



**Functional Borders and Sustainable Security:
Integrating the Balkans in the European Union
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**Albanian Immigrants in Athens:
Some recent findings**

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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper is part of a broader project aiming at enhancing our socio-economic understanding of the migration dynamics on the basis of findings derived from empirical research. It comprises case studies of two Southern EU countries (Greece and Italy) that were formerly emigration societies and have recently transformed into migrants receiving economies. It includes also a post-communist migration source country, Albania. This WP hopes to provide adequate analytical tools capable of explaining the emerging socio-economic **and political** reality in the region and the ways in which it affects 'functional borders' and 'sustainable security'.

Security constitutes a catch-word in the contemporary political agenda. Policy management evolves around this concept. Migration challenges the prevailing security discourse on the demographic, economic, cultural, political level of contemporary societies. Migration constitutes a borders crossing action, while borders are not only meant as external but moreover as internal. The meaning of borders is as multifaceted and as controversial as that of security. Demarcating territorial or de-territorial borders, "territorializing" (Harvey 1989) one's own existence, is *the* human "social practice" (Giddens 1984) under which social interaction is regulated and certain aspects become legitimate. In a sense, demarcating borders is the practice that transforms a collectivity into society. Security alerts and borders crossing are shaped by the interaction between host with migrant populations; hence the need to be analyzed both from the viewpoint of the host societies and also from the point of view of migrants themselves. It follows that the analysis of integration and exclusion patterns concerning migrants constitutes a major field of investigation relating to security and borders issues.

This paper presents the initial findings of the fieldwork research on Albanian immigrants conducted in Athens between 12.9–26.11.2003. We used the 'snowball' sampling procedure, making use of informal networks. The 559 structured interviews with Albanian immigrants (questionnaires addressed to the head of the household) draw a broad picture of integration and exclusion experiences. Our aim is to investigate how the various perceptions of borders (both from the point of view of those that cross them but also from the point of view of those who remained immobile) are reflected in social practices, attitudes, values and behaviour. Understanding the formation of such social practices is a necessary precondition for formulating meaningful policy recommendations leading to functional and secure borders, conducive to economic prosperity.

In what follows we intend to present the actual data of the Albanian migrants' lives in Greece covering socioeconomic integration/exclusion patterns as well as cohesion and socio-political performance as an immigrant community. The areas particularly explored are living conditions and housing, employment, education, aspects of everyday life, regularization, access to welfare services, property acquisition, trips and remittances to Albania, Internet use, social contacts and participation in associations. Our findings contribute to the broader debate concerning the major issues triggered by the migration process and more

specifically the implications of migration for the receiving economy (and society) as well as for the welfare of immigrants themselves.

The challenges raised by migration become crystallized in several forms: concerns about an immigrant **takeover of the natives' jobs** and the beleaguering of the host **welfare state** are the most typical examples of «the fear of the Stranger (the 'Other') in the labor market» (Lyberaki 2000). On this matter, our findings corroborate earlier finding that immigrants from non-EU countries do the hardest, unhealthiest, and low status jobs with low qualifications. However, the low cost of immigrant labour (a characteristic of the early 1990s) is no longer the case. Wages have tended to increase steadily. Self-employment levels among immigrants appear to be on the increase while as time goes by migrants are accessing jobs that were perceived as “natives only” territory until recently. Furthermore, the social security system has benefited significantly by an immigrant population the big majority of which pays its social contributions.

Another growing concern that the advent of (illegal) immigrants in the 1990s brought before the political landscape of Southern-European countries, has been the strengthening of the **informal economy**. The informal economy, whose size is allegedly equivalent to one third of the GDP of Greece (Labrianidis& Lyberaki, 2001, p.98), may eventually jeopardise the strategic development objectives. In other words the abundant supply of cheap, *expendable* and low qualified¹ immigrant labor force “imprisons” the Greek economy in a labor-intensive development rationale, instead of facilitating a transition in the direction of quality and knowledge-intensive paradigms and *the upgrading of the working force* (Labrianidis&Lyberaki, 2001, p.148-155). However, it is commonplace in migration literature that the above fears of the 'Other' reflect, more than the Other itself, the structural deficits of the host labour market and society to benefit on a healthy and long-term basis from the immigrant labour offer (on the significance of host institutions and structures see P. Ireland's comparative case study on Turkish immigrants in Switzerland and France).

The particular contribution of our research is that the management of an 'immigration society'² as framed by host security alerts, can be reconfigured and rebalanced only if we also look at the security management (re)produced on the 'Other' side that complements the picture: within the migrant community. In this light, we explore the dynamics and co-ordinates of spaces of socioeconomic and political integration/ exclusion (like employment situation and the underground economy, and in general the of different functional significance pillars³ of the

¹ We have seen that the immigrant labour force is no longer cheap. It also stops being easily expendable since the illegal status of the largest immigrant population of Greece is being generally transcended; although the fear of lapsing into illegality revives every year during the renewal of their documents. As for its qualifications, although the upgrading of educational qualifications occurs at a low pace the prospects are promising looking at the next generation.

² The term 'immigration society' refers not only to immigrants but the host society as a whole. The wavering, delayed and fragmented political response of Greece towards immigration reminds us the German '*Gastarbeiter*' response on the issues of immigration and ethnic diversity, according to which “for decades Germany denied its status as an host immigrant country”(Modood, 1997:5).

³ The pillars of the Albanian immigrants socio-political sphere are their employment situation, their house strictly connected to family composition and marital status, and other fields upon and patterns via which they re-share and negotiate their common past and host society experience: tv

migrants' sociopolitical sphere) that all play a significant part towards the modernization of the polity and the labor market on the national, transnational/regional and consequently EU level.

In particular, it is through the exploration of the complicity of different factors towards the immigrants' integration/exclusion that our research reveals how social spaces are *territorialized* (rendered intelligible, meaningful-functional, legitimate and distinguishable-demarcated). The cultural, economic and sociopolitical factors that influence their position in the economy are heavily influenced by their past experiences in Albania (in terms of the size of the community they are coming from, the prevailing gender roles, the skills they have acquired, the prevailing work ethic to mention but a few). The above, together with the host labour market particularities (jobs segregation along gender and ethnic lines and regularization concerns) eventually give rise to hegemonic attitudes concerning what matters to them in a job, how to evaluate the personal and social features of different occupations rather than limiting their interest strictly in employment-related characteristics.

Our findings on the social sphere of the Albanian immigrants' lives are indicative of their integration in the host society and demonstrate the continuity of bonds with their homeland. The hegemonic family paradigm⁴ acts as a vehicle for integration but at the same time functions as a barrier for the smooth inclusion and cohesion of certain migrant groups into the host society. On the other hand, it appears that the main forms of interaction with the 'homeland' reflect a 'territorial' and family-based pattern (social contacts with friends/relatives, trips to Albania, telephone calls) instead of potentially more inclusive collectivities such as associations. Evidence on remittances to and property acquisition in Albania indicate strongly the primacy of family vis a vis the wider collectivity, while it is still early to reach any definitive conclusions relating to the length of stay (as intended length of stay is constantly revised in the light of accumulated experience).

2. OVERVIEW OF THE RELEVANT ISSUES: theoretical, empirical and policy aspects

There exists a renewed interest in migration in many OECD countries, partly as a result of the need to attract immigrant workers (in both high-skilled and low-skilled activities) and partly as a result of population ageing [OECD, 2004]. At the policy front however, the general trend has been in the direction of reinforcing controls both at the borders and internally. The latter are justified on security grounds (in the context of the fight against terrorism triggered by the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States) but also as means to address trafficking and the exploitation of human beings. As a result, the implications of migration for the host as well as for the sending economy and society acquire a new urgency.

and social contacts (friends/relatives), property in Albania, trips, telephones, exercise of electoral rights in Albania, internet and associations, and access to host State institutions (education, health, regularization mechanism).

⁴ The role division across gender lines at home, in employment and in the management of free time, as we shall view, also runs against the integration of the Albanian migrant group.

The discussion on the costs and benefits of migration for the receiving economy sits very uncomfortably between two extreme positions. On the one hand both the theoretical labour economics literature and the available empirical evidence clearly stress many positive implications for the host economy arising from the arrival of immigrants. These positive effects, however, do not result automatically and their incidence depends on the kind of immigrant labour attracted, as well as the specific features of the host economy. On the other hand, the political debate seems to be evolving on a completely different track. The dominant attitudes to migration in Europe tend to be characterized by prejudice and hostility. Interestingly, instances of ethnic hostility and racism are not related to the economic consequences of migration. Rather they reflect a deeper fear that the European *cultural model* is under attack (ways of life, identities and cultural foundations of social arrangements). What the inflow of immigrants into Europe has served to show is that “European institutions have grown up around a culture of immobility, and have been designed not only to support it but also to defend it against outsiders” [Burda in Boeri et al (eds.), 2002: p.152].

Economic consequences for the host country

When economic migrants have skills and are adaptable and responsive to the requirements and special features of the host economy, then undoubtedly their contribution to the increase of productivity of the economy will be positive. As they contribute to the creation of wealth and add to competitiveness, they also create jobs. Moreover, they lead to benefits by easing bottlenecks in specific segments of the labour markets. Thus, there would not appear to be reasons of disquiet that they would pose a burden, in net terms, to the welfare state. In other words, skilled and adaptable immigrants tend to contribute much, while they cost little.

If, alternatively, economic migrants are characterised by low skills then they may “burden” the host economy. If, in other words, they encounter insurmountable obstacles in adapting to the requirements of employers, then it is likely that the phenomena of marginalisation and wage discrimination will be intensified. This could in turn lead to significant social protection cost for the host society. The casual nature of work and impermanence can further inhibit their adjustment.

Do they create or usurp jobs?

In part the question whether immigration leads to an increase in jobs overall or if it leads to an equal job loss depends on whether immigrants' skills can give rise to a multiplier-like effect or not. Much depends, though, on the host economy: what its needs are, what type of work corresponds to its structures and momentum, what are its future needs for productive restructuring. Whether the final balance comes out positive or negative is not certain, but depends on a range of factors.

It depends not only on who they are, but also on how they are received

The answer to the above ultimately decides whether and by how much wages are compressed. If the immigration inflow has a multiplier effect on economic activity, then the demand for labour will also rise. However, the multiplier effect does not solely depend on the immigrants, but on their employers. If, in other words, businesses use the increase labour supply to defend an otherwise untenable market position then multiplier effects go away. In this case immigration does not act as a development springboard.

The implications for the sending economy and society constitute the other side of the economic effects of migration. It is often argued that, beside the obvious positive effects through remittances and the curtailment of unemployment, there are numerous invisible negative consequences. The weakening of human capital together with “brain drain” are the most often quoted examples of negative consequences. Are these claims well-founded?

It is a fact that those emigrating are neither the poorest nor the most desperate. In the majority of cases, the decision to emigrate is part of the household's overall strategy. That decision concerns the viability and welfare of the household as a whole. What evidence exists in the developing countries points that the emigration decision was associated with a visible increase in overall welfare for the entire household. This increase in welfare involves not only an increase in monetary resources, but also protection against sudden income fluctuations. In other words, emigration helps to reduce the household's exposure to risk due to external economic factors.

If the theoretical case on the advantages of migration for the host economy are somewhat cautious⁵, the available empirical evidence is much more straightforward.

On the issue of the supposedly adverse impact of foreign workers on the natives' wages different methodologies and different economies in question seem to produce slightly different results; what is important to bear in mind however, is that in all studied cases the negative impact, if any, tends to be very small (and hence manageable). EU estimates suggest that a 10 percent increase of foreign workers is likely to cause at most a 1 percent wage loss (if not a gain) to natives. Similar findings have been produced in the US context, where there is ample evidence that immigration generates a negligible pressure on wages (with a possible exception of wages at the bottom of the distribution)⁶. Now, as far as the displacement effect is concerned, it seems that the EU natives' chances of finding a job or exit unemployment are apparently unaffected by immigration. In the US evidence suggests that migration flows might trigger native population flows as a response [Boeri, 2002].

These are hardly surprising findings. The reason is that “Cassandra scenario” (involving job displacement and downward pressure on wage levels) assumes that everything else remains the same (the famous “other things being equal” or the *ceteris paribus* of much of economics analysis). But in the real world nothing remains the same, and thus it would be unrealistic to assume that the whole burden of adjustment is born exclusively by the labour market alone. In fact, technology as well as output composition (not to mention output volume) may change as a response to the inflow of migrants, thus leaving employment and

⁵ An extreme scenario trying to calculate the overall economic effect of free migration in the world economy (on the basis of 1977 data) suggests that entirely unrestricted migration, sufficient to equalise wages and the marginal productivity of labour across the 179 countries considered, could more than double global GDP: the change would have added between \$5 trillion and \$16 trillion to global income of \$8 trillion (cited in the Economist, May 6th, 2004). In the same line, Dani Rodrik has argued that even a modest freeing up of migration would create gains for the world economy far greater than those following the gains from liberalising trade.

⁶ This is the case only in a situation where natives and foreigners compete for the same labour market segment, a hypothesis that does not hold in the majority of cases.

wage levels unaffected. In the EU context in particular, where labour market flexibility is relatively weak⁷ (at least by US standards) there is a high probability that immigrants contribute to an increase in jobs and more efficient production solutions because they supply a flexible labour pool.

So, the economic argument in favour of freer migration is very strong. Much of its intellectual opposition is based on a fallacy, known as the “wage fund fallacy”⁸. It rests on the notion that there exists a given and fixed amount that employers can spend and will spend on labour. Every additional worker thus “crowds out” someone else who would have been employed otherwise. As Tinios (2004) succinctly argues, in the less sophisticated versions the effect is directly on workers or hours worked, while in the more sophisticated versions it may operate through the wage bill (by eroding wage levels). These arguments are neither theoretically nor empirically founded. On the contrary, the available evidence stresses the potential benefits from migration.

What is important to bear in mind, however, is that the degree to which migrants contribute to growth, prosperity and job creation is closely linked to the degree of acceptance they enjoy in host societies. In other words, immigrants contribute more positively when the host societies actively accept their presence (and contribution) [Papademetriou, 2003]. Yet, the fact remains that popular perceptions of the costs of immigration are difficult to dislodge. This is clearly the case when (real or imaginary) economic frictions between natives and migrants are exacerbated by non-economic factors such as fear of terrorism and clashes of culture.

3. MIGRATION IN GREECE: facts and policies

Large-scale immigration to Greece has only become an issue recently. For the greater part of the twentieth century, Greece was predominantly a country people emigrated *from*. However, there was a gradual reversal in the last three decades, with *net* inflows being registered. The inward flows in the 70s and 80s consisted of returning Greek guest workers, members of the Greek Diaspora from Egypt or elsewhere, as well as political exiles from the time of the Civil War of the 1940s.

This pattern was disrupted by a wave of ethnic Greeks from the former USSR (mainly the Southern Soviet republics) and Albania. Gradually, Greece was transformed into a migrant-destination country. This process took off after the events of 1989 in the former socialist countries. The great majority of migrants come from neighbouring Balkan countries, though waves of economic migrants and asylum seekers have also been arriving from Eastern Europe, the former USSR, the Middle East and several Asian and African countries. In some cases (especially early on in the process), Greece was a stepping-stone on their migration route westward; increasingly though migrants see it in terms of long-term residence or even permanent settlement.

⁷ the low geographical and functional mobility of natives.

⁸ This point is made by Tinios, 2004

In 2001 the estimated stock of foreigners living legally in Greece was 762.200, amounting to approximately 7% of the total population [OECD, 2004]. Ten years earlier their share was a modest 1,6% of the population. It is further estimated that out of the total foreign population, 413.000 foreign born persons entered the country for employment reasons (almost 55%). The following table summarises the picture.

Table 1: First results of the 2001 population census, Greece (thousands)

Stock of foreigners by nationality	Total	of which entered Greece for employment purposes
Albania	438,0	270,7
Bulgaria	35,1	27,5
Georgia	22,9	11,1
Romania	22,0	17,3
United States	18,1	3,7
Russian Federation	17,5	7,8
Cyprus	17,4	5,0
Other	191,1	100,1
Total	762,2	413,2
Of which: women	346,6	168,6

Source: National Statistical Service of Greece, Population Census 2001, cited in OECD, 2004:204

In many ways, the Greek experience has much in common with the other Southern EU member states (Portugal, Spain and Italy). Apart from their similar socio-economic characteristics and similar economic evolution, Southern Europe shares similar experiences of migration, to an extent that allows reference to a specific Southern European immigration model (King, 2000)⁹. Many of the characteristics and trends of contemporary global migration clearly apply in the Greek case. First, the East-West dimension dominates. Second, most of the immigrants are clandestine, at least initially. Third, the new forms of mobility are also evident: transit, temporary, seasonal and cross-border migration, as well as “tourists- workers” and sex migrants. Finally, geographic proximity and cultural or historical links with countries of origin and migrant populations (in terms of religion, ethnicity, etc.) can also be identified.

In terms of geographical location, the greatest number is concentrated in Attica (the Athens area) and secondarily in Central Macedonia (Thessaloniki). A key fact is that the two large urban centres attract the vast majority of migrants. Out of those who applied for legalisation in 1999, 65% come from Albania, and a further 18% from Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Poland and Georgia. This concentration signals the overwhelming role of proximity in migration to Greece – a factor which further allows and facilitates ‘circular migration’ and seasonal migration patterns. In any case, the overwhelming majority comes from the Balkans (76,4 per cent), and most notably from Albania (65 per cent). It is important to note that Albania has dense commercial and investment flows with Greece. The particularity of the Greek experience among the rest of Southern Europe lies on the fact that not only the majority of immigrants come neighbouring countries, but also that, apart from

⁹ In the last three decades, Southern European economies were incorporated in the ‘developed block’. Hence, the post-war ‘development rift’ shifted to the south: this imagined line, from Istanbul to the Straits of Gibraltar, passing from Cyprus, Crete, Sicily and Sardinia could be characterised today as Europe’s “Rio Grande” (King 2000).

the evident issue of geographic proximity, there seem to exist both historical and contemporary linkages in the region, which inevitably influence migration trends. The concentration on the Albanian element distinguishes sharply migration to Greece from the equivalent phenomenon in the rest of Southern Europe. Close links between Greece and Albania (flows of goods, services, capital and people) combined with the size of these flows (non-negligible in national macro terms for both countries) form the picture of a two-way relationship where what happens in Albania feeds back to Greece in the sphere of the economy, the society and in international relations. In other words, from the point of view of growth dynamics, Greece and Albania constitute elements of a closed circuit.

At this point we shall depict the patterns through which the migrant labour has been institutionally managed by the Greek polity. We first make an overview of the immigration legalization policies (1991-2004) for they constitute the decisive variable that determines the access of the immigrants to further services and renders them visible social policy targets.

Following the German «Guestworker/Gastarbeiter» approach and its myth about the temporary sojourn of immigrant workers which German governments held for decades (Modood&Werbner 1997, Bryant 1997, Castles&Miller 1998), Greece kept denying for years its transformation into an immigration country (Fakiolas, 1997, p.4). Most indicative of this tendency has been the police rationale of the Act 1975/1991 titled «entry-exit, stay, employment, deportation of foreigners, recognition procedure of foreigner refugees and other provisions» (Georgoulas, 2001, p.206) that cast its shadow on immigrants' lives in Greece practically for the whole last decade. In this law predominantly concerned with the strict control of the foreign labour inflows and the penalisation and deportation of those that illegally enter and stay in Greece, there was no room for integration policy, as instead was the case with the equally tightening immigration regime of Western European countries. The humanist and social impasse created led (with significant delay to other Southern European countries: Spain, Portugal, Italy) to the two Presidential Decrees that regulated respectively the two phases of the first Greek regularisation programme in 1997-8. The failure of this first regularization (low regularization rate) did not lead to legislation proper until 2001. The 2910/2001 Act on «the admission and residence of foreigners in Greece and the acquisition of Greek nationality through naturalisation» and the modification of some of its provisions by the Act 3013/2002 constitute the main pieces of legislation for immigration in Greece. Despite the facilitation of family reunion (the requirement of legal residence is decreased to 2 years from 7) and the decentralization attempted by the submission of applications in municipalities and prefectures and not the Ministry of Public Order, the deficits of this legislation have been quite a few. They range from the very sharing of the regularization process amongst three services of the State with vaguely defined domains (municipality, periphery, prefecture) and inadequate coordination with each other, the Ministry of Interior and organizations like the Greek Employment and Labor Organization (OAED), the qualitative/quantitative manning and infrastructures of these services together with their number, to the tight renewal period of only one year. The latest decree of 27-10-2003, on the one hand, responds in the demand for a longer intermediate period between the renewals of work permits by

extending it into two years and, on the other, raises the required days of paid work into 300 (from 150).

As far as social and economic integration is concerned, the 2001 Act further «lays down the conditions for the immigrants' rights and social obligations (9year compulsory schooling for children, compulsory insurance to be taken out by employers, better access to courts, social services and health care)» and links immigration to the labour market via the OAED yearly reports destined to evaluate the needs and vacancies of the labour market and set quota for work permits. While employers face now heavier penalties for illegal employment of immigrants. Such measures though are useless if the respective authorities set to control employment issues (the Labour Inspectorate) are not substantially restructured. A significant evolution on the planning level constitutes the recently established Immigration Policy Institute (IMEPO), which is responsible for conducting surveys and studies in the immigration field and implementing several aspects of the integration.

Of further significance are the National Action Plan (NAP) measures pointing, among other issues, towards immigration integration policies under the framework of aligning EU countries with the employment and social inclusion goals set in the EU summit of Lisbon. The more particular Action Plan for “the social integration of migrants for the 2002-2005 period” introduced by the Greek government addresses the issues of the adult immigrants' qualifications gap, better chances of entry into the labour market and other social support services. Indicative goals it provides for are «a) the creation of training and information centres for migrants and administrators, b) initiatives aimed at promoting better access to training (e.g. language and vocational training courses), c) improvement of access to health care for migrants and d) the creation of emergency centres to assist migrants in situations of distress» (OECD 2004). The education policy sphere has the longest institutional history of ‘integrating’ the foreigner immigrants in Greek society. Under the «compensatory/assimilationist rationale» governing the initiatives of the 1980-1995 period, the «Welcoming Classes» and the «Tutorial Classes»¹⁰ were enacted in 1983 as supplementary classes inside mainstream public schools providing repatriated Greek and foreigner pupils with additional educational assistance so as to be placed equally among Greek pupils in ‘regular classes’. The modification of the existing Tutorial and Welcoming Classes into Intercultural Classes and the introduction of «Intercultural Education Schools» (IES) under the new Act 2413/1996 aimed to bring in a normative multicultural rationale of respect to ‘particularity’. Although these evolutions constitute a significant institutional basis for the take off towards multicultural education, the provision for establishment of public IES, as Damanakis succinctly argues, may practically serve as a ‘multicultural’ cloak for abandoned ‘segregated schools’ (Damanakis, 2001, p.79-87, 316). A recent positive development on the education field constitutes the interactive collaboration of the “Centre of Intercultural Education (KeDA) of the University of Athens” with teachers of Tutorial Classes of certain schools of Athens that is preoccupied with the production of teaching material and methods for foreign-language speaking children.

¹⁰ Welcoming Classes, *Ôaksis Ypodochis* (ÔÛîâéò Ôðîäî÷Èðò) and Tutorial Classes, *Frontistiriaka Tmimata* (ÔñîîôéóóçñéáêÛ ÔîÈîáóá) (Damanakis, 2001, p.57).

4. ALBANIANS IN ATHENS: LIVING CONDITIONS AND HOUSING

Evidence from our empirical research on Albanian immigrants in Athens suggests that housing and living conditions present a constantly changing picture. There do not exist ghetto situation neither there are emerging non-go areas in the urban landscape of the capital. Partly due to the phenomenon of the vertical differentiation of residence status (as opposed to the horizontal segregation evidenced elsewhere in Europe), locals and immigrants inhabit the same neighborhoods and the same residence blocks. For immigrants their home is the prime site of hospitality, while they seem to be reluctant to express dissatisfaction with the quality of their residence. Furthermore, our findings reveal a close link between the length of stay in Athens and the quality of residence. Initially people settle as guests with friends and later on they move to their own place. Since the incidence of home ownership remains rare, mobility prevails, allowing individuals and families to move to better homes when they can afford them. And last, but not least, our findings lend credibility to earlier findings in Thessaloniki, as they reveal a clear improvement of residence characteristics over time (more space, better condition and higher floor).

The space of residence is one of the first locations controlled by the immigrants. 'The home', constitutes one of the initial social spaces of the immigrants' existence, the significance of which can hardly be overstressed. The housing conditions are to a certain extent indicative of the immigrants' socioeconomic integration in the host context. Moreover, since the house is a site of social control, it represents a shared space of *meaning* and *trust*¹¹, a space that people demarcate in order to render identifiable, familiar and secure. It follows therefore that the discussion of the immigrants' integration that rotates around living conditions and housing is further indicative of the 'security' management from the immigrant population.

In certain respects the cultural management of space in the country of origin is reproduced in the new residential territory. For example, the **hospitality** the Albanian immigrants offer to their guests (in this case, the interviewers)¹² reflects the mountain laws of the Kanun on escorting the guest up to the limits of one's village and on the significance of the guest in the Albanian culture. While it simultaneously constitutes one of the main self-identification narratives the Albanian immigrants **perform** and strive to demarcate their collective 'we' in response to negative stereotypes about them.

Interestingly, the discussion of housing problems in the interviews has revealed a clear **reluctance on the part of immigrants to admit to problems** or to express dissatisfaction with the quality of their residence. Recurring answers of the kind «we are fine here, no problem» may indicate two things: First, that housing

¹¹ See Foucault on the transformation of meanings into recognisable by everyone (and therefore uncontested) *knowledge*. Foucault, M. (1991), 'Discipline and Punish: the birth of prison', London: Penguin. On the links of trust and responsibility with distance and 'territory' see Giddens, A. (1990), *The Consequences of Modernity*, Cambridge: Polity.

¹² Their escorting you after you've left their home up to the place where they regarded their jurisdiction, 'village', ended (that be your car or the nearby train station) or their offering everything they had in their house.

conditions are seen as acceptable or amenable. And second, that immigrants are anxious not to differ, or better 'to be regarded as equal'. All things taken into consideration, however, it should be stressed that half of the respondents answered that they do not face any housing problems.

Linked to the housing conditions is the issue of perceived criminality, the 'imagined borders' (widely held views of certain areas as dodgy) with which the native population has demarcated areas of Athens (Harvey 1989, Giddens 1990, Psimmenos 1995, 1998) in order to conceptualize oneself before the immigrants and sustain a certain 'social class' balance. There is evidence that immigrants adopt the 'foreignerization' of criminality discourse, but there are also more critical views: «There are a lot of foreigners here...there is police...not that I have any problems with the people. On the contrary I feel sorry for them...They are poor people like us». As far as rent levels are concerned, nearly half fluctuate between 201-300 euros, while an important 37% is below 200 euros. It should be added that some of the low-rent paying arrangements involve the additional supply of cleaning services. The rent constitutes a significant financial burden for the 40% approximately of the respondents whose household income is up to 899 euros (the latter comprising the 34.2% of the sample's population). Overcrowding is a minor issue for over half of our respondents and applies only to large families (of households with 5-7 members -the latter comprising the 30.5% of the sample).

Although obviously the neighbourhood affects housing conditions, and there are areas with higher immigrant density, it is clear that there are **no ghetto situations**. Our findings suggest that there is a wide distribution of immigrants throughout Athens, although a large number (37.4%) reside in the centre of Athens. Secondly, housing problems reported do not refer to any neighbourhood in particular; their incidence is not linked to the immigrants' density. The characteristics of the neighbourhood play a minor role in determining the quality of life perception of our respondents. More important is the existence of relatives/friends in that area¹³. Having family/friends nearby widens the boundaries of their social presence.

An interesting finding is the mobility and **improvement of housing conditions over time**. While clearly the incidence of home ownership is low (it is slightly higher among Vorioepirotos demonstrating the effect of institutional borders set onto the migrants' integration routes, while self-employed people are more likely to buy property than employees) there is a clear improvement in housing conditions linked to the length of stay in Athens. It appears that the lack of property ties induces greater mobility, which in turn proves beneficial for those concerned. Only 18% of our sample population remained immobile, while people do not move frequently (see Table below). Most of our respondents have changed houses during their stay while the move was made to a bigger house and/or to a

¹³ The people arguing the following have their relatives/friends living in the same area. «Nea Ionia is nice. People here are very good. [Nea Ionia started off as a refugee settlement/ another such area is Kaissariani]». «They trust us here. They let us their house keys when they're going away, they love us...While in the beginning they did not want foreigners, now one Greek neighbour told me, for example, 'if you have an emergency, knock on my door even if it's 02.00 in the night'». «We have been in this neighborhood for 13 years now. Although the area has a bad reputation, it's fine. We never had any problem here».

better house (often on higher floors). The above is indicative of upward socioeconomic mobility.

Table 2: *How long do they live in current residence?*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
this year - last year	105	20,6	21,2
2 years now	79	15,5	16,0
last 3-5 yrs	193	37,9	39,0
6 yrs and more	118	23,2	23,8
Total	495	97,2	100,0
Missing: guests	14	2,8	
Total	509	100,0	

With regard to the **household equipment**, most of the households have central heating, 1 in 3 owns a car, 83% have mobile phone and nearly half of them have conventional phones. The overwhelming majority has tv(s), fridge and washing machine, while half of the households have video/dvd and stereo. The incidence of PC ownership is low (7.3% of the total). So the general picture is not substantially different from the situation characterizing the natives. The only two exceptions are the conventional phones and the very few dishwashers. The latter is indicative of the prevailing cultural values rather than lack of financial means.¹⁴

5. EMPLOYMENT

The role of employment for economic immigrants can hardly be overstressed. Similarly, employment characteristics constitute the main avenue for (smooth or otherwise) social integration and economic success. The objective of this section is to examine the dynamics of integration into and exclusion from the Greek labour market concerning migrant men and women.

Finding a job is the obvious first step for labour market integration. As anticipated, the employment participation rate among our sample is high, particularly so among men (96,1%). Women also display a considerably higher employment participation rate compared with Greek women (65% compared to approximately 40% respectively). Interestingly, economic inactivity appears to be a “luxury” some women are capable of affording, although they used to be economically active earlier (in their home country and/or in Greece at an earlier time). Taking into account the higher employment participation rates among Albanian immigrants compared to the native population, an interesting analogy emerges nevertheless. Women’s employment participation rate lags by 31% from those of men in both the immigrants and the natives alike. The above suggests that there are some similarities in the sphere of gender roles and shared values that produce an unequal access to employment among men and women both Greek and Albanian.

Table 3: *Current employment (males and females)*

	Men	Percent	Women	Percent
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¹⁴ The phrases often accompanying this finding «the woman does the dishes» «we do not trust them [the dishwashers], we prefer hands» suggests that not having this particular household equipment is more culturally than financially related.

Industry, primary + tertiary sector	101	30,5	Industry, waitress, kitchen maid, primary sector	21	11,9
Business, self-employment, other similar to native's paid work	81	24,5	Self-employment, office employee, other	34	19,3
Constructions sector	136	41,1	Domestic services	60	34,1
Unemployed	13	3,9	Unemployed/housewives	61	34,7
Total	331	100,0	Total	176	100,0

Our respondents were for the most part paying social security contributions. Again some differences were apparent between men and women. While 88,4% of men paid regularly social security contributions, the respective percentage of women is much lower (by 22%). This is partly attributable to the kind of jobs that women do, jobs closely associated with service provision to the households, activities firmly within the realm of the gray economy.

The main occupations for men are waged employment in construction (41,1%), in manufacturing and tertiary sectors (30,5%) and a surprisingly high percentage in self-employment or business-owner categories or paid work that usually falls outside the reach of immigrants (24,5%)¹⁵. Women work primarily in domestic services (34,1%) and manufacturing together with restaurants and cafes (11,9%). Again the share of self-employment together with office employment appears to be relatively high, reaching 19,3%. The above, compared with earlier findings elsewhere, suggest that Albanian immigrants are slowly entering professions and types of employment (self-employment) that were previously virtually non-existent for them. In other words, it seems that they increasingly become more similar to their hosts.

This, however, is a difficult and multifaceted process full of achievements but also set-backs and cautious steps. Indicative in this respect is the finding that most of our self-employed or respondents try to camouflage their identity in their everyday economic activities. This applies also to the experience of Albanians doing other "non-migrants dominated" jobs. An Albanian woman working as a primary school teacher reported «even though I had a [Greek] university degree with 9 [excellent], when I said I am Albanian they used to tell me 'ok we will call you' and of course they never did...Finally I got a job in a small private school...In order not to stir the children's curiosity I have adopted a Greek name". The fact that 26.3% of the sample's population is being called by a Greek name in their work is

¹⁵ One out of three self-employed or business-owners are Vorioepiotes. The goods/services their enterprises produce are mainly related to the third sector and the constructions sector: little haberdasheries and kiosks, street market merchants and vendors, other small enterprises (like furniture refurbishing, textile repairs, shoemaker, buildings cleaning), small take-away food shops and cafes, hair-dresser's, construction works related enterprises, and a paper producing factory. With regard to the other "no migrants dominated" jobs that immigrants from Albania do, indicative are the following: cooks in restaurants and employees in fast-food shops, bakeries and a patisserie, salesmen (in street markets, other), saleswomen (furniture, clothes, other), craftsmen, electricians, a plumber, garage employees, drivers, doorkeepers, hairdressers, a nurse, a civil servant, a private primary school and a tutorial class (Frontistirion) teacher.

indicative of the native's urge to make the Albanian more plausible (less Albanian) before his eyes. The Albanian has become the alter ego for the Greeks; he is what they no longer need to be.

Stability of employment is another characteristic of our respondents' work experience. Only 9% of our sample experienced job change over the past 12 months, while there appears to exist a three-years cycle in which a fair share of the immigrant population moves jobs (a quarter of the total). Continuity and stability need not necessarily indicate high level of satisfaction from the current job. In fact, among the most prevalent occupations (construction for men and domestic services for women) we encountered the highest dissatisfaction percentages. Why, then, this is not immediately translated into greater mobility?

Family obligations discourage most of the construction workers from seeking a different kind of employment (2 out of three respondents). Although they consider their income adequate, they feel highly insecure as far as their future employment prospects are concerned. Indeed, they often report that they cannot predict what kind of situation will characterize the post-Olympics labour market landscape. Therefore, they prefer to stick with the job they already have, so as to minimize future unemployment risks. For women, a higher percentage of whom do not pay social security contributions, the reasoning is slightly different. They stress the fact that «the money is good» and also that they have developed personal relations with their employer/s. In addition, representative of the social perception of the supply of domestic services within the prevailing culture is what we reported in our interviews: «it's not proper work, if you work for houses you know». For both men and women, the fact that somebody (a friend or relative) vouched for them and recommended them for their current job appears to be a string deterrent for not quitting. And last, but not least, come the solidarity links men develop in the construction sphere, a terrain with dense concentration of Albanian workers. After all it is no coincidence that the members of the most active associations of Albanians are employed in the construction nexus.

We have also detected a "pride in work ethic" especially amongst construction workers. Regardless of their current level of satisfaction with their job they suggest that «we are here to work... and a job is a job» and «I should not say that I do not like this job. After all, it is work...a craft I've learned». This pride in work narrative is an effort to construct a collective 'We' against negative stereotypes. Work has become one of *the* places where the Albanian immigrant community retrieves its dignity and re-narrates its identity.

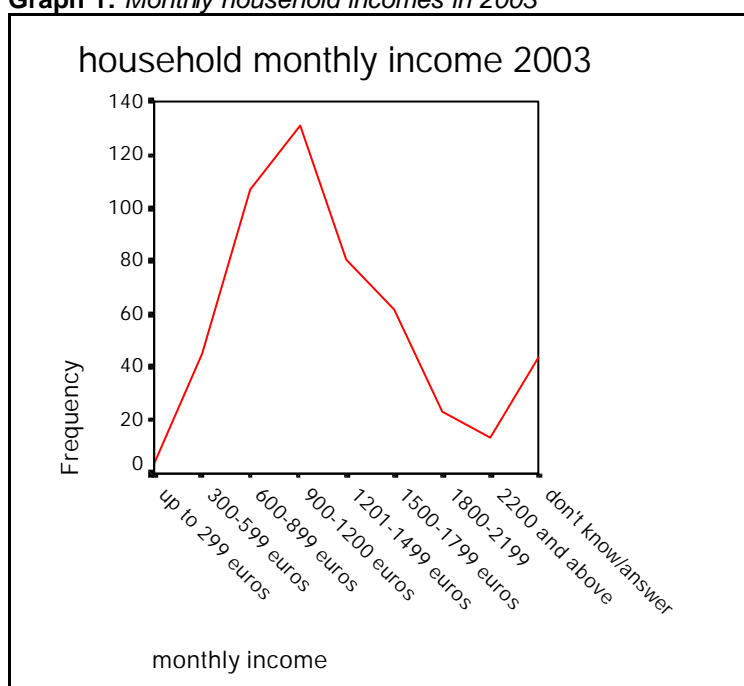
Another issue that concerns the total of Albanian immigrants and further discourages them from seeking work is related with institutional borders: they cannot afford to lose a day's work not so much due to foregone income but mainly due to foregone stamps (prerequisites for legalization).

So, apart from the revealed demand for specific jobs in the Greek economy, a number of characteristics of immigrants themselves contribute to this particular jobs distribution. Such characteristics refer to gender roles and the prevailing stereotypes in the construction of a collective identity. The grand picture, however, is one of clear advancement at least at the personal level. In spite of concentration in particular occupations, there is evidence of entering new

occupations and types of work, the most important being the self-employed option.

Turning to the issue of household income the picture drawn from our sample suggests that approximately one fourth of our respondents fall within the 900 to 1200 euros monthly family income as an average of the year 2003. In their own words they “make ends meet”, while a group representing nearly 35% of the sample report monthly family income over (or –two thirds of which- substantially over) 1200 euros. Quite a few also suggested that making ends meet has become harder nowadays partly due to the euro introduction and also as a result of growing needs on their part.

Graph 1: Monthly household incomes in 2003



The main vehicle for getting a job is via friends and relatives, while newspapers advertisements also surface quite prominently. Interestingly, immigrant associations appear to be completely insignificant in the job seeking process.

Table 4: Job searching patterns

How did you find your job?	Frequency
State organizations	7,2
Private organizations	4,1
Alone	24,7
Asked friends/relatives	77,3
Immigrant associations	1,0
Newspaper ads	20,6
n.a.	3,1

This labour market situation is reflected in the reported intentions concerning the length of intended stay in Greece. Most of our respondents suggest that they would like to stay permanently. This finding is different from the respective picture in earlier research (in Thessaloniki and elsewhere) and may be indicative both of the expectations but also of the commitments they have entered. The prime and most important factor tying them up in Greece seems to be the existence of

children and considerations relating to their education and future prospects. Obviously, other things matter too, such as family or property in Albania.

6. EDUCATION and language skills

Education constitutes one of the main vehicles, apart from employment, for improving one's employment chances and widening the boundaries of their social presence. Education refers to two main aspects. The first is the level of skills and educational achievement of immigrants. And the second is their participation in continued education schemes (or lifelong learning, according to the dominant EU terminology).

The question of skill composition of our sample is crucial both on economic performance and policy grounds. In line with earlier findings on Albanians in Greece, the skill and education picture emerging from our sample is one in which Albanians are educated and have acquired skills prior to their arrival in Greece. 63,8% of men and 65,2% of women had finished 12-year school education and technical school (where they trained for specific professions). A high percentage of people (15% of men and 13,4% of women) hold a university degree (from Albania) or a vocational school degree (again from Albania). Elementary school education level applies to 1,2% of men and 10,4% of women. An important qualification is the number of foreign languages spoken. Indicative of the overall educational qualifications situation is the finding that 4,1% of our respondents (here we refer to adults only) use regularly the Internet.

The relatively high educational level notwithstanding, there exists a gap between qualifications on the one hand and type of job performed on the other. This is particularly the case with university degree holders.

The other side of the qualifications picture is the continuation of learning and skills acquisition. Interestingly, the percentage of attendance to any kind of continued education scheme is higher among immigrants compared to Greeks. The percentage of immigrants attending or having attended educational courses over the last year is 6.7% (the respective figure for over 25 year old Greeks is around 1%, the lowest in the EU). Younger people, mostly in the 18-24 age cohorts, are more likely to attend a course. The existence of family constitutes an education-enhancing factor. 85.3% of the immigrants that attend a course are people living with their family. Most of women and men that do attend educational courses are either self-employed or do jobs similar to the natives. Also, women in the house cleaning and domestic help lines of activity are more likely to attend courses than other people with more fixed hours of work. Probably, apart from the obvious advantage of flexible time schedules, women attend language courses due to the fact that their jobs are more "human contact intensive".

The majority of the adult respondents speaks and has good understanding of the Greek language while less are those who write it equally well. Most learn it in the context of work and via television.

Table 5: *Patterns of learning host language for adult respondents*

How did (do) you learn Greek? (3 choices)	
Via children	22,3

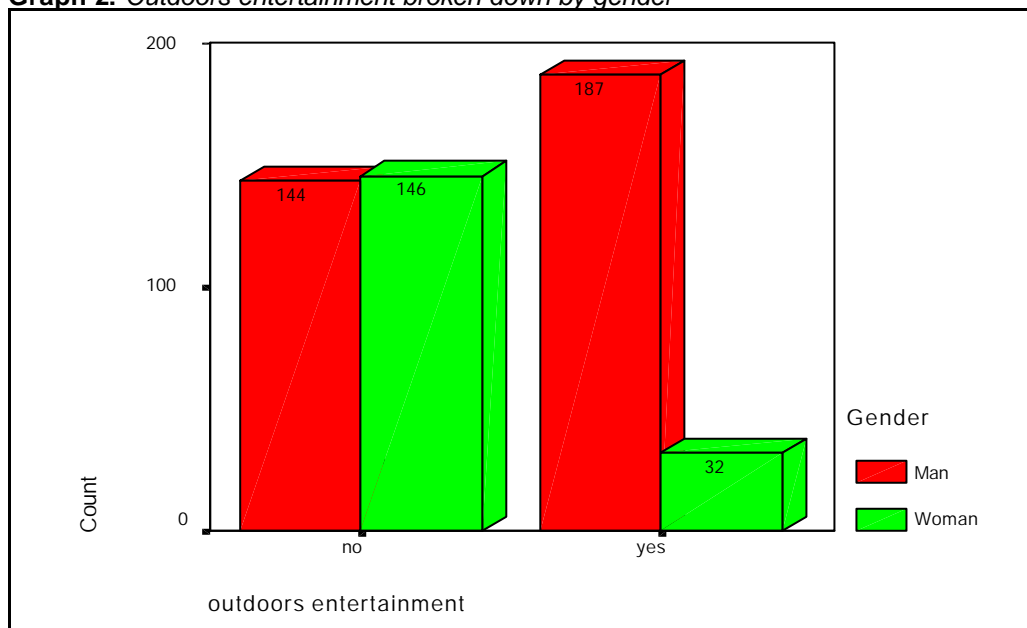
Via tv	50,0
Greek press	5,3
In the context of work	68,5
Other (courses, dictionaries)	17,9
n.a.	1,1

7. Quality of everyday life and networks.

The constituents of everyday life reflect the utilisation of free time, and in particular the access to several channels of goods/services and networks enhancing or obstructing the participation of individual immigrants in the host society. Furthermore, they reveal the nexus of connections and linkages with their home country.

Free time activities are dominated by TV watching and visiting friends/relatives for both men and women. Women are responsible for cooking, housework and the children (if any), they tend to read slightly more, and generally are more involved in indoor activities than men. The uneven distribution of outdoors entertainment between men and women testifies to distinct gender roles.

Graph 2: *Outdoors entertainment broken down by gender*



The overwhelming majority of Albanian immigrants watches mainly Greek TV. TV is *the* vehicle of Albanians' participation and familiarization with local politics and social issues. It is via the Greek television channels that they acquire significant amounts of local knowledge and language skills so as to facilitate their interaction with the native population. They also watch Albanian channels, but to a lesser extent. This should not mean that their bonds with Albania are loosened. It rather indicates that they develop new ways of seeing their homeland familiar reality within the lens of the more recently acquired experience in Greece. As a respondent put it «We, now, see things there [in Albania] with a critical eye. Migration is a big school». 40.9% of immigrants from Albania in our sample

usually vote for Albanian elections while 72.1% report that they would like to be able to vote in Greek elections.

The development of a distinct political culture though is still very immature. This is reflected to the very low participation rates in associations and trade unions. 1 in 4 does not want or appears uncertain on whether to vote, while newspapers reading remains moderate. They keep in touch with socio-political developments in Albania mainly via relatives and friends and not via networks of collective character (associations, internet chat-rooms, Albanian tv and newspapers)¹⁶. Remittances to Albania are sent via “informal means” and are means for family sustenance (the 82.9% declares so, see Table 6) rather than for investments purposes¹⁷. It also appears that the amount of remittances is declining over time.

Table 6:

How did (do) you send money to Albania?	Personally	21,7
	Relatives	47,6
	Friends	31,6
	Banks	18,4
	Agencies	1,9
	Post	3,8
	Other	1,4
	n.a.	,5
For what reasons did you send money?	Sustaining family	82,9
	Buying land	6,2
	Investments	7,6
	Other	13,3

8. ACCESS TO SERVICES

The immigrants' access to services constitutes a crucial indicator with regard to their participation (integration/exclusion) in the host civil society. Here we focus on access to health (welfare) services, banking and the labor directorates of prefectures and municipalities of the Greek capital where their legalization process is being conducted.

The general picture is of an immigrant group that uses without problems the existing health facilities. The big majority goes to the state hospitals associated with their social security fund while a not negligible percentage goes to private doctors.

The fact that the majority of the Albanian immigrants (the 74.1%) have a bank account demonstrates their integration in the mainstream modes of transaction. Furthermore, an indication of the significant role the Albanian speaking depositors play in the Greek economy, is that in various branches of one of the biggest banks in Greece - National Bank of Greece - the foreign languages in the cash points are two: English and Albanian. The market, after all, is the most objective indicator that could describe the integration of Albanian immigrants in the Greek economy.

¹⁶ With regard to the significance of Internet use, trips and telephone calls to Albania for the Albanian community see Appendix 5: No 3, 4, 5 respectively. For newspaper reading see Appendix 5: Table 3.

¹⁷ See Appendix 5: No 6

If the economy votes with its feet, this is not the case with the bureaucracy. The main problem of the immigrants' civil life (and their life in the host society in general) is their legalization. Nearly 70% of them report problems in the legalization process¹⁸. One fourth of the permit holders declaring that they have solved these problems are either Vorioepiotes (that have to renew their documents every three and not every year or 6 months like the rest) or those that decided to pay a lawyer to deal with the endless requests (13,1%). The late, difficult and fragmented immigrant regularization programs (the Greek regularization process of immigrants commenced quite late, in 1997-8) have affected not only immigrants' lives but also the host economy, «the things you see we bought [furniture, electrical equipment etc], we bought them only after we started sorting our papers [documents/permits]. We were afraid to buy things [before]».

9. SOCIAL CONTACTS + ASSOCIATIONS

Social contacts underlie the formation of social attitudes and social outcomes alike. Here we analyse two specific factors that affect to a certain extent the frequency and character of social contacts with natives, co-nationals and other immigrants. These factors constitute demarcating 'practices' that have reached a level of 'consolidation-fixation' in the collective imaginary.

Immigrants from Albania that live with their family (nuclear families) are more likely to have frequent social contacts with natives, compared to those living alone. This indicates the significance of family for 'acceptance' in the Greek society (Psimmenos 1995, Kasimati 2000). Family is also one of the main narratives helping to form a bond between the Albanian immigrant community and more or less affects the frequency of social contacts. It has not been uncommon in our interviews for people to connect criminality with unmarried people living alone or with friends (especially men). Indicative of the importance of marriage in the Albanian population is that marriage appears to be a prime objective for men as well as for women. A 28-year-old man that recently lapsed into illegality (expired work permit) after 8 years of stay in Greece, in an attempt to evaluate his migration experience reported that «Had I not moved from Albania, I would have progressed [in my life]. Now, and unmarried I am ...».

Table 7: Families

Respondents living	Frequency	Percent
with partner, children and/or other relatives	355	69,7
with parents and/or other relatives (brothers, sisters)	42	8,3
with other relatives and/or friends	61	12,0
alone	45	8,8
Total	503	98,8
Missing	6	1,2
Total	509	100,0

The immigrants' *types of employment* in the host country have created different opportunities and routes of social integration for men and women: construction

¹⁸For the particular problems they face in the document renewal process see Appendix 6: No 1

workers associate more with co-nationals while immigrants in more prestigious jobs are *slightly more* likely to have often than infrequent or rare social contacts with natives. The majority of women (house-cleaners, domestic helpers) has more infrequent contacts with co-nationals and might develop friendship with their employers, though their circle is smaller. In the words that a respondent working as a primary school teacher reasons her infrequent social contacts with Albanians, «in order to have Albanian friends, you have to have a job similar to theirs. How else are you going to find Albanian friends?»

The “pride in work”, one of the main migration narratives of Albanians in certain occasions inhibits the participation in associations. «We don't do *these things* [associations participation], we are here to work». There appears to be a ‘denial’ of political identity. Denial of political identity has become a symbol for keeping the Albanian immigrants out of exposure, *out of sight* (Psimmenos 1995, Kaplani 2001) and therefore out of trouble¹⁹. It is no coincidence that the most popular associational activity to the immigrant community (the cultural activities occurring once/twice a year) lacks socio-political character.

It would be a mistake to view immigrants from Albania as a homogenous whole. Apart from differences arising from distinct geographical and ethnic backgrounds, we have noticed that the institutionally framed perceptions in Greece concerning Albanians are contributing to the emergence of a separate category: the *Vorioepiotes*. The latter enjoy higher acceptance from the Greek society. In the words of one of our respondents: «When you go to ask for work, they ask what you are, Albanian or *Vorioepiotes*. If you say Albanian...[they reject you]». And also «Due to this preference for *Vorioepiotes* there is now a hatred between us». The fact that nearly 1 in 4 Albanians with Greek descent appears to have rare or no social contacts with other Albanians manifests the reproduction of ethnically distinguished categories carried from Albania in the host context. In addition to these, one should also consider other types of ‘borders’ demarcating the newly arrived immigrants from the earlier flows. Indicative are the following sayings of a woman working together with Pakistanis: «I am not the same with the Pakistani that's been here for the last 6 months. There should be a distinction for those that have lived here more... my stamps being the same with theirs?».

Table 8: Social contacts with co-nationals broken down by ethnic group

Social contacts with Albanians (non-relatives)		Ethnotic group		Total
		<i>Vorioepiotes</i>	Albanians	
Every day	Count	20	225	245
	% within rows	8,2%	91,8%	100,0%
	% within columns	33,3%	50,2%	48,2%
Often	Count	21	148	169
	% within rows	12,4%	87,6%	100,0%
	% within columns	35,0%	33,0%	33,3%
Relatively often	Count	5	31	36
	% within rows	13,9%	86,1%	100,0%
	% within columns	8,3%	6,9%	7,1%
Rarely, never	Count	14	44	58
	% within rows	24,1%	75,9%	100,0%
	% within columns	23,3%	9,8%	11,4%
Total	Count	60	448	508
	% within rows	11,8%	88,2%	100,0%

¹⁹ The widely met amongst Albanians self-definition with other than 'political' terms constitutes a critical reaction to the exploitation they experience(d) from two polities and not a vacant of political meaning response.

10. Preliminary findings of Albanian households in Italy

The survey on Albanian immigrant households was conducted by IECOB in the region of Emiglia-Romagna in the period September 2003-January 2004. There were 100 household interviews conducted in this survey and they were carried out in order to draw a comparison with the issues addressed in the respective household survey held in Athens. The length of the interviews ranged from 45 min – 2 hrs. The ‘snowball’ sampling procedure has been used, making use of informal networks. An approximate 58% of the sample is men and a 42% is women immigrants (65% and 35% in Greek survey). The population interviewed is over 18 years old. With regard to the Greek sample, the population in this survey is a little younger. The 59% are respondents living with their families, while higher with regard to the Greek survey are the ones living with friends/relatives. 7% are respondents living alone. The 57% of the households consist of 3-4 members while the 20% of 5-7 members not distancing much from the size of the Albanian households in Athens. The findings cover the economic, social, cultural and political spheres of the Albanian migrants’ lives in the host country²⁰.

With regard to living conditions and housing we have found the following: Albanians in Italy seem to face less housing problems than their co-nationals in Athens. Rent levels are well above the respective ones in Athens. With regard to mobility and improvement of housing conditions, the first findings demonstrate that there is an improvement in housing conditions linked to the length of stay in Italy (house owners frequency is a little higher in the Italian sample despite the longer period of stay for the Albanian migrants in Greece). The Albanian immigrants in Emiglia-Romagna move more frequently from house to house than the Albanians in Athens, and this mobility proves beneficial for them (they usually move to a bigger and/or better house). With regard to household equipment, Albanian immigrants in Emiglia-Romagna seem more likely to own a car, motorcycle, bicycle, pc and satellite dish than Albanians in Athens.

The employment participation rate is high amongst the sample of Albanian immigrants (almost no unemployed men) in Emiglia-Romagna, as is the case in Athens. The unemployed women seem less though in the Italian survey. In line with the Greek survey the majority of the sample is insured, while the high percentage of women not offered insurance is associated with the kind of job most women do (domestic services). A glance at the self-employment and office employment levels reveals, as in the case of Albanians in Athens, that Albanian immigrants are entering professions and types of employment (self-employment) that were previously hardly existent for them. The Albanian immigrants in Emiglia-Romagna change more frequently jobs than their co-nationals living in Athens. From the perspective of wages, it seems that this mobility has positive effects for their integration. A significant reason to which the employment mobility can be

²⁰ The areas particularly explored are their housing and living conditions, employment, education, particulars of everyday life, regularization, access to welfare services, property, trips, remittances sent to Albania, Internet use, social contacts and participation in associations. The processing of the findings and the simultaneous comparison with the Greek case ones is in progress.

attributed, with respect to the Greek case study, is the lack of the severe institutional borders that the immigrants in Greece are brought before. Although incomes fluctuate to levels similar to the Albanians' in the Athens survey, much less people intend to settle down in Italy with respect to the 70% of Albanian migrants that want to stay permanently in Greece.

The existing educational qualifications of the migrants are by and large similar to the respective ones of the Athens sample. Although the percentages of people with Albanian university education are very close between the two samples, the percentage of the Emilia-Romagna sample having finished a degree in Italy (6%) is a little higher than the Greek case one. Basic ICT literacy (using a pc, Internet) seems higher amongst the Italian sample.

Albanian women in Italy seem a little more involved in outdoor activities than their co-nationals in Greece. Albanian immigrants in Emilia-Romagna watch Albanian tv or read Albanian newspapers in bigger percentages than their co-nationals in Athens. Higher seems also the former's participation rate in associations, trade unions and educational programs (mainly language courses).

As in the Greek case, they use without problems the existing health facilities and usually go to the state hospitals associated with their social security fund. The findings on the legalization problems of the Albanians in Emilia-Romagna demonstrate a noticeable gap distancing the Greek and Italian regularization regimes. Indicative is the fact that people having lived for more than 8 years in Greece would still have to renew every year their permit while in Italy the majority that lived there for over 5 years has now permanent or 2 or 4 year work/stay permits.

All things considered, looking at the frequency with which the Albanian immigrant population in the Italian survey uses collective character means of integrating in host society and engaging with 'homeland' discourse (associations, Albanian tv and newspapers, internet to mention but a few) we may argue that the socio-political sphere of the Albanian migrant community develops with a faster pace in Italy than Greece. This discrepancy cannot but pinpoint, among other things, towards the different civic histories of the two EU countries.

11. Conclusions: functional borders revisited

This paper is about the social and economic experiences of Albanian immigrants in contemporary Athens. It touches upon a broad number of issues, ranging from security and borders to economic success, gender roles and social inclusion. The overwhelming thrust of our evidence draws the picture of a vibrant community whose main trait is the combination of individual success with collective deficits. We witnessed hard working individuals, striving to become accepted and managing to improve their condition in every respect as time goes by. The economic picture is loud and clear. Work availability, improvement of incomes, access to social insurance via contributions, home equipment comparable to the native's. Immigrants gradually enter jobs and positions previously beyond their reach, although they often have to hide their identity in the initial phase so as to

gain easier acceptance. Looking more like Greeks is both an objective and an actual evolving process.

If obscuring their real identity was/is one way of gaining the much sought after acceptance, the development of a strong “pride in work” narrative constitutes the commonest reaction to the negative stereotypes haunting them. Success of co-nationals makes the Albanian community proud and assists its more or less fragmented struggle for recognition. Taken to extremes, this pride in work ethic hinders though the creation and development of extra-family links and associations. The “pride in work” functions as the *uncorrupted* narrative running against the *dèjà vu* of ‘status-based’ social stratification patterns²¹ that the majority ‘sees’, rightfully or not, in their associations. The majority of our sample expressed lack of trust in their own associations and a reluctance to cooperate with non-relatives in the context of collective forms of representation. It could be argued that coming from a low trust society and arriving at another low trust society, it is not surprising that such aspects are being reinforced in the course of their immigration experience. So, while our respondents proved so far successful at attaining individual goals, they have been less successful in forging a collectivity on the basis of trust and cooperation. It could be, thus, argued that they take up the Greeks’ “disillusioned winner”²² profile as far as social cohesion is concerned. Family continues to constitute the main point of reference in people’s lives, while both men and women attach great importance to marriage.

Probably the strongest shared negative experience stems from their dealings with the Greek bureaucracy. The legalization process has proved difficult, time-consuming and very expensive for immigrants. It also reinforces their vulnerability and insecurity. People feel “cornered” and reduced to impotence. This ambience is hardly conducive to long-term planning and investment of any kind: in skills acquisition, in consumer durables, in knowledge, to mention but a few. It also feeds short-termist attitudes on the part of employers. Such attitudes may prove detrimental to an overall upgrading of the domestic production nexus. In other words, such attitudes inhibit the modernization process in Greece.

In the course of the analysis of integration/exclusion of the Albanian immigrants in Greece we came across a number of distinct “social spaces” along with the functional borders that legitimate and reproduce them. One such space is the women’s social spaces (within the house and in the shade of man in outdoor activities). Another is the “informal economy” both as an entry point to employment (initial stage) and as a tax-free income supplement (in the case of women’s work in domestic services).

We have also argued that the social spaces in the construction sector may indeed promote the immigrant workers’ socio-economic integration and the women house-cleaners’ friendships with employers or clashes with the negative social

²¹ By ‘status-based’ patterns we refer to the social legacy of nomenclature-like networks of appropriation of power that as WP2 succinctly argues are a result of the late ‘nationalization’ and uneven modernization of SEE post-communist societies, the authoritarian politocracies formed under Communism and current conjectures, such as the breaking down of the state after communism and the large spoils available through privatization.

²² We borrow this term from WP2 finding stressing that economic development does not necessarily lead to more social trust.

perceptions of their job might disengage them from their socially 'isolating' working environment. However, the terms of this particular integration do not challenge the received traditional values and priorities, but rather reflect the Balkan society, economy and polity structures. In particular, we have seen that the past experience in Albania (in terms of the size of the community they are coming from, the prevailing gender roles and work ethic, the skills they have acquired to mention but a few) together with the host labour market particularities (jobs segregation along *gender and ethnic lines, informal economy and regularization concerns*) eventually give rise to hegemonic attitudes concerning what matters to them in a job: evaluating more the personal and social features of different occupations rather than limiting their interest strictly in employment-related characteristics.

Other borders that the host society and polity raises against immigrants exacerbating their insecurity range from the ethnic terms with which the native market perceives the Albanian self-employed and those doing similar to natives' jobs. Prevailing attitudes constitute part of the problem however. Institutional treatment remains the prime concern. Although legalisation programs are in progress and the government considers new types of residence and work permits, the qualitative and quantitative evidence from our interviews highlight lack of coordination between the services and departments responsible for the process, a faceless transfer of responsibility as well as the quantitative and qualitative inadequacy of the staff and departments involved in the process.

A tentative conclusion that could be drawn from the above analysis is that although individually immigrants are doing well and although collectively the Greek economy benefits from their presence, the derived benefits for all parties involved would be considerably greater had greater trust and cooperation attitude together with networks of civic engagement developed more densely. The implied benefits for the immigrants themselves are almost self-evident. Relying on support networks wider and broader than family, creates a much more solid basis for solidarity and support, translating into more vigorous economic success and also greater bargaining power. There are missed benefits for the host economy and society as well. There exists ample evidence that migration has the greatest value added to the receiving economies and societies in the case where positive attitudes towards migrants become the rule in both general public opinion and policy perceptions. Fear is the worst counsellor for natives, new comers and "relatives back home" alike.

The above carry some important policy implications:

- Need to invest in the creation of immigration-friendly attitudes in the Greek society and economy. The positive aspects of immigration need to become more visible, while active additional measures should be also adopted to ease the fears of potential losers.
- Regularisation should be made easier and less time consuming. It also needs to show that it does not involve arbitrary processes. The legalisation process needs to be modernised both on efficiency and legitimacy grounds (Dahrendorf 1984, Mouzelis 1987, Makridimitris 1999). Legality is a powerful springboard for economic development and social advancement.

- Policy-makers should adopt a more far-sighted view concerning migrants. The fact that there is no apparent problem yet with “second generation” (a situation faced by other EU member countries) leaves open a window of opportunity for some years to come.
- Social inclusion initiatives should be strengthened and better targeted.
- And last, but not least, comes the issue of management at a higher level. That of international cooperation. This is important at two levels. **First**, Greece is an EU country with extended porous borders whose security is a European rather than national issue. This is a policy issue that necessarily need to be negotiated at the European level. **And second** is the question of investing in Albania’s economic development and stability. Although the questions of direct foreign investment are rarely linked with immigration policy, there is an obvious advantage in doing so in the case of bordering countries where proximity generates its own dynamics.
- The modernizing role of immigrant associations and other networks of de-territorial and civic character as civil society interlocutors has to be re-assessed by policy-makers. Social inclusion cannot but go hand in hand with integration in the public sphere. In this respect, the immigrants’ associations can potentially play a significant role as civil society constituents. All the more the trans-border character of the migrant associations can enrich the element the Greek civil society is so urgently in need: differentiation. Not to mention that it can set off a wider participation in civil society.
- Any measures for promoting the migrants’ trans-border public sphere should be applied in tandem with the decentralization and modernization of the Greek public administration.
- The at a first glance more developed socio-political sphere of the Albanian immigrant community in Italy reflects the different civic histories of the two EU countries and calls clearly for the necessity of modernization of the Greek public administration and political system.

Note:

Information on the samples, as well as the detailed tables with the results and original data are not included in this paper as this empirical data is being processed. For any particular questions on the methodology and on the content of the questionnaire, please do not hesitate to contact the authors. Comments welcome.

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