have pointed out (among them Vertovec 2004; Nekby 2006; Lindley and Van Hear 2007; King and Skeldon 2010; Ahrens et al. 2016), the simplistic origin-destination matrix leads to an exaggerated ‘bifocality’ or ‘dual orientation’ in migration studies, based on a reductive conceptualisation of one ‘here’ and one ‘there’ (Jeffery and Morrison 2011: 136). In most instances, migration can be regarded as an investment in human capital, and people usually migrate when they assume the benefits of migration outweigh the costs; this dictum also applies to sequential migratory moves such as return and repeat or onward migration (DaVanzo 1983; Nekby 2006). Nowadays more and more migrants move multiple times in their lifetimes. There is mounting evidence that international migration is characterised by frequent return and onward migration (Aydemir and Robinson 2008). Sometimes migration is indeed still a ‘once and for all’ event; however most secondary moves are either to new locations or back to the places where migrants came from (DaVanzo 1983).

Onward migration is any non-return repeat move, whose destination does not duplicate a previous area of residence (Nekby 2006). Onward migration could be defined as emigration

to 'third-country destinations' and could be the result of 'the same optimization process that shaped the initial migration decision' (Nekby 2006: 200). Initial migration to a country gives migrants access to information concerning employment opportunities of other previously unconsidered regions, which may subsequently lead to onward migration. A current migrant intending to move again is better informed about the migratory process than before his or her initial move and than those who never migrated (DaVanzo 1983).

EU citizens have freedom of movement in the Schengen zone, which has greatly facilitated citizens of one EU country to seek employment opportunities in another EU country. This has also given migrants with newly acquired EU citizenship the right to move freely and multiple times. The UK has been one of the most popular destinations among EU citizens until now. The London area, in particular, has become the favoured destination for young migrants anxious to find work and enhance their career prospects (King et al. 2014, 2015, 2016).

The traditional concept of citizenship which dominates the field of naturalisation research considers naturalisation as final settlement and incorporation within the society of which someone becomes a citizen (Della Puppa and Sredanovic 2017). Onward migration disrupts our understanding of the integration of migrants within a nation-state framework and suggests a broader understanding of how migration and settlement should be conceived. Formal citizenship is initially acquired by migrants for the legal securities it offers and as a form of protection from deportation and administrative irregularity for themselves and their families. This is a 'citizenship to stay'. Yet for others it means an opening to international mobility, or a 'citizenship to go' (Della Puppa and Sredanovic 2017).

A growing body of research pinpoints that naturalised third-country nationals take advantage and benefit of their freedom of movement (Ahrens et al. 2016) and an increasing number of new European citizens onward migrate between member states. Even for third-country nationals without EU citizenship, intra-EU mobility is on the increase (European Migration Network 2013). According to Lindley and Van Hear (2007) the onward migration of new citizens of refugee background within the EU is an increasing pattern in European mobility; Somalis onward migrating to the UK from Denmark and from the Netherlands have been a particular focus (Bang Nielsen 2004; van Liempt 2011). A study on naturalisation in Italy carried out by Codini and D'Odorico (2007) finds that the second most preferred motive amongst migrants obtaining Italian citizenship was the opportunity it offered for moving to other countries. For some migrants, naturalisations and the subsequent removal of the legal barriers to mobility is part of a broader tactic of social and territorial stabilisation for the migrants themselves and their families, particularly for the future of their children (Sayad 2004).

Especially in the context of worsening economic conditions, migrants take advantage of the ability to move following formal EU citizenship. In the case of the Albanians in Greece, access to the Schengen Area and limited border controls renders the Greek passport particularly desirable. It gives them the ability to be mobile, offering a new acquired opportunity of regional and international movement.

Although several noteworthy studies have been published on the effects of the Greek monetary crisis on the Greek population and more specifically on the highly skilled (Labrianidis and Vogiatzis 2013; Labrianidis 2014; Theodoropoulos et al. 2014), very few studies have examined the impact of the crisis on the immigrant population in Greece, and

more specifically on Albanians (Barjaba and Barjaba 2015). I assume that there is an immediate link between the current crisis in Greece and the out-migration of Albanian migrants, and that the impacts of this crisis and subsequent unemployment were particularly harsh on the immigrant population in Greece. Low-skilled immigrants are usually the worst affected members of society following a decline in labour market conditions (Beets and Willekens 2009). This is because they are employed in industries and sectors which are susceptible to shocks in the business cycle, such as construction and the lower-status and labour-intensive service sector. Thus, migrant workers with limited contractual arrangements are more prone to lose their jobs in the case of worsening economic conditions.

Methods and data

This study is based on a qualitative research method emphasising the way in which the people being studied understand and interpret their own social reality, in this case a reality of multiple migration. More specifically, my primary research was based on 10 semi-structured, in-depth interviews, which has given me a unique glimpse into my informants' lives. The target population was composed of Albanians who had lived and worked in Greece over a long period of time and then onward migrated to the UK due to and after the financial crisis. Their length of stay in Greece varied from four to 24 years and they onward migrated to the UK between 2011 and 2017. Table 1 sets out some basic biographical data for each of the research participants.

The target population definition was kept purposely broad in order to capture the variety of experiences of onward migrants, with an age range from 26 to 57 years at the time of the interview, which took place during summer 2017. The main criteria the adult participants had to have are the following: born in Albania, having lived and worked in Greece over a long period of time, and arriving in the UK after the onset of the Greek financial crisis, i.e. after 2008.

The interviews were carried out in Greek, a language that all participants knew at an advanced level, and lasted approximately one hour. Overcoming the initial reluctance of the participants, all interviews were recorded, and later transcribed subject to informed consent.

Participants were initially recruited through my existing personal contacts, as well as through a snowballing method, contacting those interviewees face to face. However, after encountering some refusals to be interviewed, due to the heavy workload of many as well as some refusals to identify as Albanians, the rest of the interviewees were located online through various 'Albanian Professionals' Facebook groups. Those latter interviews were contacted on skype or Facebook video messenger. Interviews were conducted in Brighton, London and elsewhere.

Table 1. The research participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Occupation	Years in Greece	Migration to the UK

Maria	Female	38	cleaner	1995-2013	2013
Elpida	Female	56	Grocery store cashier	1991-2015	2015
Artur	Male	42	Waiter	1991-2013	2013
Rea	Female	31	Housewife	2009- 2013	2013
Ariana	Female	38	Deli shop clerk	2002-2015	2015
Eduard	Male	26	Mechanical engineer	2002-2015	2015
Anna	Female	30	Accountant	1997-2010	2011
Adriana	Female	57	Cook/Chef	1991-2010	2013
Miranda	Female	50	Caregiver	1993-2016	2016
Mario	Male	29	Mechanical engineer	1999-2017	2017

The sample consists of seven female and three male participants. The interviews were kept informal and free flowing; however, the participants were encouraged to tell their life stories in a broadly chronological order, starting with basic biographical information, recounting their lives before emigration from Albania, migrating and life in Greece with an emphasis on the impact of the financial crisis, and the reasons behind the choice to onward migrate to the UK. They were also encouraged to dwell on issues of ethnic identity, integration, transnational bonds, social networking, labour adaptation and employment opportunities.

Through a critical analysis of the narratives, elicited during the interviews, the researcher can go beyond an initial, largely factual picture, enabling deeper insight into unique human experiences. Such an approach also allows us to look beyond what people are saying, recognising that there is no unbiased account of the past. Critical narrative analysis is a method of qualitative research which has ‘the story’ as the investigative focus. By listening to the stories of the research subjects, the researcher attempts to understand the relationships between the experiences of individuals and their social framework. The narrative analysis does not focus only on information collection but on the very construction of narratives and the role they play in the social construction of identity (Rosenweld and Ochburg 1992).

A key purpose of the interviews was to consider the multifaceted circumstances influencing my informants’ onward migration and explore their complex motives and strategies. I do not claim that the sample of the interviewees is representative of the general population of the Albanian migrants coming from Greece to the UK; nevertheless these interviews can shed light on the aforementioned issues relating to this particular group of people. All names mentioned are pseudonyms and no compromising information is given about individuals, places or events.

The following sections of the paper summarise the findings from the in-depth interviews with the Albanian onward migrants, tracing their lives from Albania to Greece to the UK. In the first section, I start with my informants’ pre-migration lives and continue with their migration and life in Greece. The second section describes the consequences of the financial crisis on the migrants, and to what extent it affected them. The final section discusses issues of ‘home’ and identity, labour adaptation and social networking.

From Albania to Greece, and life in Greece

Albania's communism saw 40 years of extreme isolation from the rest of the world, including a progressive split from the rest of the communist block too. The communist government introduced a centrally planned economy nationalising all land and industries, transforming foreign trade into a government monopoly, and prohibiting emigration (Vickers and Pettifer 2000). During this period, Albanians were denied fundamental human rights such as travel overseas, the freedom to practice their religion, and to speak minority languages. However, the events that followed the fall of communism in 1991 led to a 'migration explosion' (Barjaba and King 2005: 2).

Albania can be characterised as a country on the move. This mobility played a crucial role in household-level tactics to cope with the economic hardships of that transition (Carletto et al. 2006). It is obvious from the narratives that I recorded that people lived in impoverished conditions. The following quotes are indicative of the situation.

In Albania, during communism they used to give us 2 kg of pasta a month to eat, 1 kg of meat... We were hungry... (my mother) was a poor woman, she would steal olives, and then with a sock she made olive oil, because we were a very poor family with six kids. (Maria)

Another informant stated that during the winter she 'had grown up without heating'. The isolationism of the Albanian regime becomes even more poignantly obvious with the following quote:

We only knew Coca Cola because the waves washed up the cans and we put them for decoration, just as Greeks decorate with ancient monuments. The cans and plastic bottles seemed so beautiful to us. (Adriana)

As soon as communism started to fall in 1990-1991, the Western embassies in Tirana were occupied by civilians asking for asylum. These symbolic events can be considered as prologues of the vast migration flows that followed. In February 1990, a family of six climbed the wall of the Italian embassy compound – an act which could be regarded as the first symbolic migration onto foreign territory (Barjaba and King 2005: 4). By that summer many thousands followed. As one participant narrated:

My husband's brother knew a soldier at the Greek embassy, so to help us he took my son and put him inside the gates of the embassy and told us to leave him there. The ambassador had seen my son waiting so many hours – he was only 7 at the time – and felt sorry for him... This is how they gave us visas. (Adriana)

Therefore, as soon as the emigration controls relaxed in the early 1990s, the emigration took on phenomenal proportions, becoming 'the single most important political, social, and economic phenomenon in post-communist Albania' (Carletto et al. 2006).

Most of my respondents who migrated to Greece between 1991 and 1995 were irregular, with the exception of the 'Northern Epirotes' (the ethnic Greeks who lived in southern Albania close to the Greek border), who had an advantageous position and were granted a special status. The scale and suddenness of this cross-border exodus undoubtedly caused consternation amongst the Greek authorities. It is estimated that until the mid-1990s around 200,000 irregular Albanian migrants were expelled from Greece per year (Baldwin-Edwards and Fakiolas 1998: 197). Others came with forged passports which they had previously bought in Albania.

I came to Greece with a forged passport, we bought it for 100,000 drachmas. There was chaos, it was impossible to get a legitimate one and it would take so long, so we chose the easy and quick way. (Elpida)

For those who managed to cross the border, avoid the police, and stay in Greece a while, experiences and reactions varied. The initial support to the first waves of Albanians was not by the organised state but in many cases by individual Greeks and the church. The clergy urged the people and practitioners to help. One of the motivations was the Christianisation of the immigrant population. The following quote is demonstrative of this support from the church.

...the bishop gave us a house to stay, it belonged to the church. We cleaned it and painted it. The bishop was knocking on doors telling people to give us anything that they thought might help, and be that night we filled a room full of clothes and nice things. (Adriana)

Perceptions and reactions towards Albanians in Greece (as in Italy, the other country affected by the exodus) changed over the years, from welcoming sentiments at the beginning, followed by scepticism and fear (King and Mai 2009), and finally in recent years changing to more moderate reactions and acceptance. Through the interviews it is apparent that racism, especially for those who came to Greece in the 1990s, was widespread. However, for those participants who came in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the negative stereotyping applied to Albanians had started subsiding.

A big role in the negative stereotyping of the Albanian migrants to Greece was played by the media, especially TV, which contributed to the further stigmatisation, exclusion, and 'otherness' of the Albanian migrants in Greek society (Kapllani and Mai 2005). In both Greece and Italy, the negative stereotyping of Albanians as criminals became a self-fulfilling prophesy as it led to further marginalisation and alienation from the rest of the society (King and Mai 2004, 2008).

In Greece, we had our own social group, we were a world inside a world, even if the Albanians tried really hard to incorporate in the societies of the countries they moved to. (Artur)

Some of the interviewees who came to Greece in the beginning of the 1990s now talk about feeling psychological pressure and for some it resulted in stress-related illnesses. As Elpida stated:

One day my daughter came home really upset because a mother came to school and told her daughter, 'Don't you dare play with this Albanian again!' And my daughter came home crying. That was the first wound. My daughter is a very strong personality, but very sensitive, and this has caused her a lot of psychological problems in her life. (Elpida)

In order to deal with the stigmatisation, many of the interviewees stated that they developed coping mechanisms:

I looked at it as their problem, not my problem. I might have felt sad for about 10 minutes and then I would think logically, and feel sorry for this person who thinks that way. He or she judges you without knowing you, just because you come from a different country. No one chooses the country they are born in. I don't feel shame because I was born in Albania. (Elpida)

However, with the respondents who came to Greece from 2000 onwards, we observe a change in attitudes. They mention experiencing racism less, and some said that they did not experience any significant racism. According to Barjaba and Barjaba (2015), new legislation introduced since 1998, which allowed the regularisation of Albanian immigrants, resulted in a change of attitudes and fading of the prior heavy stigmatisation. This happened at the same time as Albanians were seen to be an active sponsor of the national welfare system through taxation and incorporation into the legitimate market.

Many Albanians in Greece adopted Greek names and had themselves and their children christened Orthodox, regardless of their prior religious affiliation, Muslim or Catholic. According to an empirical study which took place in the mid-2000s in Thessaloniki, one third of the Albanians interviewed admitted using a Greek name (Kokkali 2015). Most of my interviewees had two names, a Greek one which they used in their everyday life in Greece and in contact with the Greeks, and their Albanian name which was on their official documents. They were also baptised and maintain a very close relationship with their godparents who are very close friends or former employers.

The name-changing tactic could be considered as a strategy to integrate into Greek society. Albanian migrants' name-changing tactic, as well as the public acts of baptism, were part of a wider adaptation strategy to navigate around a stigmatised identity. Despite their great numbers, Albanians were socially discreet and they did not expose any obvious traces of their ethnicity in the urban space. Their relative ethnic invisibility in Greece also reflects this specific adaptation strategy (Kokkali 2015). As one respondent comically stated:

In Greece we have a different mentality, you must be Christian to make friends and you have to have a name like Taki, Maki, Paki... (Maria)

Another ironically said:

And we have learnt for our personal and family good to get Greek names, to tell one or two lies to satisfy the Greek. This is how things were... so if your name was Artur, you had to change it to Vasilis, because it was easier for his boss to call him that way, as if it is really difficult to pronounce Artur. (Artur)

Furthermore, respondents emphasised the barriers they faced towards finding a job according to their qualifications. Former engineers, economists and teachers were employed as unskilled workers in the menial service sector. They worked as waiters, construction workers and cleaners. A significant proportion of Albanians thus underwent 'occupational deskilling'.

In Albania, I was a kindergarten teacher and my husband had studied economics at the university. When we came to Athens my husband had dreams at the beginning, but not me, because I knew the kind of work women did. We tried in Athens for about one or two years, he went here and there... and every time he saw something related to his job in the newspaper, he would go and ask...but nothing. So then he started working in a garage. (Miranda)

Another stated:

In Albania, my husband used to go to work wearing a uniform, he was a mechanical engineer but when we moved to that village [in Greece] we had to do any job to survive. (Elpida)

The only occupational upward mobility over time that has been observed involved crossing the somewhat unclear divide between the informal and formal labour market. A study of Albanians in Thessaloniki carried out in 2000 revealed that the migrants moved out from the informal towards the formal labour market and from unskilled low-paid labour to jobs in construction, small firms and services (Labrianidis and Lyberaki 2001).

Overall, and summing up, most migrants experienced discrimination, particularly those who migrated in the 1990s, but less for those who migrated in the late 1990s and in the 2000s. They employed a number of tactics as part of their survival and integration strategies, including name changes, being baptised and converting to Christianity, and accepting lower-skilled employment in the hope, which sometimes was realised, of moving to more skilled and higher-paid jobs.

The results of the financial crisis and onward UK migration

According to data collected by Eurostat, the non-Greek citizens who left the country between 2010-2013 constituted almost half of the outflow of the country, that is 187,369 people

(Labrianidis and Pratsinakis 2016). This is indicative of the impact the recession had on the immigrant population of Greece, especially the Albanians.

Before the crisis, all the participants described their lives as financially comfortable. They lived in what they regarded as spacious apartments, could save money, owned cars and could afford holidays for them and their families. They had also invested money back home in Albania, building new houses or renovating old family homes. They seemed well settled and rather fully integrated into the Greek society. The participants also talked about their pleasant life in Greece and frequently mentioned how content they were. One participant stated:

Before the crisis my husband (a garage owner) got really good money. On average, he earned 3000–3500 euros a month. And I earned around 500. I did not need to work a lot. You know how much the rents are in Greece, so you can understand how much our income was. (Miranda)

Another said:

I was really happy with my job. In the beginning, I was paid really well. I would earn around 1000 euros a month, and my husband 1600 euros, so we were really comfortable financially. (Ariana)

All the interviewees framed their migration to the UK as a need to ‘flee’ Greece’s economic recession. The main push factors that shaped their decision to leave Greece were the deteriorating economic conditions, unemployment, and a lack of career opportunities. The severity of the Greek crisis has not abated as the years have passed. For many, the crisis hurt them so severely that it even affected their basic needs. The decision to leave Greece is thus described as a necessity rather than a choice.

My husband did not have a job for four years and only I worked. But after I lost my job and we spent all our savings, we decided to leave Greece. We had even got a loan to pay for the rent. My ex-employer at the mini-market brought me food every single Saturday, he loved me! And even the church gave us food, yes indeed! (Elpida)

It is clear, however, that for the young and educated it was not just the economic aspect of the crisis that drove them to onward migrate. It was also the lack of opportunities and the inability to find employment according to their qualifications, perhaps improving their human capital, for instance with a Master’s degree, intending to be absorbed into the UK labour market. Britain was considered as offering better further education and good work opportunities. Therefore, it was a tactical move to study in the UK. Many interviewees stated that they were successful in finding employment.

There are lots of reasons I left Greece. Obviously the first is the financial crisis and the fact that you can’t see your future in Greece, which is really stressful, because otherwise who wouldn’t want to live in Greece? The financial crisis is the first reason and second is that there is no room for professional development in my field. (Eduard)

Migrant workers are usually the first to lose their jobs during a decline in labour market conditions, which may result in an intention to move back to the country of origin or to move onwards to a new location (Beets and Willekens 2009). There is evidence that the economic recession differentially affected the gender composition of the migrant labour force in Europe (Koehler et al. 2010). This was a result of rising unemployment in male-dominated sectors such as construction and on-going demand in more female-dominated sectors such as care work.

The construction industry, one of the most important sectors of the Greek economy, was the hardest hit by the Greek economic recession, especially in the first post-crisis years. This resulted in a re-dimensioning of the industry, the downsizing of many building firms, or outright closures and bankruptcies.

In most cases among my interviewees, men were the main breadwinners of the household and it appears that they were the worst affected by the recession. Working as low-skilled workers in construction sites, garages and restaurants, and with the crisis impacting on the demand for these jobs, they become unemployed. Men usually lost their job prior to their wives. They initially tried to find alternative jobs but the situation became critical from 2011 onwards. Wives continued working but they could not sustain their families and livelihoods on one salary.

The financial crisis changed things dramatically in Greece. I worked in Italian restaurants and I was paid well, 65 euros a day plus I would get good tips. I worked in an upscale neighbourhood in Athens and the clients were politicians, journalists and the like, and I was happy. By the first year of the crisis I was only getting 43 euros a day, and then work became irregular. And then the restaurant I worked at closed. (Artur)

The same participant also mentioned:

Although as Albanians we had some problems, the only thing that kept us there was the financial prosperity, that we had good jobs and a good life, but when this balance broke, then you realise you have to do something. (Artur)

My interview material also revealed various ways in which masculinity had been challenged for migrant men in Greece after the financial crisis. It becomes apparent from the interviews that men lost their jobs first, whereas women continued working. There is a sense of shame attached on the part of men to be unemployed and live off their wife's salaries.

Basically, I had a job but my husband did not, I worked at Piraeus port, as a cleaner, I was paid well. I was very happy but my husband could not live off my money, he felt guilty...he is a man. (Maria)

In the light of the economically and personally devastating impacts recorded above, onward migration, return migration and mobility within Greece were the main coping mechanisms of Albanian migrants in response to the financial crisis. Albania is one of the poorest countries in Europe, with a GDP per capita of around \$4,250, and around 14% of the

population living in poverty, according to the World Bank (2017). The financial crisis on one hand, and the enduring poverty in Albania on the other, leave no option for Albanian migrants but to onward migrate.

The participants in this study onward migrated to the UK from 2010, the majority between 2013 and 2015. They also mentioned that friends and family members are waiting to acquire Greek citizenship and move to the UK.

According to the participants' narratives, it becomes clear that there is a direct link between acquiring Greek citizenship and onward mobility. Eight out of the ten interviewees have Greek passports, whereas the other two came on spouse visas, because their husbands and children had acquired the Greek passport. It thus becomes clear from the narratives, that acquiring the Greek passport played a crucial role in enabling and encouraging onward migrating (cf. Della Puppa and Sredanovic 2017 for the Italian case). For others, it was a strategy and a goal to obtain Greek citizenship and only after did they decide to onward migrate. Most of the interviewees moved to the UK as soon as they obtained the Greek passport and gained the subsequent freedom of movement within the EU.

With the crisis, they started reducing the salaries. It happened gradually. Then they started laying off staff. My husband had already lost his job. My salary was reduced from 1000 to 650 euros and so as soon as we got the [Greek] passports I told my husband, let's go because there is no future here. (Ariana)

Another said:

We got it [the Greek passport] in 2013, and as soon as we got it we left. We got it so we could leave. (Artur)

Two-thirds of the participants mentioned that social networks played a central role in their choice to move to Brighton or London, having either relatives or friends who had previously migrated there. From them, they received information and initial help finding accommodation and jobs. According to King and Mai (2004), Albanian immigrants in the towns of Modena and Lecce in Italy relied on family networks to help them find jobs. Similarly, the participants in this study mention the help of family members in finding jobs and housing. However, around one third of the participants arrived in England without knowing someone.

According to various studies in Greece and Italy (King and Mai 2004; Labrianidis et al. 2004; Pratsinakis 2005; Hatziprokopiou 2006), Albanians seem to have an ability to learn languages fast, which has been crucial in their upward social mobility and their integration process. Yet, one of the main reasons behind the choice to onward migrate in the UK appears to be knowledge of the English language. As one participant stated:

UK was my first choice, because I knew the language. It was a strategic choice, not coincidental. I thought that if I had to move to Sweden or Germany I would need at least a year to learn the language, even for me, a multilingual, and I already speak Italian, Greek, English and Albanian. (Artur)

The decision to onward migrate is also a strategy involving the whole family. Seven out of the ten interviewees onward migrated to the UK with their families. For those who had young, school-aged children, an influencing factor in moving to the UK was the school system, and their desire for a good English secondary and further education. Therefore, education and language were important factors.

Summarising, onward migration has been an important coping mechanism for Albanian migrants in response to the Greek financial crisis. Despite all the interviewees being well settled in Greece with no earlier intention to onward migrate, the economic crisis and their subsequent unemployment forced them to move. They strategically acquire Greek citizenship, which removes legal barriers to mobility, and move to the UK because they are familiar with the language. In the UK they also expect to find better employment opportunities. Therefore, employment opportunities, language, and education are strong pull factors motivating movement to the UK.

Life in the UK: identities and notions of home, social networking, labour adaptation

Identities and notions of home

Globalisation has challenged modern definitions of identity and perceptions of belonging. As mobility has become an increasingly widespread social phenomenon, there should be a shift in our approach to identity. Other forms of collective memories should be considered as more important to define those global multiple migrants (Colomer 2017). The key question is how do people living in multiple locations in their lifetime, and experiencing diverse cultural encounters, describe and make sense of their lives.

We should not treat identity as unified and static, but rather as multiple, fragmented and continuously evolving (Hall 1996). Most Albanians have rejected and dissociated themselves from their communist past. Therefore, for Albanian migrants to Italy, Greece, or elsewhere, it is often about ‘realising a new project of identity’ (King and Mai 2008: 202-204), or what has been previously characterised as ‘migrants of identity’ (Rapport and Dawson 1998).

The majority of the interviewees identified as Greek or Albanian, but also some participants mentioned having no specific identity, or feeling half Greek and half Albanian, or even seeing themselves as global citizens. The acquisition of Greek citizenship by the majority of the respondents did not automatically mean that they now identified as Greeks. Some of the factors shaping the identity of my participants are the amount of time they spent in Greece, the age they migrated there, their experiences in Albania and Greece, whether they went to school in Greece, and whether they had kept frequent contact with Albania. The first set of quotes are indicative of the diverse nature of their identities.

I love everyone, but I feel my home is in Greece. My home that I built is in Albania but I don't feel Albanian. I feel Greek. After a long time, I have settled down there, but before I felt embarrassed to express myself because they would make fun of me, even the Albanians. (Maria)

Another said:

Greek, I am not. Albanian I don't feel. Every time I go to Albania I don't feel that connection. I don't think I have an identity. (Miranda)

While a third and younger (29 years old) participant stated:

I feel 50-50. I speak Albanian, I have relatives back there [in Albania]. I go almost every summer. But I am not 100% Albanian, not 100% Greek, so 50-50. My home is in Piraeus! Our home is where we live. (Mario)

However, some participants stated the reason why they identify as Albanians is because they did not feel accepted and were not allowed to really integrate in Greece, due to both stigmatisation by the Greek society and the lack of state support. They expressed a bitterness towards the Greek state and society because any attempts to integrate were rejected. This created a love-hate relationship with Greece.

I don't feel Greek because they never accepted me. I feel Albanian because I was born there. If I don't feel Albanian I will feel I am without any identity. My mum and brothers live in Athens. I feel Albanian because this is how the Greek policy made me feel. Greece doesn't accept you. There is no way that Greece can let you feel 100% Greek, even if I had lived there 25 years, even if I have a Greek passport. (Artur)

Another interesting phenomenon is the strong transnational and cosmopolitan orientation that some migrants demonstrated. Moving to where good opportunities exist and setting themselves new higher goals is very important. They indicated that, in case they had to leave England, they would further onward migrate again, e.g. to the USA, with some saying they would go back to Greece. As a serial onward migrant (Albania-Greece-Netherlands-UK) stated:

I am not Albanian and I do not want to be one. I feel Greek and my passport is Greek. But everywhere I go I like to adapt. In any country I go to, I want to learn everything. To tell you the truth I feel a global citizen and I like it that way. Even if you take me to Iraq I will survive and will find the good things. A lot of people say: like Greece, like the Greek sun, there is nowhere to be found [to compare with that]. And I say – sun without money? I like rain with money! (Adriana)

Moreover, from the narratives it becomes noticeable that the interviewees' identity can be characterised by its fluidity; depending in which context they are, they identify differently. They often hide their Albanian identity to become 'invisible' amongst Greeks living in the UK out of fear that the stigmatisation will continue to have a negative impact on finding jobs. In this respect, according to Kokkali (2015), Albanian migrants' relative invisibility in Greece, indicates a specific adaptation strategy—a strategy, however, which is not practised by *all* Albanians.

And I said to the people [at a Greek church in London] that I came from Greece and I'm looking for a job. I did not say that I'm Albanian, I did not mention it, because I did not know how they will react, I just needed a job. I don't feel inferior that I'm Albanian like some other people, but I did not mention it so they don't close the door to me. (Elpida)

Another participant who identified only as Albanian stated:

If someone has only three minutes and asks me where I am from, I am going to say I am Greek since I have a Greek passport, I am not going to explain my life's story. (Artur)

Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that the younger and the more educated the interviewees were, the more comfortable they were with their Albanian identity. They were mutually proud of their Albanian and Greek background.

I feel half and half but this time here in London I try to cultivate a bit more my Albanian identity...but yes, I feel very lucky I passed through Greece for many reasons. I can't say I did not have awkward moments, but I don't blame the people but the Greek government as an organisation. (Eduard)

In England, they mentioned that they feel more comfortable being Albanian. 'No one asks' and 'no one cares' where they are from and this gives them a sense of release from the stigmatisation that some experienced. They feel more comfortable living in a multi-ethnic society and not being the only or the biggest migrant group, as they were in Greece. They also feel that the society in the UK is much more tolerant and accepting, and being Albanian does not negatively affect their chances.

I feel happy here, I have a job, my sister, my kids. I'm happier here; when I went to Greece last year, I felt again that pressure. (Elpida)

Notions of home

Irrespective of what the participants identified with, the majority of them stated that they felt Greece to be their home, even if their material home is in Albania. Identity and home do not necessarily match for these migrants, as some feel Albanian but they state that Greece feels like home and they wish to return there one day. They often place their home with their city or neighbourhood in Greece, which clearly demonstrates the importance of locality. As one mentioned:

I feel Albanian. My friends in London are half Albanians and half Greek and some English. I definitely don't feel English. But Thessaloniki is my home. (Anna)

Participants also mentioned having purchased a material house in Greece, and those who did not, mentioned that they intended to buy one due to the fall in housing prices after the recession. Two of the participants even expressed a desire to sell their home back in Albania in order to buy in Greece, so they and their kids can visit. Therefore, to capture the shifting notion of home of onward migrants, we need to rely not only on their place of birth, as it may not adequately represent ties to a place, including where an individual grew up or went to school (Newbold 2001).

Summarising, identity is not static as it is incessantly redefined by various social actors, and also challenged by continuous geographical mobility. My research demonstrates that this particular group of onward migrants have diverse identities. The dynamic nature of identification of the participants in this study is clearly demonstrated. Greek citizenship does not necessarily mean they identify as Greek and even their notion of home does not always match their identity. They sometimes choose to conceal that they are Albanian, especially around Greeks in the UK, and they feel more comfortable living in a multicultural society.

Social networking and labour adaptation

Migrant networks are defined as webs of social ties that connect family, friends and community members in origin and destination countries. Migration researchers have demonstrated that these networks have an impact on both the direction and magnitude of migration flows from the sending country. These networks also facilitate the adaptation outcomes in the destination country and links to migrant networks assist new migrants in finding employment (Boyd 1989).

The data collected from the narratives suggest that the majority of the participants relied on family members, friends or acquaintances who had previously migrated to the UK, offering valuable information and practical support. They mentioned husbands, aunts, sisters, and friends who had previously migrated to Brighton or London. They usually offered them a place to stay initially, helped them to find more permanent accommodation, as well as helping them find work. Family and social migration networks facilitated and encouraged the decision to migrate to the UK for two-thirds of the participants.

The role of family and social networks is particularly important in the case of the Albanian immigrants, as ethnic solidarity amongst them appears very weak. There is a weak inclination amongst Albanian immigrants to create community associations, and to trust and socialise with fellow-nationals whom they are not already close friends with (King and Mai 2009). According to research on Albanians in Italy, even when associations such as diaspora organisations, government and non-governmental organisations do exist, Albanian immigrants do not choose to take advantage of them (King and Mai 2008, 2009). Instead, they deal with issues such as finding employment, housing and further needs through close friends and colleagues (Melchionda 2003).

Another interesting aspect of this research is the fact that half of the interviewees contacted and took advantage of either the already established Greek community, or Greek acquaintances in the area they settled in. One participant stated that his CV was forwarded by a Greek colleague and friend. Another stated that she works for a Greek family in London, as the fact that she does not know English inhibits her from finding employment anywhere else.

Three participants mentioned that they contacted the Greek community through the church to find employment, and two of them did eventually find employment in this way. When Elpida was asked why she contacted the Greek community (through the church) to find employment and not the Albanian community she simply replied: ‘We Albanians are not very organised, the Greeks are’.

Another notable trend observed amongst families with young children was that, in most of these cases, men migrated first, found employment and housing, and women and children followed a few months later. For families with grown-up children, the children migrated first and the parents followed. In one instance, a father migrated with a teenage child to the UK, and the mother followed once housing and employment were established. Finally, it was observed that the younger, highly skilled and unemployed strategically migrated to the UK to do further higher education, and subsequently find employment according to their qualifications. This is something that was difficult or impossible in financially stricken Greece. Three out of the four young participants, aged between 26 and 31, engaged in such a tactic.

Finally, it can be noted that only two out of the ten participants in this study are below 30, while the rest range between 30 to 57 years old, some of whom might be considered of mature age. According to Labrianidis and Pratsinakis (2016), a substantial number of post-2010 emigrants left Greece after their forties, with the average age being 30.5 years old, whereas during the 2000s the average age was 28.3 and during the 1990s it was 24.3. Hence, we see older individuals who are expected to be settled, engaging in this onward move out of necessity, and with the difficulties this later-age move entails.

Conclusion

The Greek economic recession has had a tremendous and overall negative impact on both the native and the immigrant population in Greece. This study has demonstrated the harmful impact of the Greek recession on the Albanian immigrants, the largest immigrant group in the country. Albanians were particularly affected by the crisis, as they were principally employed in low-skilled jobs, often in sectors, such as construction or the restaurant trade, which were particularly susceptible to shocks in the business cycle. They were also deprived of any chance for upward labour mobility.

The findings of this study also illustrated the dynamic nature of Albanian migration. Albanian immigrants demonstrate that they are adaptable and are a dynamic part of the host societies of countries they have settled in. Having settled for years in Greece and overcoming the initial challenges and discrimination, they have recently been compelled to onward migrate to the UK due to new financial hardships. Considering the small sample of this study, some limitations of the present findings should be kept in mind; however, common experiences, problems, strategies and patterns are detected among all the participants.

Concerning the theoretical framework of onward migration, it is observed that the Albanian immigrants in this study onward migrated as a result of the same optimisation process that shaped the initial migration decision, namely the drive to find an improved economic status through access to employment (Nekby 2006). The main push factor was the economic recession, high unemployment and the lack of opportunities for the highly skilled younger generation. On the other hand, employment opportunities, education, familiarity with the

English language, and the multi-ethnic social environment constitute the main pull factors motivating movement from Greece to the UK. The initial migration to Greece and the accumulation of human and social capital facilitated this further move. Moreover, the newly acquired Greek citizenship which gave them access to the EU free movement space and thus to move multiple times within the EU, has played a key role in the decision and realisation of this onward move to the UK.

One of the most interesting findings of this study concerns their identities. These are not static but constantly renegotiated, as the experience of racism and prejudice against them has influenced their lives. Studying the Albanian onward migrants and the experiences of this super-mobile community can help us predict how notions of identity and belonging will be shaped in an increasingly interconnected world in the future. In this context, the emphasis should be given not on 'roots' of people but needs to take into consideration the 'routes' that they have taken (Colomer 2017). Although nowadays we might view these highly mobile people as representing an extreme example of mobile communities and multicultural identities, perhaps in the future it is likely to represent a more mainstream pattern rather than an exception (Friedman 2007). More research should be done on the relationship between mobility, identity, belonging, collective memories.

The post-2008 crisis and its consequences are still unfolding and we cannot grasp the final outcome and implications for Greece, and the impact on the individuals who left. Therefore, state policy should consider the implications of the crisis towards not only the native population but also migrants. By doing so, Greece could benefit from it by improving immigration policies. International cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination is paramount in achieving sustainable immigration policies that benefit all stakeholders, such as countries of origin and destination, and the migrants themselves.

Finally, in order to explore the Albanian onward migration phenomenon, we should study not only the role of income and employment, family economic strategies, and social networks, but also the structural differences between countries. I suggest that further research should be done to compare those Albanian immigrants who chose to remain in Greece, those who returned in Albania and those who onward migrated to the UK.

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