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**Albanian immigration and urban transformations in
Greece**

Albanian migrant strategies in Thessaloniki, Greece

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This paper aims to sketch out our PhD research on Albanian immigration in Greece, and in particular Thessaloniki, which will be our field of study and reference. Within this research, we will try to explore an ensemble of choices – which we will call a “strategy of invisibilisation” – made by a large part of Albanian immigrants in Greece. We maintain that this “strategy” consists in the non-affirmation of the immigrants’ “Albanity”; which probably derives from their desire to facilitate their stay in Greece and to be accepted by and incorporated into Greek society. This specific “behaviour” makes the Albanian migration in Greece quite an exemplary case, since it generates migratory patterns rather different from those of “classical” migrations.

Introduction

Since the collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, we have witnessed the re-unification of the European space and the Balkan region, in particular. At the same time, new migrations principally from Eastern and Central European countries in direction to the European Union, continue to take place. Therefore, traditional immigration countries, such as Germany and France, have seen their populations increase due to “new” migratory flows from these countries.

Simultaneously, a parallel phenomenon emerges: Greece, Portugal, Italy and Spain, countries of considerable emigration until the 1970s, face a considerable

inversion of their migratory balance due to the return of their emigrants to the homeland, as well as to their sudden transformation into immigrant-receiving countries.

The most flagrant case of all seems to be Greece, which reaches rates of immigration comparable to those of Germany, all within a very short time span. In addition, to an incomparable extent with other countries of Southern Europe, Greece has been subject to a distinct immigration impact: the collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe, some of which share borders with Greece. In other words, contrary to the experience of Spain, Portugal and Italy, the vast majority of immigrants actually present in Greece come from former communist countries, which are undergoing transitory processes in order to enter market economies; the principal flows come from a single country, Albania (Cavounidis, 2002: 45, 46).

In this context, Greek cities, countryside and islands witness a considerable increase in their populations related to the migrants' arrival. As a result, they are transformed by the adjunction of various populations and the modification of their ethno-socio-demographic structure, losing, thus, their cultural "homogeneity".

Actors but at the same time witnesses to these evolutions, Albanian immigrants trace different pathways and numerous trajectories within the Greek territory. Having arrived principally in 1991, but also in 1997 after the bank crisis in Albania, they seem to want to stay in Greece, if not for a lifetime, at least for the long-term. Therefore, their migrations persist; the Albanian community¹ in Greece is

¹ We would do better to refer to Albanian "communities" instead of one "community". The use of the plural would then be justified by the fact that the characteristics of the Albanian immigration in Greece, which depend primarily on the departure society in Albania, seem to be considerably different to each other. In this way, it seems more appropriate to speak of "communities" instead of a

actually the most numerous of all immigrant groups (65% of foreigners residing actually in Greece), its number reaching officially 438,036 persons, but according to estimations² attending and even surpassing 650,000 persons to an ensemble of 10,934,097, which is the actual population of Greece³.

Research problem

Albanian migration, apart from its importance for the demographic, social, cultural and economic changes that Greece is currently going through, is interesting for yet another reason; it does not seem to follow the patterns of “classic” migrations, since its diffusion within the national territory is rather “balanced”.

It is evident that Athens constitutes the principal destination of Albanians. However, the difference of these latter from other immigrant groups originating in countries in the Middle and Extreme East or Africa⁴, is that they are found in numerous regions of Greece too; they thus offer a more diffused geographical distribution into the Greek territory (Sintès, 2002).

“community”. However, in order to simplify our research, and because we do not dispose the means to distinguish and then study each different “community” separately – we will refer to one and only “community” of Albanian immigrants in Greece.

² We will be herein referring precisely to estimations made by Baldwin – Edwards (2002), according to whom there are 800.000 – 1.000.000 migrants in Greece; the rate of Albanians in Greece is in general 65% of the total migratory population. See also Appendix.

³ See also Appendix.

⁴ This group of countries offers a concentration to the capital that surpasses 70% or even 80% (Sintès, 2002).

It seems to us that Albanian migration within Greek cities and more particularly Greek metropolises – Athens and Thessaloniki – follows the same process: “classic” migrations are often interpreted by a geographic concentration that ethnically marks the space. Regarding Albanians, the characteristic diffusion into the ensemble of the national territory seems to be reproduced in a smaller scale, this one of the urban space. Therefore, it seems that there is not any precise geographic territory within cities, reserved to Albanians, i.e. “Albanian neighbourhoods” or “enclaves”. If this is the case, we should then suppose that Albanians are not subjected to a supplementary form of exclusion that numerous other migratory groups are familiar with: spatial segregation and ghettoisation based on ethnic-national origin.

Nonetheless, we firmly believe that the spatial diffusion of Albanian immigrants in Greece is part of a more global “strategy” that they use to adopt into the host society, in order – according to us – to include themselves into this latter as easily as possible. This “strategy” consists in an ensemble of choices, such as names and /or religion changes, preference of the Greek language instead of the Albanian, etc., that seem to have a common objective: the invisibilisation of the immigrants’ ethnic –national identity, i.e. their “Albanity”.

Academic significance of and reasons for choosing the subject

Immigration from Albania to Greece is a major theme within the actual Greek socio-political scene, firstly because immigration itself is a new phenomenon for the Greek society, having provoked, already, several shocks to this latter; secondly because the study of actual migration flows in and their impacts on Greece cannot

ignore Albanian immigration due to the number of Albanians currently residing and working in Greece.

In addition, although a considerable number of studies – academic research, in particular – have dealt with relevant themes, very few of them have had Thessaloniki as their field of study. Nevertheless, Thessaloniki is the second largest Greek metropolis, a historically important urban center of the Balkan region and the second destination of Albanian immigrants coming to Greece, after Athens⁵. For these reasons Thessaloniki will be the field of reference for the present study.

Additionally, most existing research principally examines Albanian immigration and its effects on Greek society and its economy, without considering the actors of these phenomena, i.e. Albanians themselves, their practices and modes of life.

It should also be pointed out that, hitherto, no research has coped with the geographical “patterns” that Albanian migration takes, nor the justification of such “patterns”. Therefore, it seems to us essential to deal with the present topic, as it will be herein outlined.

Theoretical background

Apart from these clarifications of methodological order, explanations and definitions should be given, regarding some of the notions and terms to be used within this essay. In addition, the principal references used in order to form our theoretical background should be mentioned.

⁵ However, in both cities, Albanians are approximately 5,5% of the population (6,49% of the Athens’ population and 5,43% of Thessaloniki’s), (ESYE, 2001).

As Sayad (1999) proposes, we consider that immigration and emigration are the “two sides of the same coin”, as well as the two components of one and only “total social fact”⁶. For that reason, an immigrant in a receiving country is, first and foremost, an emigrant of his/ her own country of origin. As a result, we cannot look on immigrants simply as such, totally ignoring, thus, their emigration from their homeland. That is why, instead of the term “immigrant”, we are going to use, further on, the term “migrant”, which represents – for us – the total fact of the emigration – immigration process.

Additionally, one should consider that if migrants take on such “invisibilisation strategies”, it is very probably because pressures on the part of the autochthon society force them to do so. The Greek society, traditionally being rather religious and very xenophobe, probably because of the mass and unexpected arrival of migrants and refugees, plays a primary role in Albanian migrants’ attitude. We strongly maintain that Albanians, since their arrival in Greece, were not at all welcomed by the receiving society, but on the contrary were very often rejected; after being identified as criminals, thieves and “barbarians”, they finally chose to “moderate” their Albanity and tried to “peter out” those elements of this latter that could – in a way – pass unnoticed. As we perfectly agree with the thesis distinguishing “dominated” and “dominant” groups in the migratory processes⁷, we strongly believe that Albanians’ vulnerability regarding the “autochthon” society confirms their “domination” to this later and also explains their efforts to “moderate” their ethnic-national identity. Therefore, we will be using the term “dominated” to

⁶ Marcel Mauss is the first to talk about a “total fact”.

⁷ Sayad (1981, 1999: 125)

indicate the migratory group and the term “dominant” for the “autochthon” society within this study.

Yet, we acknowledge that “autochthon” is not a neutral term, and in order to use it appropriately we should first examine the “autochthony” of the “autochthons”, i.e. Greeks. However, we will not address this type of questions in this essay, since it is not our objective herein.

Furthermore, the use of the term “strategy” stresses the necessity to examine if Albanian migrants’ attitudes really constitute a strategy⁸, i.e. an ensemble of coordinated actions and operational objectives, chosen so as to implement a pre-defined and designed policy for a particular purpose; we will not look into this question either, because it goes far beyond the purposes of the present paper. Nonetheless, it does seem that these kind of “survival” choices and actions made by Albanians, although undertaken individually or in a family context, as practiced by many households/ persons/ families, etc., finally become an “individually” collective and conscious practice, as well as a predefined plan with a particular purpose, i.e. a strategy.

Another theoretical and more precisely terminological choice is after Psimmenos’ (2001 : 88) thesis, to use the term “undocumented migrants” in order to illustrate those who did not succeed in being regularised, by one of the two Regularisation Programs, in 1998 and 2001 respectively. In other words, we do not

⁸ *Strategy: 2. planning or managing any affair well, 3. plan or policy designed for a particular purpose (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, Oxford University Press, 1989). But also, Stratégie: 2. Ensemble d’actions coordonnées, de manœuvres en vue d’une victoire. 3. Ensemble d’objectifs opérationnels choisis pour mettre en œuvre une politique préalablement définie. (Le Nouveau Petit Robert, 1993).*

accept the term “illegal” migrants, because it has recourse to the classification adopted and used by the Greek Police; moreover, such a term stigmatises and criminalises *de facto* the migratory act, as well as a considerable number of people who were forced to migrate.

Regarding the references used within the preset research, our principal theoretical “input” from migration studies, sociology and urban studies are Sayad Abdelmalek (1981, 1999), Psimmenos Iordanis (2001), Tarrus Alain (1992: 16, 17, 122), and Castells Manuel (1983).

As mentioned above, Sayad (1981, 1999: 125) insists on the dominance of the host society upon the migrant group, respectively naming them the “dominant” and the “dominated”. Psimmenos (2001: 186) goes even further, affirming that name changing, even when done voluntarily, symbolises the first rupture of Albanian immigrants with their personal history, which is considered by the “dominant” society as a “serious social drawback”. Therefore, the migrant, by changing his/her name and thus rejecting his/her history and identity, tries to “correct” his/her social position.

Nevertheless, all this does not signify that migrants are at the autochthones’ mercy. Migrants’ “power” is found in that they influence the history and future of the cities in which they settle. Indeed, in a way, they are the “architects” of some of the economic and political transformations of those cities, and – according to Tarrus (1992) – they constitute the initiator subjects of specific centralities.

Tarrus (1992: 16, 17, 122) suggests that minorities “*disarrange established orders and hierarchies*” due to their mobility/ non-stability. Therefore, he continues, “*the future of migrant groups refers more to a capacity of perpetuating a relation between nomadism – immovability, which destabilises ‘sedentarities’ and narrow vicinities of autochthon populations, than to a ‘sedentarisation’ process*”. This is the

reason why we should not “*consider migrants as objects at the mercy of local, endogenous and, in general, historical approaches of urban development and migrants’ incorporation. {...} The absorption according to ‘natural’ processes, which are very often put into practice, is out-of-date. Migratory populations are initiator subjects of specific centralities prone to establish profound restructuring of urban and social morphologies, and they do so by departing from “elsewheres” very exterior to the receiving agglomeration: identity networks, ethnic or professional cultures are kept in distance with autochthon approaches, without being, on the other and, isolated; quite the opposite, the links of economic and social networks with their sites of origin are very intense*”.

Still, it is evident that Tarrus is not the only one to renounce incorporation and assimilatory processes, either “natural” or forced, as the essential *modus operandi* towards the acceptance of the migratory fact by the receiving society. As De Villanova (2004) stresses, migrant mobility – when seen from the host society’s perspective – is a drawback, a marginality form destined to “disappear” into incorporation, passing through “sedentarisation”. This idea is essentially related to the principal of the national territorial unity and its political frontiers. In other words, mobility jeopardises the national unity, exactly as cultural pluralism threatens the integrity of culture. In fact, she continues, the notion of incorporation is politically and ideologically constructed against the principal of mobility, nomadism and even the double nationality.

Taking this all into consideration, it is to be noticed that we are less interested, herein, in Albanians’ incorporation into Greek society than in the strategies that they implement in order to succeed in that, as well as in the impact of these strategies upon

the city. In other words, we intend to explore “why” and “how” these strategies are put into practice and what migratory pattern is thus generated.

Theoretical assumptions

Every emigration – immigration is originally provisional, even if the return to homeland can, afterwards, be prolonged perpetually. In the case of Albanians in Greece, regardless of their migratory project, initial or actual, the situation in Albania – past, present and future (that does not assure – in the short term – any political and socio-economical evolution capable of attracting emigrants back to Albania⁹) – results in a potential return to Albania in the short/ medium term which appears to be unlikely.

In addition, the geographical proximity of Albania to Greece reinforces this fact; it upholds several cross-border movements between those two countries rather than a definitive decision of settling to Albania. Besides, an important part of Albanian migrants seem to have decided to find a place for themselves in the Greek society. As a result, and in order to succeed in being included into and more accepted

⁹ Some data: 200.000 retired persons benefit from a rural pension of approximately 20 euros per month, 370.000 urban retired persons benefit from a pension of approximately 60 euros per month. The unemployment aid does not surpass the amount of 35 euros per month. One third of the population is actually found below the limit of poverty (Nasi, 2004). A doctor in a hospital earns monthly 250 euros, the unemployment is situated between 18% and 30% and the informal economy, according to International Monetary Fund, occupies 40 to 60% of the general production (Arosio, 2003). Dozens of children “dive” every day in the garbage of the coast city of Durrës, in order to assure their daily bread (Kallço, 2005). To get a global idea of Albania’s present political and socio-economical situation, see also Zeneli (2005).

by the receiving society, they seem to adopt a sort of a “strategy” which seems to intend to dissimilate their ethnic-national identity.

Our **principal assumption** is centered on this hypothetical tri-fold “strategy”: religion¹⁰ and name changes; a decreasing utilisation of the native language by the youth, very often with the parents’ encouragement; and the non-formation of Albanian neighborhoods within Greek cities, Thessaloniki, in particular.

As far as the **first component** is concerned, there is some evidence that Albanian migrants in Thessaloniki, as well as other places in Greece such as Athens, have proceeded in name and/ or religion changes. Indeed, it seems that in many cases Albanian migrants in Greece, when they are Muslims, change their religion to Orthodox Christian and /or their first names, in order not to sound Albanian or Muslim (Psimmenos, 2001: 184, Lamprianidis, Lymperaki, 2001: 173-185, De Rapper Gilles, 2002b).

It should be clarified, however, that for Albanians, either Muslims or Christians, religion is not a purely religious question or a matter of faith, but more of a tradition related to origin and parental affiliation. In other words, belonging to a religious conviction seems to be, for Albanians, a form of societal organisation and of collective belonging that is expressed by the fatherly descend. Religion, thus, indicates a common origin and the common cultural traits of a specific group. It is, then, “*inseparable of a certain ‘nature’*”. As a consequence, since it is a ‘nature’, this

¹⁰ By “religion changes” we intend to signify a more complicated phenomenon: Albanians, and essentially those who are Muslim, often declare themselves Christian Orthodox; this does not necessarily mean that they have converted to Christianity, nor that they are baptised (even though sometimes they really are). More frequently, this is part of a purely theoretical discourse, with no real evidence to support it.

cultural and community belonging goes beyond and is different from the religious faith (De Rapper, 2002a: 2-3).

As regards to the religious beliefs of Albanians, no generalisations should be made. However, there is some empirical evidence, provided by some surveys that for the majority of Albanian interviewees who actually live and work in Greece, religion is of no importance or leaves them indifferent (Tzortzopoulou, 2002: 150, 151, Lamprianidis, Lymperaki, 2001); yet, it is possible that they declare their beliefs in such a manner in surveys and opinion polls in Greece without being entirely sincere. Nevertheless, the indifference towards religious matters, if true, would be no surprise, given that Albania experienced 50 years of strict atheism during the regime of Enver Hoxha. Besides, the parallel existence of three religions (Orthodox, Catholic, and Muslim) throughout Albanian history before the communist regime, could explain Albanians' attitude and tolerance for a multi-confessional society (Doja, 2000: 425)

On the other hand, we should relate this particular attitude of Albanian migrants as regards to religion to the precise context of the host society, in our case the Greek society. Indeed, such phenomena and practices do not occur or have not been reported in Italy, which is, after Greece, the second principal destination of Albanian migrants. The Greek society is apparently a very religious one since being Orthodox is particularly valorised and can even constitute a reason for solidarity¹¹.

Besides, we should not forget that the Greek society is traditionally an emigration society, and until very recently a very "homogenous"¹² one. It can then be

¹¹ We recall herein, as an example, the very popular pro-Serb leitmotiv, heard in Greece during Belgrade's bombardments: "Greece – Serbia – Orthodoxy".

¹² In the sense that the great majority of the country's population was Greek and was speaking the Greek language, even if, there were minority groups having other "parallel" identities to the Greek

understood that the massive arrival of migrants, Albanians in particular, has provoked a shock to the local population, since it has disturbed the existing equilibriums. The reactions to this shock were not so much racist acts of violence (even if many such incidences are constantly reported, especially accusing the Greek police and army), but the emergence of chauvinism and xenophobia, or better “Albanophobia”, that was also seriously nourished by the media. Therefore, Albanian migrants in Greece have found themselves in a rather hostile context, where being Albanian was seriously undervalued by the receiving country.

As Psimmenos (2001: 186) stresses, being Albanian is considered by the dominant society as a serious “social drawback” that the migrant tries to “correct” by changing his/ her first name, an action that symbolises a rupture with his/her history and identity. Indeed, many researchers report such phenomena of name changes (Psimmenos, 2001: 184, Lamprianidis, Lymperaki, 2001: 173-185, De Rapper Gilles, 2002b, Tzortzopoulou, 2002: 150-151), which – it should be clarified – are not official changes with the support of documents proving such changes, but mainly a figure of speech.

Apart from these reasons, which are related to the Greek society’s specificities, psychology (Grinberg *et al.*, 1986: 161, 165) provides some

ethno-national one; for instance the Vlacks consider themselves both Greeks and Vlacks. However, it should be pointed out that for the Greek official position regarding minorities, there are not any minorities in Greece in the exception of the Turk minority of Thrace. All other populations using the Greek in their everyday life, even if Greek is not their native language, are considered by the Greek State as Greeks (Παρέσογλου, 1995: 816, 819; Poulton, 1993). However, this does not necessarily mean that they automatically have the right to the Greek nationality. For more, see Grammatikopoulou (2000).

supplementary explanation why Albanians¹³ would try to conceal their identity of origin, or at least some elements of this identity; in other words why they try to “moderate” their “Albanity”, by proceeding in name and /or religion changes. Indeed, the desire to mingle with others so as not to feel marginal or “different”, together with the fact that being Albanian is underestimated by the Greek society, is essentially a first considerable cause for concealing one’s Albanity.

What is more, Rokeach (1960)¹⁴ affirms that *“foreign persons are poorly received when one judges that they deviate from the values of the majority group on important aspects of the belief system”*. More generally, we could accept that in the perceptions of the autochthon society there is certainly an “ideal” foreigner (migrant, refugee, etc.), i.e. one who “deserves” to acquire asylum or other rights, because (s)he shares “our” ideals and way of life, and another kind of people who are “threatening” because, by their actions, they most obviously do not share a commitment to “our” values, will not adopt “our” way of life, and, thus, can never assume “our” identity. It is then evident that the former would stand a better chance at inclusion from the latter (Harris P. and Williams V., 2003: 215). Or even, as Sayad (1999: 112) suggests, we could distinguish between the “good” migrant and the other – the not so “good”, the former being like “us” in his/her family life and cultural “moral”, his /her social life and so on; the latter, on the other hand, behaving completely differently from “us” in his/ her family and social life, giving him/ herself family and social structures entirely

¹³ Methodologically, it does not seem accurate to us to reduce them to a group, pretending that these practices are generalised amongst all Albanian immigrants in Greece. However, our objective here is not to quantify this phenomenon, but to analyse it, and to try to understand why and how it occurs.

¹⁴ Cited by Wagner (2001: 35).

bizarre to “us” and a “moral” in which we cannot recognise “ourselves”, such as the extended family, the endogamy or polygamy, etc.

Regarding the **second component** of this tri-fold strategy, i.e. migrants’ native language, Albanians do not express the need to teach, in schools, the Albanian language to their offspring. On the contrary, these latter are fully integrated into the Greek school system, without any apparent difficulty; in fact, Albanian pupils maintain high-performing school records and in many cases they do better than the indigenous pupils. Parents insist on their children studying in Greece and they even manifest the ambition of seeing them enter the Greek University.

Indeed, the proportion of Albanian pupils in the multicultural schools of Athens and Thessaloniki (respectively 7 and 6 schools) is considerably lower than those of other nationalities. Some immigrant communities, for instance the Poles, have created special schools where their native language is taught in addition to the Greek language (Tzialas, Xaralampakis, 2001: 155).

According to theory, in the migratory process, identity is quickly associated with a language, after which stigmatisation can promptly emerge (Schippers, 2001: 21-22). This could provide a good explanation as to why some immigrant groups opt for the non – practice of their language of origin in public, in the receiving country. It could equally be regarded as part of a more global choice – an entire strategy – of non-revealing one’s identity, in order to facilitate acceptance of and inclusion into the host society, as well as to hold over exclusion and hostility. Moreover, the absence of identity/origin “markers” such as skin colour, coupled with a good knowledge of the language of the receiving society could potentially turn concealing one’s identity into a not so difficult task.

Considering all this, we firmly believe that the tenacity shown on the part of Albanians regarding their children's Greek education is relevant to the fact that education – and university degrees more precisely – has always been the principal means for social ascension in the Greek society. It is also the most secure way of inclusion into this society. Therefore, Albanians do not require the need for an Albanian education for their children, nor do they insist that their children learn their native language.

Regarding the **third component** of Albanians' strategy, it seems to us that the Albanian community hardly makes up a precise geographical substance in the Greek city. Albanians' geographical concentration is explained by their socio-economic characteristics; this – if true – considerably differentiates them from other immigrant groups in Greece, such as the Poles, the Pakistani, etc. who – in geographical terms – prefer to constitute rather precise communities. On the contrary, Albanians are rather “diffused” within the urban territory (Lamprianidis, Lymperaki, 2001: 208-210, Hatziprokopiou, 2004: 330).

However, the city not being homogenous nor isotropic, we expect to find more Albanians in certain areas of the city than in others; but this is essentially explained by their financial capacities. Therefore, Albanians seem to reside principally in the central and the west parts of Thessaloniki, in proximity with other populations, Greek or not, who present similar socio-economical characteristics.



Source : MapPoint.net, our rectification.

Apparently, no “enclaves” or Albanian neighbourhoods have been generated in Thessaloniki. In addition, the patterns of Albanian migration do not seem to result in any kind of “centrality”, where Albanian practices could be exposed and recognised. But, as Castells (1983) suggests, there are some communities which favour a network of acquaintances that links its members, instead of a “centrality”, i.e. a place within the city where they and their modes of living could be recognised. Even if Castells refers to gay and lesbian communities, the former holding up a “centrality”, whereas the latter a network of acquaintances, we could project his thesis to the migratory process.

Hence, **our second hypothesis** is that Albanians’ “invisibilisation strategies” do not lend themselves to the formation of an Albanian centrality in Thessaloniki, but instead favour an informal network of acquaintances which circulates information principally about employment and accommodation.

Analytical structure

The present research is structured in four major parts:

1. The Greek “specificities”

We will try to enlighten, herein, some of the motivations, but also the favorable conditions that lead Albanians to the “invisibilisation strategies” analysed hitherto. In other words, we will deal with the specific conditions of the receiving society and its specificities:

a) The existence of a Greek minority in South Albania, which results in a large number of Albanian citizens seeking out “Greekness”. In fact, even if they are not issued from the Greek minority, many Albanians try to “pass” for “Voreio-Epirotes”¹⁵, as the Albanian citizens of Greek origin, issued from the Greek minority in Albania, are called unofficially. The reason for such a choice is rooted in the consideration of the latter as “Homogenous” (“Omogeneis” – “Ομογενείς”), i.e. of the same descent as Greeks, who are theoretically more accepted by the Greek society and apparently treated in a better way, compared to ethnic Albanians.

However, it seems to us that this is not the principal reason, particularly because Greeks’ attitudes towards Albanians of Greek descent cannot be homogenised in such a manner. For the Greek authorities, on the other hand, Albanians of Greek origin are indeed seen in a more positive way, since they have

¹⁵ It is worth noticing that, although, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in its estimations the most “integrationist” of the Greek minority in Albania counts 150.000 persons, there were 300.000 –350.000 applications on the part of Albanian migrants in order to become Greek (with the argument of the Greek descent).

been given Greek passports, state loans for housing, working licenses, etc., soon after their arrival in Greece. This is absolutely not the case of migrants who did not have any Greek descent; they were – and in some cases still are – less privileged.

It is worth noting, however, that the policy of facilitating Albanians issued from the Greek minority in Albania to come to Greece has been gradually abated, since it did not endorse Greece's geopolitical objectives. In contrast, this policy resulted in the decline of the Greek minority and the "evacuation" of those territories in South Albania where Greeks or Albanians of Greek descent historically resided.

b) The absence of a rigid inherited system of social hierarchy; such an obstacle to social ascension does not exist. On the contrary, it is the Greek educational system (university degrees in particular) that has always been the main means of social mobility. As a result, the place of education, good knowledge of foreign languages and university degrees has always been primary. Therefore, Greeks put considerable emphasis on their children's successful schooling. In a very similar way, Albanian parents insist on their children's Greek education and good knowledge of the Greek language, even if this could lead to the loss of the native language of their children;

c) the rapidly changed status of Greece from an emigration to an immigration country which resulted in rather "hostile" migratory policies undertaken by Greek authorities, but also hostile and xenophobic behaviours on the part of the Greek society, particularly in the early 1990s. However, it should be mentioned that the 1998 regularisation program of undocumented migrants is considered as the one with the largest number of applicants (371.641 individuals have submitted) carried out in Europe up to date (Cavounidis, 2002: 47). In addition, contrary to various xenophobic discourses taking place currently in Greece, the number of racist events is still very

low compared to other EU countries. It seems that in Greece a sort of “everyday life tolerance” flourishes¹⁶.

2. Albanian migration in Greece

We propose herein an overview of Albanian migration in Greece: a brief flashback to the socio-economic and political situation in Albania over the course of the last 15 years (such as extreme poverty, socio-political instability, etc.¹⁷) that could partly explain the motivation of Albanian migrants to stay in Greece rather than return to their homeland.

3. Albanian migrants in Thessaloniki

In this part, we will present some general traits of the Albanian migration in Thessaloniki.

- a) The demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the Albanian migrant population in Thessaloniki, in order to illustrate

¹⁶ In order to explain this “everyday life tolerance”, we recall that generally in the Greek perceptions, Albanians are identified as thieves, barbarians, those who take Greeks’ jobs and are thus to blame for unemployment, and so on. However, interviews with Greeks have shown that “every Greek has his/ her Albanian”, of whom he/ she thinks in a very positive way. But the Albanians in question have, in general, a personal relation with the Greek “employer”, for whom they have painted the house, fixed the roof, looked after the children or elderly relatives, etc. In that way, the general discourse regarding Albanians in Greece differs considerably from what Greeks say when talking about “their” Albanian.

¹⁷ See Arosio (2004), Kallço (2005), Nasi (2004), in <http://www.balkans.eu.org>.

as precisely as possible the dynamics of the Albanian community in Thessaloniki.

- b) The diffusion of their households throughout the urban territory, which will appear in a localisation map, and the non-formation of an Albanian “centrality” within the city.

What is expected, herein, is to illustrate the socio-spatial pattern of the Albanian migration in Thessaloniki, and, thus, to corroborate or not the hypothesis of a “diffusion” model. In practice, we will try to compare the Albanian “pattern” with those of other migratory groups in Greece, such as the Poles, the Chinese, etc., who seem to hold up more “concentrated” models, on an ethnic-national basis.

However, it is to be noticed that a space concentrating Albanians’ habitat cannot necessarily and automatically be considered as “ethnically” marked. A space is “ethnically” marked when an ethnic community manifests its presence: “ethnic” commerce and shops, kiosks selling journals written in the native language, either coming from the homeland or published in the receiving country, and above all a symbolic place considered as such by the migrant community, as for instance a standard meeting point (a café, a square or a park, a street, etc.).

4. “Invisibilisation strategies” of Albanian migrants in Thessaloniki

We will recapitulate, herein, the reasons explaining and justifying Albanian migrants’ “strategies”. In addition, we will reach some conclusions particularly regarding the confirmation or erosion of our research hypotheses.

We will also explore the impact on the city of the “invisibilisation strategies” that Albanians uphold, as well as the effects on the way that the Albanian community in Greece is organised. We will then be capable to respond to our last problem, i.e. if

these strategies – if they really exist – result in/ favour the emergence of an informal network of acquaintances or a kind of centrality, or both, or even none of them.

Methodological approach

Limitations of the research and an overview of the methods to be used

It is to be noted, once again, that within the present research we are not capable of producing primary data on Albanian immigration in Thessaloniki because we do not dispose the means to carry out a survey based on a representative sample of the Albanian population in this metropolis. For the same reasons, we cannot carry out a survey with the intention of collecting original data on the “classical” fields of demography regarding migrants: age, sex, education, profession in the homeland, profession in the host country, socio-economical status, etc.

On the contrary, we will be treating secondary data of this type. Hence, our principal source is essentially the Statistic Agency of Greece, and more precisely information coming from the two last decades’ census, i.e. the 1991 and 2001 (ESYE, 1991, 2001). This does however, imply that we are effectively only going to work with the migrants that appear in statistics, even if we recognise that the rest are also significant, particularly if we intend to illustrate the pattern – spatial or other – of Albanian migration in Thessaloniki.

In addition, we will carry out fieldwork of our own. Given the nature of the present research, qualitative methods seem to be most appropriate. Therefore, observational and interview techniques are to be used, particularly relying on information obtained from a number of semi-structured interviews with Albanian migrants who actually reside in Thessaloniki.

We will also include in our interviewees, if necessary, some key-informants of the local Authorities (mayors, consultants in Municipalities working on migration, etc.), but also of the Albanian community (or communities) of Thessaloniki (journalists, leaders of Albanian associations, syndicates, etc.). However, we believe that those informants are very unlikely to be reliable; we consider that they are prone to “filter” the information given, according to their objectives, and their personal and political standpoints. Therefore, we need to carry out a localisation work, in order to detect those persons, apart from our interviewees (Albanian migrants), who will be able to provide us with reliable and relatively objective data.

Last but not least, certain university laboratories and institutes such as the Laboratory of Social Demographic Analyses (University of Thessaly), will also provide us with data on immigration in Greece and Thessaloniki, and information about Albanian immigration in particular.

Our methodological approach consists, generally, in:

- a) literature review regarding migration phenomena, as well as ethnic-national identities and their reformulation during the migratory process,
- b) literature review about the methods of observation and analysis of such problems,
- c) critical review of the existing sources of administrative and survey data regarding immigrants in order to reveal gaps and limitations,
- d) literature review regarding Albanian immigration in particular, in Greece (and to a lesser degree in Italy, so as to be able to compare the two),
- e) a limited analysis of legal frameworks related to migration, highlighting changes over the past decade,

- f) semi-structured interviews and focus groups with Albanian migrants in Thessaloniki (qualitative and non-representative sample),
- g) semi-structured interviews of key informants in Greece. Key informants include national and local government officials, representatives of NGOs and civil organisations that work with migration and representatives of migrant organizations,
- h) direct observation in the districts with a high concentration of Albanian immigrants in Thessaloniki (in search of a potential Albanian “centrality”).

In addition, we have distinguished three principal problems of our work that correspond to our theoretical assumptions; for each of these problems the methods and data to be used, in order to confirm or erode the departure hypotheses, are the following:

1. Migrants’ “invisibility”: qualitative interviews and analysis of information required;
2. Migrants’ “diffusion” within the urban territory: cartography. In a map of Thessaloniki we will localise the Albanian households, so as to show their dispersion (or concentration). As data for other foreign communities is available, we will proceed with some comparisons between migratory groups of different origin;
3. Network(s) of acquaintances: interviews and life histories, so as to explore the type of link that relates Albanians to each other. To this end, the “Sunday practices”¹⁸ (what we do on Sunday, whom do we visit, with whom do we go out, etc.), will be a major indicator.

¹⁸ See Weber (2004).

Preparation of the fieldwork

Our field of study and reference is Thessaloniki, which has been chosen for the reasons mentioned above. We are conscious, however, that a study comparing Athens and Thessaloniki, so as to show the dissimilarities and particularities in these two cities, as well as to produce some general conclusions concerning these two Greek metropolises, would be more complete.

Nevertheless, we do not dispose the means for such an extensive and comparative survey. We will, thus, go no further than studying Albanian migrants in Thessaloniki; which enables our research to be considered as a case study. However, it should be clarified that for us the decision to carry out a case study is not a methodological choice; as Stake (1998) suggests, it is a selection of object.

a) The sample

We intend to work with approximately 30 households, either made up of families (extended or nuclear) or single persons or even cotenants in an apartment. Regarding families, in particular, one person at least from all of the living generations is to be interviewed. This will enable us to explore the cohesion or division of mentalities, practices, relations, points of view, problems, etc. in the receiving society among the different generations. In general, we will try to interview an average of 4 persons per family. The male and/ or female heads of each family will also be interviewed in the interest of looking at different standpoints related to gender roles, profession, age, etc. Nevertheless, the definite number of families and interviewees within each household will be defined when a saturation point is reached (Bauer 2000:34).

b) The sampling techniques

Bauer's (2000) method of a corpus construction seems to be appropriate to our research. According to this method, the interviewees' final number will be defined when a saturation point is reached; in other words, when the interviewees' answers start to reappear. The "corpus construction" is a cyclical method in which a primary selection is made either following external strata, functions and categories (e.g. occupation, gender, age) or following an already known number of representations (e.g. beliefs, attitudes, discourses, practices)¹⁹. This first selection is to be analysed and through the acquired knowledge of the field, other categories will be identified and incorporated into the corpus (sample). However, we intend to use this method, in a second stage, only to define the "volume" of our corpus.

On the contrary, we will construct our sample by using the "snowball" method, as it appears to be the preferred method of researchers carrying out studies on migratory populations. Indeed, this method is appropriate for studying populations that have some particular characteristics in comparison (as for instance migratory groups) to the majority population of a society.

There are two conditions necessary for the success of this method: the interviewees' acquaintance and their will to introduce the researcher to another person they know. This latter will introduce the researcher to another person, and so on, till the acquaintance "chain" is exhausted. In other words, interviewee "chains" are created by persons that know each other. In addition, in order to achieve a more

¹⁹ The problem here is to overcome what Bauer describes as the "corpus paradox", i.e. the dimension of representations (beliefs, attitudes, discourses, practices), which is the main interest of qualitative research, is unknown and is intrinsic to the phenomenon studied. It is, thus, impossible to determine the sample (corpus) *a priori*.

representative sample, it is often suggested to create several such “chains” (Tzortzopoulou, 2002: 124, Psimmenos, 2001: 89).

It seems to us that the use of the “snowball” method will enable us to reveal the Albanian migrants’ informal network in Thessaloniki.

c) Data collection throughout the fieldwork

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the main methods of data collection to be used during our fieldwork are observational and interview techniques. The latter will enable us to gather data on practices, attitudes and discourses regarding the migratory experience of Albanians in Thessaloniki. The survey will mainly discuss the attitudes of Albanian migrants towards their return to their homeland and will explore issues of settlement or resettlement (in Greece or elsewhere). It will permit a limited analysis of the characteristics of individuals who are more likely to return or stay, taking into consideration differences in patterns and migration experience that are subjected to various elements: the departure society and area (urban or rural, Tirana itself or another smaller city, areas bordering Greece or not), the type of migration (temporary, permanent, circular), etc. In addition, we will explore the size and regularity of remittances or investments in the source country, together with the means of sending these remittances and their use (build a house in Tirana or in the area of origin, send goods or simply money from Greece, etc.). In this way we hope to better understand their migratory projects.

The interviews will be semi-structured; they will be made up of both open-ended and focused questions. These will be complemented with a number of narrative questions in order to trace the history and the experiences these migrants have had in Thessaloniki (life histories, residence and professional trajectories, etc.).

The use of visual methods is also considered, as they are particularly useful for recording and retrieving perceptions, uses and attitudes towards spatialities and practices (Ortega-Alcázar, 2004: 11).

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APPENDIX

Table 1 (NATIONAL LEVEL):

Usual resident population by country of citizenship²⁰

<i>Total population</i>	<i>10.934.097</i>		
Country of citizenship	Residents	Country of citizenship	Residents
EUROPE		ASIA	
Albania	438.036	Kazakhstan	2.256
Bulgaria	35.104	Iraq	6.936
Poland	12.831	Syrian Arabic Republic	5.552
Romania	21.994	Armenia	7.742
Federal Republic of Yugoslavia	3.832	Bangladesh	4.854
Republic of Moldova	5.716	Georgia	22.875
Russian Federation	17.535	India	7.216
Ukraine	13.616	Pakistan	11.130
Cyprus	17.426	Philippines	6.478
Turkey	7.881	AFRICA	
		Egypt	7.448

Source: ESYE 2001.

²⁰ Here are presented the countries that count more than 3000 residents in Greece.

Table 2 (REGIONAL LEVEL NUTS 3): Usual resident population in Athens and Thessaloniki

	<i>Thessaloniki</i>		<i>Athens</i>	
	<i>Population</i>	<i>% of the population</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>% of the population %</i>
<i>Total population</i>	1.084.001	100,00	2.805.262	100,00
Population living outside				
Greece one year prior to the census	8.130	0,75	18.676	0,67

Source: ESYE 2001.

Table 3: Estimation of the total population of non-EU immigrants, 1998 (000s)

	<i>Total population</i>	<i>Total migratory population (estimation)</i>	<i>Immigrants/total population</i>
Greece	10.300	800-1.000	9-10%
Italy	57.000	1.500	2,6%
Spain	39.100	900 ²¹	2,3%
Portugal	10.000	279	2,8%

Source: Baldwin – Edwards, 2002, our rectification.

²¹ Of which almost 400.000 are EU nationals, retired, in particular.

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**2nd LSE PhD Symposium on Modern Greece:
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Title: “On Racism in Greek Immigration Services”

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Introduction

One of the main walls blocking the socioeconomic and political integration of post-1990 immigrants in the Greek host context is the existing immigration regularization regime. The general depiction in the Greek media of the interface between immigrants and the immigration services is of long queues of immigrants and racist attitudes from civil servants. This picture, verified by different surveys, is one area I consider in my PhD research on the integration of Albanian immigrants in the Greek labour market and society. However, the notorious unfriendly immigration services are just the icing on the cake. In the background lay the structures of the Greek State upholding this behavior. The worst Greek bureaucracy for the lowest importance ‘citizens’ (in votes). To gain a more complete understanding of the situation, alongside my interviews with immigrants, I decided to conduct fieldwork on the involved immigration state services via interviews with civil servants in the Labour Prefectures of Athens, where applications for work permits are submitted and processed. The fieldwork was carried out between November 2003 and February 2004, roughly at the same time as the fieldwork I conducted on the other target groups of my research (immigrant households and immigrant associations).

Why did I choose this area of investigation? The immigration services constitute one of the most significant meeting points of the immigrants with the host society. These services of the Greek state are the sole regular contact (apart from work) that many immigrants maintain with the host society. Furthermore, the State is the mirror that reflects the rules of the new country. Rendering legitimate those rules before the immigrants’ eyes is dependent on that reflection. In other words, difficulties involved in the regularization programs have adverse implications both for immigrants and also for the host economy. Undocumented immigrants are likely to be barred from the visible social and economic web and cast into the grey zones of the society. Losses in social security fees, criminality, policing expenses, rehabilitation costs with uncertain return, and a fragile social trust and cohesion are some of the consequences of socio-economic exclusion on the part of the host country. Marginalized participation in the host civil society would also bear important implications for their repatriation orientations and the dead ends of the host country’s political system. The institutional position of the immigrants is central to their socioeconomic integration in the host society: The immigration regularization policies constitute the decisive determinant that controls the access of immigrants to all the magnitudes of the labour market and other areas and services (e.g. housing, health care, education) and renders them a visible social policy target-group.

Conducting research on the target group of civil servants both at their work place, and outside it, brings the researcher before several methodological challenges. My paper aims to discuss these challenges, and through this discussion to ‘develop’ a deeper understanding of the reported problems in the immigration services. This will lead me to offer some theoretically informed outlines towards addressing these problems. The first methodological issue I will discuss is one of access, and the questions and answers it both raises and provides. Secondly, the methods the researcher uses ‘on the spot’; for example, adhering strictly to structured questionnaires decreases significantly his/her chances of getting something more than the prefecture’s statutes. Finally, as an object of investigation, the immigration service is a complex one. Since it needs to be examined both at a structural, organizational level, whilst also encompassing the perspectives of those who make it

work on the production level. This constitutes an even stronger incentive for the sociologist to conduct qualitative research. On top of that, the partisan character of the 'scepticism' of some social scientists against quantitative data analysis, and the placing of the latter in the 'positivist' camp might strengthen an ideological disregard for the quantitative methods to be used in the research. My approach distinguishes its position out of the polemic dichotomization of academic debate on the methodology of social science. In particular, the discourse of racism is explored by both quantitative and qualitative aspects of labour relations in the relevant services. In doing so, I further bring a specific conceptualization of racism to the fore.

Through the analysis it becomes evident which areas and issues need to be addressed if effectiveness is going to be pursued and racism dealt with. These constitute the body of my considerations for the problems of the Greek regularization process.

Getting to the fieldwork

The researcher does not retrieve his data only from his/her interviews. Indicative of the problems of the immigration services in question here, is the data he/she already collects from the sample access stage. Along these lines, gaining access to the fieldwork opens a discussion that explains part of the problematic landscape of the immigration services; that is, the discussion about the particularities of the modern Greek State.

In particular, the first attempt to interview the civil servants of the Labour Prefectures of Athens failed. Without any permission from the top ranks I was denied access. Blocking any attempt to explore this problematic field corroborates the traditionally uneasy relationship of the Greek Public Administration (PA) with the society it supposedly serves. The PA (and the State in general) has always been experienced as a foreign body superimposed on the social web, literally in the first decades of the modern Greek State and in accordance with the political rhetoric of the times¹, in the metaphorical (but very real) sense as it has been brewed thereafter². Instead of serving the public indiscriminately, the Public Administration used its channels of communication with the public as a market where different political factions traded public seats for political influence³. In brief, as a result public administration seats turned into long-lived social aspirations since. A culture of protectionism/clientelism was developed where the strata of civil servants were

¹ The centrality of the autochthonous and foreign lines along which public seats were distributed after the revolution of the 3rd September 1843 is characteristic of the selective towards certain social groups (and not uniform and consistent) spirit of the Greek political cosmos. This period is very important for it solidified the foundations for the clientelist state structures and the populism that the Greek political system has not disentangled from up to date (Mylonopoulou, 1998: 52-59)

² See in particular Tsoukalas 1986, Makridimitris 1999.

³ The causes for this range from the economic underdevelopment of the newly born Greek State combined with the slow enlargement of Greece through wars that devastated the economy, the consequent regional disparities, to certain strata (*cotzampasides*, - a Greek elite of *village elders* that was delegated with administrative powers under the ottoman millet system - lodgers involved in tax collection, chieftains from the war of Independence) that 'replaced' the Ottoman administration and lingered over the Greek State and in particular Public Administration (Mylonopoulou 1998). The perseverance of features of the Ottoman landowning system together with the right above social strata benefiting from it have developed throughout the decades into a power configuration within the Greek State, and their powerful interests pulled the threads in Greek politics and hindered any industrialization and modernization efforts (Sakellariopoulos, 1991, p.76-7)

dependent on politicians and vice versa. The permanence in public seats, a social demand once (19th century and at least up to 2nd World War) destined to fight corruption and the placing of party delegates to the state mechanism, turned into a boomerang during the 1980s and 1990s. The call for ‘democratization’ and ‘modernization’ of the Greek polity in the 1980s and 1990s meant to democratize the structure, manning and function of public administration (e.g. abolishing top clerical ranks and establishing a flat class record and rate of pay), but actually ‘socialized’ the clientelistic structures of the state mechanism at the expense of meritocratic criteria, qualifications for the servants and, therefore, efficiently managed public services (Makridimitris, 1999, p.124-139). This in brief modern history of the Greek State is reflected in certain features of the civil servants I confronted in this stage of the research: lack of accountability to the public, faceless transfer of responsibility and/or the other side of the coin: the extended responsibility-phobia recently.

The grounds on which I eventually managed to get the permission to conduct interviews indicate, however, even more eloquently the principle under which ‘things work’ within the state structures: clientelism (Mouzelis 1986). My ‘networking’ brought me before the official in charge. On top of that, I did not have to refer to anything more than my family connection in order to get what I needed. It still astonishes me that the prefecture’s official signed a free pass to all Foreigners’ Services on my behalf without even asking about the goals of the research. Clientelism, the most common toolbox with which the communication to (and control of) the wider society is mediated, is evident on the threshold of the fieldwork.

The clerical culture and the clientelist networks that I met on the outset of my research switching selectively on and off the valves of social accountability and consequently legitimacy of the state, are two familiar themes regarding all administrative sectors of the Greek State. These two revisit the discussion of the history of modernization of the Greek society, economy and State; a discussion one has to consider in any answer to the problems of the legalization process, and the forthcoming convergence with some common EU principles or even policy-standards on migration.

Towards the fieldwork findings

Discussing the methodology the researcher uses during the fieldwork further verifies the scepticism and closure of most civil servants towards transparent processes of communication with and answerability to the public. In addition, this discussion paves the way for the methodological question at the centre of the paper: the significance of combining quantitative and qualitative methods in this particular case study.

In particular, when exploring a certain process one has to take into account the different dimensions of space in play. Firstly, the physical space that the process takes place matters. The conduct of the legalization process is affected not only by what occurs within the prefecture’s boundaries but also by what happens right outside them. Participant observation is a significant method in this respect: waiting alongside immigrants for my turn reveals parallel informal practices in play, usually with or sometimes contrary to the tolerance of the prefectures. Disrespectful and hostile behaviour to immigrants from the police in the entrance of the prefectures and entry tariffs (!) constitute part of the picture predisposing negatively any immigrant towards the process. Secondly the space in question has certain functionality. It is a workplace.

And as such it has specific hierarchies. These attributes of the explored fieldwork produce different research findings according to the interviewing patterns used. Conducting interviews with one person at a time, and when possible outside the employees' work place, creates boundaries necessary to protect the sample against the influence of colleagues or superiors. Furthermore, interviewing both the director of every prefecture as well as at least one member of staff in contact with the clients discloses the perspectives deriving from different positions. The latter method also reveals several aspects of the production relations within the immigration services (cooperation, organisation patterns, and cross-checking of each other's sayings).

Then it is the intersecting social dimension. The space in question is situated in a society with certain institutional, economic and cultural characteristics. In particular, the legislative framework that underpins the legalization process is incomplete and does not take on board in a clear-cut fashion that Greece is an immigration country. When all's said and done, it is more concerned with the strict control of the foreign labour inflows and the penalisation and deportation of those that illegally enter and stay in Greece, than integration policy initiatives (facilitating the regularization process is one such initiative). Viewing this fact in tandem with the shortages in equipment, funds, specialized personnel, the *lack* of coordination between the administration services involved (municipality, periphery, prefecture, all with vaguely defined domains) creates a negative implementation scenario for the regularization process. A scenario where, all the more, informal activities would operate easily, given the a) stake of the 'grey' economy in Greece's GNP⁴, b) the experience of making profit out of uninsured immigrants throughout the 1990s and even up to date, c) the loose accountability procedures in place. Making (illegitimate) profit in legalising immigrants is a practice that has been verified during the fieldwork.⁵ In addition, the xenophobic and racist reaction of non-negligible factions of the Greek society towards recent immigration constitutes a variable that would definitely not facilitate the process. After all, the employees making the process work do not operate in a social vacuum, and their work is likely to be influenced by the above social framework.

This last remark unfolds the complexity of the immigration service as a space of investigation. Since it needs to be examined both at a structural, organizational level, whilst also encompassing the perspectives of those who make it work on the production level. However, it is not only the social dimension of the immigration service as a workplace but also the object of the enquiry that constitutes a strong incentive for the social scientist to conduct qualitative research. Racism, the discourse in question here, is often taken for a discourse that concerns the qualitative section of a research indeed. Racism is a phenomenon that has preoccupied social theory greatly and has been studied by philosophers, historians, anthropologists and sociologists long before quantitative data analysis came in assistance⁶. We should note further that the proliferation in analyses of racism occurred from 1980s onwards, in the aftermath

⁴ Another concern that the advent of (illegal) immigrants in the 1990s brought to the political discussion in Southern-European countries, has been the consequent strengthening of the informal economy. The size of the Greek informal economy is allegedly equivalent to one third of the GDP of Greece (Labrianidis & Lyberaki, 2001, p.98).

⁵ Cases of civil servants taking some more money from immigrants and the existence of a phony-documents industry outside the prefectures have been reported in my interviews.

⁶ As Goldthorpe (mostly chp.5, 2000) would characteristically argue with regard to the value of quantitative data analysis for social sciences.

of post-structuralism⁷; when the concepts of culture, difference (Hall 1990) and gender (Anthias & Yuval-Davis 1992) intersected class and (neo-)Marxist (Rex 1983, Miles 1989) perspectives of interpreting racism in the context of social theory. This could not but marginalize the scientific status of the so-called ‘positivists’ (see right below) in this field. Indeed, the grand (in explanatory range) structural analyses were, in general, on the defense after the 1980s’ concern of social sciences with agency. The theoretical wave of ‘contextualizing’ social phenomena, however, rebalanced crucially the dialectic of structure and agency in social theory. Shifting from explanations of racism according to structures of the capitalist mode of production and historical particularities of the international division of labour (colonialism) to its study within labour and gender relations of a certain industry or community in a certain urban setting⁸ was central in this respect.

We have seen that both the social dimension of the particular workplace and the object of the enquiry are likely to encourage qualitative data analysis. On top of that, the partisan character of the ‘scepticism’ of some social scientists against quantitative data analysis, and the placing of the latter in the ‘positivist’ camp –a fetishized discourse in academic debate– might strengthen an ideological disregard for the quantitative methods to be used in the research (Goldthorpe 2000, Hammersley 2000). My approach distinguishes its position out of the polemic dichotomization of academic debate on the methodology of social science. I shall demonstrate the validity of both types of data analysis when exploring the hypothesis of racism in the context of the particular administration services. In particular, my research was designed, on the one hand, in order to collect quantitative data that concern structural and organizational issues of the particular immigration services as a workplace. The way the services were spatially organized and the work administered and appointed, their technical configurations (in collecting, processing and delivering data), their communication channels with collaborating and external institutions, and the quantity and qualifications of the staff employed have been such issues. Discussing the problems the civil servants come up with in serving their immigrant clients unfolded the qualitative section of the research whilst it verified the significance of the quantitative findings.

The findings from upper ranks are not positive: *the directors are unsatisfied with their superiors, their counterparts in other departments and their inferiors (staff)*. As mentioned above, there is no clear-cut legislation and insufficient communication with the ministries and other prefecture departments. There is scarce staff, mostly with short-term contracts, no meritocratic criteria in hiring it and hardly any educational seminars. The staff majority has never read the laws with which they process cases. *Findings are nor good from below: the staff, the main communication channel of the state with the immigrant that collects and processes cases, is unsatisfied with the existing working conditions and relations*. Everyone does everything and nothing; there is no prefigured position with specific delegated duties. There is no technical equipment and in some departments not even spatial organization of work duties. Overtime is unpaid. Under these managerial and working

⁷The legacy of postmodernism to sociology is evident in the discourse of ‘essentialism’ with which sociologists have been occupied from the early 1980s onwards. In the ‘aftermath’ of postmodernism, writers like Gellner, Hobsbawm and Anderson with their racism concern and their focus on the ‘fixed-essential’ narratives of nation and culture under the modern ‘nation-state’ have paved the way for a blossoming literature concerned with disclosing ‘essentialisms’ in the social, political, cultural and religious spheres of our cosmos.

⁸ See a review on theories of migration and labour in N.L.Green 2004.

conditions the civil servants' views are no surprise. References to phenotypical, physical characteristics (dirty, smelly, dark, with a strong accent are indicative descriptions) and to ethnical ('Albanians'⁹) and cultural (low intelligence) markers of certain immigrant groups are common when asking civil servants (mostly those in direct contact) about problems with immigrants. After all, there are no penalties for racist behaviour of civil servants included in the Code of the Civil Servants¹⁰. In brief, the enquiry has disclosed an ineffective working process that faces significant legitimacy challenges both from above (inefficient legislation that requires undeliverable tasks from the particular state services since it does not address the chronic problems of Greek bureaucracy, and problematic connections with other bodies and ministries) and below (demoralized employees with hardly any incentives or control to do their work)¹¹. *Under these conditions, racism is just the icing on the cake. It is the structural, organizational aspects of the immigration services that reproduce and/or mediate the varying perspectives of those who run the regularization process.*

I use the words *varying perspectives* on purpose here. Because from 'holing racism up' follows what I regard racism and what I do not. What constitutes discriminative practice against immigrants does not concern views but rather how certain perspectives are translated into attitudes on the production level. As this case study aims to argue, racism is not about opinions and likes/dislikes; rather it is evident when these socially constructed stereotypes weave through certain structures-conduits to influence one's work. This conceptualization of racism draws from the political philosophy of Brian Barry (2000). As recognizing collective *claims* should not be the goal of multicultural politics (this would constitute «positive discrimination»), changing people's views should not be the frontline target of policies tackling with racism. What we can do is create structures that would prevent personal perspectives from coming into action. Defining as racist a practice that categorizes and treats individuals according to their ethnocultural markers and not their other qualities does not lead anywhere. Nor treating racism with bans on people committing the above will do much. For they define racism on pure ideological grounds, disentangled from the dimensions of any social context. This 'ahistorical', de-contextualized definition of racism maintains an ideological arsenal to fight racism. Should one attempt to address efficiently the perpetuation of discrimination and racism, he/she should not equate the cause with the means. I do not regard the mainly negative views of civil servants about immigrants as racism. Had I done this I would have treated their views and the application of their views at work as the same thing. Indicative of what I regard racist practice is the following sayings of a civil servant:

«with the Greeks we [civil servants] argue even more [than the immigrants]...the Greeks that come to help immigrants [friends, employers]...they ask [about] everything and they insist».

⁹ The ethnicity of the Albanian has become a negative symbol - a fixed, uncontested narrative - of the contemporary Greek societal/cultural vocabulary. It is a common pattern for «many Greeks to call one another "Albanian" when they want to characterize the other thief or murderer. They also say "you look like an Albanian" implying that the other is ugly, poorly dressed, dirty and tired» (Marvakis, Pansanoglou & Pavlou eds, 2001, p.359).

¹⁰ It should be noted that this Code is under renewal at the time that this paper is written, 15 years after the advent of immigrants and 7 years after the first regularization attempt.

¹¹ On efficiency and legitimacy see Dahrendorf, R. (1984), 'Efficiency and Legitimacy: on the 'governability of Democracies', *The Political Quarterly*, Vol.51 (No 4), 1984 pp.393-410

Of course the case is not that Greeks ask more things than immigrants. Civil servants are annoyed with the Greeks because they are forced to come with a proper answer. In the case of immigrants this does not occur. On the contrary, the majority of civil servants turn their obligation to reply efficiently into the immigrants' obligation to «know from beforehand their rights and obligations [to know what they want to find out!] in order to be served». Immigrant clients do not have the right to be demanding while Greeks do. *Accountability to the public is switched on and off along ethnic lines*. The racism here is also expressed in a politically correct manner. The civil servants are very aware of demonstrating their progressive thinking by talking about the rights and obligations of immigrants. However, they end their sentence by saying that the immigrants «have too many rights» for the 'hospitality' that Greece offers.

Revisiting racism

This paper attempted to demonstrate how the methodology of a certain research revisits the discourse of racism. In particular, the design of the research that led me to categorize and thus interpret certain findings in a certain way has been informed by the above definition of racism. Categorizing the data in quantitative and qualitative, prepared the ground for interpretations that highlighted the historical structural problem behind phenomena of racism in immigration services. Even the early access stage disclosed data bringing the researcher close to the identification of the problem. Similarly my conceptualization of racism is inextricably connected with the suggestions for the problems of the Greek regularization process. A piece of legislation involving penalties for racist attitudes, although important, would not solve much or even touch the core of the problem in question. But for measures that would address the structural problems of Greek bureaucracy, nothing could assure its implementation.

We have seen that the integration of the variable of immigration and the 'Other' in a low efficiency, morale and control workplace is likely to accentuate the common negative characteristics of civil servants. These working conditions and relations leaving ground for discriminative practices are interwoven with the history of the modern Greek state and Public Administration. Policy recommendations along this line, would, therefore, be interconnected with the causes of inadequacy of the Greek State. An inadequacy that is cynically evident in the particular sector of Public Administration for the same reason that it is evident or disguised in the other sectors: lack of political will. The sole (but significant) difference in this case is that political will is not answerable to any numerically significant electoral body (immigrants do not vote), and thus does not have to be disguised under the usual ideological cloaks that politics is performed.

Therefore some fundamental questions need to be addressed. The disentanglement of state structures from a lingering political system is the principal target. Towards this direction, the answer could lie near civil society; a variable far from claimed, and manipulated by the political system, that could exercise pressure on political will. Legislation, inter-departmental communication, hiring procedures, funds are all questions related to this variable.

On the actual production level, establishing transparent processes of interactive communication with the public would be a big step forward. In this respect, the involvement of media, syndicates, the Citizen's Advocate, immigrants'

unions and associations not only in monitoring (controlling) but also in consulting roles should be considered.

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**Title: Mobilising geographies:
notions of Greek-Cypriot diaspora in London**

Introduction

My analysis is an attempt to understand the notion of diaspora (from the Greek verb *speiro* [to sow] and the preposition *dia* [over]) and particularly the formation of Greek-Cypriot diasporic identity in London. I am particularly interested in issues of displaced belonging, the mobility of 'being' and the negotiation of loyalties in the process of creating viable livelihoods in diasporic conditions; the powerful local-global nexus that shapes and re-shapes fluid identifications is also a matter of discussion. The paper's overall argument is that diasporic identities are by no means static and fixed but subject to change and in constant dialogue with the social, political and economic conditions of the 'host' society. It is true that a re-conceptualisation of 'space' is necessary in formulating an understanding of 'belonging' – with spatial non-spatial dimensions to it- and of course such a theoretical endeavour leads to the deconstruction of issues of 'citizenship'. Diasporic populations adhere to an 'imaginary belonging' one that is partly confined to 'another place' and 'another time'. As such the politics of the past in creating and altering the present are also subject to analysis.

The ethnographic data consist of informal and formal discussions with a Greek-Cypriot man, Mr. Giorgos, owner of a *Taverna* in central London. Mr Giorgos left Cyprus during the 70s. My frequent visits to this *Taverna* during the years 1996-7 provided me with many useful observations and illuminating discussions with the owner, staff and clients. It must be noted that my remarks are by no means conclusive yet they do throw some 'ethnographic' light to the conceptualisation of diaspora.

In what follows I first explore the theories concerning the formation of diasporas and also assess their applicability. Then I provide some observations from the *Taverna* setting and move to specific issues that my interviews illuminated like for example issues of exclusion and economic adaptation, the importance of family bonds and the institution of the Church in maintaining collective identifications in the 'exile', issues of language, and friendships. Finally I try – in the light of my ethnographic data – to provide alternative insights to the notion of diaspora and emphasise the processes of negotiation and contestation involved in its formation.

Some theoretical remarks

According to Cohen (1997) the idea of diaspora may vary to a significant extent however, diasporic communities which are settled outside their country of origins claim on their loyalty and emotions and adhere to their natal or imagined natal land. The concept of imagination is indeed important in conceiving the bonds between the members of a diasporic community but also their affinity with their country of origins and the citizens of that country. This loyalty is often embedded in language, religion and traditions. In a sense - as Anderson (1991) had remarked for national communities - diasporas are 'imagined communities' *par excellence* with a strong sense of imaginary kinship. Thus members of a diaspora have a strong sense of belonging together, being members of a brotherhood, participating in a fraternity.

Cohen (1997) argued of 'nation- peoples' meaning groups evincing a 'peoplehood' a sense of 'togetherness'. Such peoples are imperfectly held within the borders of nation-states and they are often treated with hostility and discrimination by the indigenous population since they are believed – factually and symbolically – to be 'imperfect' citizens, who 'lack' certain qualities in order to be included in the host society. Their common loyalty is often embedded in language, religion and traditions. Diasporas have been shaped by the processes of migration and colonisation but some signify a collective trauma, victimisation and persecution. According to the – Cohenian scheme - Jews, Africans, Palestinians and Armenians are cases of victim diasporic populations whereas the Indians are an example of labour and imperial diaspora. Yet Cohen recognises that the typology he proposed is ambiguous and rather fluid since some groups take dual or multiple forms and others change their character over time.

This is the case of the Greek-Cypriots in London. Actually there are two groups: those who settled before 1974 and the consequent dichotomization of the island of Cyprus and the occupation of the northern half by Turkey and those who settled before the 1974 tragic events and therefore lost their property, family and friends. It is obvious that in the first case we are dealing with a labour / imperial diaspora and in the second with a victim diaspora, who has suffered victimisation and persecution. Yet even this typology is inadequate in explaining the multiplicity of diasporic movements. Greek-Cypriots, like the owner of the *Taverna* I interviewed, who came before 1974 belong to a labour diaspora but have suffered and internalised loss and deprivation. Mr Giorgos – as will come up in the discussions we had – internalised the loss of his home, family, friends and the nostalgia of his 'lost' country. Though he was not victimised and

persecuted because of the events of 1974 he was nevertheless 'victimised' and suffered the trauma of poverty, deprivation, exile and unwanted migration. Typologies are for the most helpful theoretical tools but inadequate in explaining the shifting conditions of life.

In a recent book titled *Greek Diaspora in the 20th century* (1999) it is argued that Greek diasporic communities have been theoretically neglected or even undertheorised with a considerable lack of ethnographic material. The book offers an overview of the Greek communities in Egypt, Australia, America, South Africa and Russia but also discusses some of the applications of Greek nationalism as far as the formation of Greek identity. In particular, the chapter on Greeks in Australia by Doumanis is an example of a population of immigrants who wished to start a new life in a modern, capitalistic environment. Greeks who initially worked as manual workers soon climbed the socio-economic scale and entered the capitalist economy of their new country. From the early 20th century until recently they opened numerous coffee-shops and fish-shops near the popular beaches where natives used to go during weekends. The author (1999) argues that Greeks successfully developed a model of 'restaurant culture' in Australia gradually succeeding in altering their conditions of life: from open discrimination and stigmatisation to acceptance and recognition. But this was indeed a very slow process; the first immigrants in Australia remember being banished for using their native language and being called degradingly «γούγογκς» meaning 'black dogs'.

The experiences of Greek-Cypriots in London were not much different. Mr Giorgos recalled similar situations of discrimination during his first years in London that gradually gave place to tolerance associated with the economic achievements of the Greek people in the host country:

"Things have changed a lot since I first came here. They did not even want to listen to our language, Greek, Imagine the Greek music! In my neighbourhood a Greek who used to listen to the Greek music he was forced by English neighbours to turn the radio off. They used to complain: 'we don't want to hear your nonsense'. For them we were just 'bloody foreigners'. Everything has changed now. They have learned to accept our music and us! Well don't forget that our community here is very strong. Even the poorest Greek has got his own house and car. But we have worked hard for all we have achieved"

My discussions with Mr Giorgos

The owner of the Taverna admitted that it was easier for him to speak in Greek yet in most of our on and off the record discussions he had difficulties in using Greek words and expressions and therefore he made extensive use of his English. Mr Giorgos

narrated to me that the first one from his family to visit England was his father in 1960. After two years the rest of the family came to meet him with a ship called *ENOTRIA* a word that stands for 'togetherness' in Greek. In 1967 he got married to a Cypriot woman and they had two children.

He remembered:

"We were very poor. We had to leave our country, see we had no choice. My parents had six children. Can you imagine? I stopped school in Cyprus when I was 12 years old. At those years if had no money you could not study. In my country I used to work in a restaurant. I was washing the dishes and then I went to work in a dry-cleaner's. When I first came here I did the same job. At that time Cyprus was a British colony that's why we came here. But now we are strong; we have many Churches, schools and a radio station"

The interviewed talked to me a lot about the first years of their settlement in England, the difficulties of adjusting to a new country and the exclusion that foreigners suffered:

"At the beginning I faced many difficulties. The most difficult thing was the fact that I couldn't speak English. Then it was that the English people did not want to mix with us, we were considered somehow 'inferior' to them. I never loved this place. I still hope that someday I might return to my country"

The Orthodox Christian Church was a unifying institution at least for the first generation of Greek-Cypriot immigrants. Mr Giorgos explained that he used to attend the Church every Sunday but in recent years life has been more demanding and it is not possible anymore attending the Orthodox mass every Sunday. Being quite apologetic he noted:

"Even today I want to go there often but I work very hard. Of course work is always the excuse but I am Greek and I will remain Greek until I die"

The interviewed added that language is for him one of the most important elements of his identity and it has been a fundamental family affair. The first language that his children learned was Greek and according to him even at school they kept saying that they were Greeks. Mr Giorgos admitted that he likes socialising more with other Greeks but because of his work he mixes with all kinds of people. Though, because of his work he socialised with all kinds of people he really enjoyed being with other Greeks because they understand him. As he put it: "Greeks are different. Greek are funny and they can understand your sense of humour"

Apollonia: a Greek-Cypriot Taverna in London

'The restaurant' serves often as the locus of the re-production of the original land's culture but also the laboratory of new cultural patterns involved in the creative

processes of adaptation and synthesis. My observations of the *Taverna* setting revealed that the acts of eating, drinking and dancing could prove essential in perpetuating, re-creating and altering diasporic patterns.

Finkelstein (1989) claimed that dining out is a rich source of incivility and that restaurants are public places where social relations are harmoniously managed and there is a certain degree of mutual tolerance between a wide variety of customers. Yet the scholar argued that we are made lazy because the decoration is fixed and the interaction is controlled thus restricting openness and free engagement.

For Martens and Warde (1997) the emphasis must be laid on the concept of 'pleasure' and the fact that different peoples choose to eat in different restaurants for a variety of reasons. They note that "The sources of satisfaction from eating out are thus wide-ranging, indicating a mix of traditional and modern urban pleasures. Arguably the traditional pleasures of achieving comfort from food and stimulation from companionship provide a reliable platform from which other, more modern, pleasures may be pursued (1997: 142).

But the concept of pleasure is itself subject to deconstruction; instead of a unitary 'pleasure' various pleasures emerge and 'eating out' acquires several meanings. For example 'eating out' can be associated with 'ethnic pleasures' or the experience of 'returning to the original country'. In turn these concepts are often associated with other concepts like 'authenticity', 'originality' and 'traditionality'. This was the case for Mr Giorgos and his two level Greek-Cypriot Taverna; its name was actually the name of an ancient Greek god. The paintings on the walls reminded of 'traditional' Greek dancers and when the owner at some point changed the wall paintings to ancient Greek representation like temples he remarked:

"Now the Taverna is more Greek. Our previous decoration was also Greek. But now we have decided to bring in the decoration something ancient"

As noted (Soysal 2000) diaspora is a past invented – with no sense of fabrication – in the present. It can be argued that diasporic people are not a lived reality but part of a wider programme to promote continuity and coherence of broken down life stories due to migrancy and exile. For that reason 'the past' either close or distant (see traditional Greek culture and ancient Greek culture) becomes a powerful, unifying symbol of diasporic communities.

Eating Greek food in the Taverna was promoting feelings of 'authenticity' and 'purity' and it was through eating the Greek cuisine that 'others' – mostly Europeans – were 'introduced' to the Greek culture. Mr Giorgos commented:

"Our cuisine is purely Greek but we also serve some food for others, I mean for other nationalities. For example lamb chops, pork chops also chicken, you know dishes that foreigners prefer. Many people have not tried the Greek cuisine yet. That is why our menu is rich in Greek-Cypriot dishes like *kleftiko*, *stifado*, *fasolakia*, *keftedakia*, *souvlaki*, *moussaka*, we also serve many fish dishes like *kalamari*, *marida*, *mparbouni*. See, we have a big variety for every nationality"

The owner of the Taverna argued that through some 'European tastes' he was trying to promote the Greek cuisine and eventually through music and dancing 'Greekness' and 'Greek spirit'. What comes out from the above is that 'the past' either as ancient past or as authentic/ 'traditional' past was celebrated and 'commemorated' through the acts of decoration, eating, listening to the music and dancing.

While the Taverna of the first floor food was far more expensive yet the one in the basement had a more 'Greek' decoration, the food was cheap, and the music was Greek. The waiters were mostly Greeks but some were Yugoslavians who had some knowledge of Greek. At times Greek dancers, in traditional costumes were dancing famous Greek songs and they were encouraging the clients to dance with them; it was as if those performances enacted a process of encountering the 'other', the exotic. Most customers were willing to dance and thus participate in another culture even for a few minutes. According to Mr Giorgos they lacked the Greek 'spirit' and that's why they could not dance as Greeks do: "When a Greek dances you can tell. The others are so funny". Only some clients were Greek or with Greek origins and the majority of them were Londoners or Western Europeans. Mr Giorgos noted that:

"Customers come here not only for the food but for the hospitality we offer, for the kindness of the staff and for the fun. 95% of our customers are foreigners who want to feel Greek just for a night, to eat Greek, drink Greek, and smash the plates like we do...(interestingly enough in Greece smashing the plates has been abandoned for more than a decade. Instead they throw flowers). Most of them have been here for vacations either to Greece or Cyprus and they kept their memories with them. They want to come here in order to live again those happy moments. Some of them have even visited the Greek islands. That's why they love the Greek spirit"

In his words it was as if globalisation - with its central process of the intensification of human contact via tourism - was 'transferring' other countries in London and this 'return' was lived through the experience of an ethnic restaurant. The music, dance and Greek food were being reproduced in a Greek Taverna and foreigners who had

visited Greece were invited to participate again in the Greek 'experience' bringing their own baggage of memories and preferences. Greek nights in the Taverna seemed as imaginary journeys to that remote country.

The contestations of diasporic identities

Typologies and clear-cut categorisations are too limiting in our endeavour to conceptualise diasporas. However diasporic identities are clearly responsive to the conditions – social, political and economic- of the arrival societies. The process of dialogue is at the heart of diasporic claims. According to Soysal (2000) the axiomatic primacy given to the formation of nation-states, as geographically bound entities is seriously put into question by the post-war changes in the geography and practice of belonging.

Thus, belonging to a diaspora alters the concept of 'space' and also our ideas on fixed and emplaced notions of 'citizenship'. For diasporic belonging is a mobile and displaced belonging constantly involved in negotiation and contestation. The paper describes how everyday, trivial performances like eating, drinking, listening to the music and dancing had been so analysed as important ingredients that give meaning to the concept of diaspora and prescribe the notion of 'citizenship'

Diasporic identities do not exist in a vacuum; they contain meanings of displacement and forced – directly or indirectly – migration and the trauma of exile. But most importantly such identities are formulated through the conceptualisation of 'difference' with the culture of the arrival society. But again 'difference', inclusion and exclusion – some might argue – assimilation is always responsive to host social, political and economic conditions and found in a constant dialogue with them. As noted identity does not grow out of clearly bound communities and it is not a quality that can be possessed or owned by individual or collective social actors. It is instead, a mobile, often unstable relation of difference (1996, Lavie and Swedenburg).

My observations of the Taverna setting revealed that solidifying the sense of being and 'belonging' to an imagined homeland can be achieved through the acts of eating, listening to the music and dancing. In the case of Greek-Cypriots in London the sense of sharing an imaginary collective citizenship is daily internalised through participation in those acts. It was as if the Taverna stood for their country of origins and was certainly a medium to return to her. But that experience was not exclusively for Greek-Cypriots; other people, with diverse nationalities were also 'invited' to live the 'Greek experience' in the Taverna and 'be' Greeks for a night. It is obvious that 'citizenship'

and 'national belonging' are too limiting concepts in order to understand the multiplicity of human experience in a global era.

Instead of an epilogue

Mr Giorgos is a Greek-Cypriot who has been living and working in London for the last forty years, his wife is Cypriot but they got married in London, his children claim to be Greek but hardly speak any Greek. A whole range of identities that are indicative of diasporic conditions. I would like to end my discussion with this man's words:

"After 36 years I am still saying that some day I will go back to my country. It is my pleasure to talk about the Greek feeling to another Greek. When you leave London don't forget about me. Write what we've discussed, what you have seen in here. People in Greece must learn how we feel, how cruel *xenitia* is, how much we miss our country. But we live here, we work here, our lives are here. After all these years I'm used pushing myself to feel that this is my home. Now it is easier for me..."

After all diaspora is more than just a condition: it is a process, in which individual agency is responsible for constructions, re-constructions and everyday negotiated identifications.

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**UNIVERSITY OF THE AEGEAN, GREECE
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY**

*The experience of paid domestic work in the context of Albanian migration to
Greece
A case study*

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The experience of paid domestic work in the context of Albanian migration to Greece¹

A case study

One of the basic elements of Greek economy and job market, which affects immediately migrant employment, is the existence and expansion of a large informal unregulated sector².

Migrant women that work in the sector of domestic work lack of occupational status. They usually work without insurance and they are not normally given days off, or holidays. There is no association or other institutions that would represent the rights of women in the labour domain. Moreover, the employer can dismiss the worker whenever he/she wants.

Domestic work is difficult to be defined as a profession, in terms of the tasks included³. In addition, domestic work involves emotional care which increases the difficulty to be considered as a profession. Domestic workers are particularly vulnerable in the domestic space where they work. Employers – as they have shown relative studies – impose them various forms of power and control, and confirm their dominant status. The form of domestic work depends each time on the interpersonal work relationships between employers and employees.

Recent social research on domestic work has explored the intersection of gender, race and class in the mistress-maid relationship, especially in the case of minority/ migrant groups of domestic workers. The main focus of these works is often the exploitative

¹ This paper is based on ethnographic material collected during my fieldwork research from 2001 to 2003. The research conducted in Patras, a Greek city, where I studied a group of migrants from Albania (ethnic Greeks, or the so called “vorioipiotes”).

² See Iosifides (1997)

³ Anderson’ s work (2000) offers a contribution to the theory of domestic work and discuss the problem of its definition.

nature of paid domestic work. Researchers have explored practices and strategies of coping with the problems of domestic work and discuss various forms of resistance⁴.

The domestic space, as a workplace for the women domestic workers from Albania, is one of the fields which attracted me early during my fieldwork research⁵. The overwhelming majority of Albanian women is occupied in this sector of black economy, that is to say paid domestic service. Hence, it was obvious its importance in their lives, which can be confirmed by the relative mentions in our discussions and their narratives of their experiences.

In my research domestic work is not the center⁶. My main concern is to explore the ways migrants perceive and interpret their new social environment and construct a worldview in the frameworks of marginalisation⁷.

In these contexts, I consider domestic work that is carried out in the domestic space of Greek employees, as a microcosm of the interrelations between the two groups (migrants/ natives) that meet and interact in the same environment. Hence, I see the domestic space as a preferential cross-cultural field. For many women from Albania the unique or perhaps the more basic cross-cultural experience they have with Greeks, is the one that is constituted in the domestic work setting.

In the case of women from Albania⁸ in Greece, I observed that they were adapted with comfort and flexibility in the domestic setting, acquiring profits and benefits that were not immediately connected with the improvement of their labour conditions or the increase of their wage. I thus thought, that it would be better to examine precisely what means improvement of labour conditions for these women. How they struggle to

⁴ For a guide to bibliography and a critical discussion of research in domestic work see Constable (1997). She also discusses the issue of power. Her ideas about resistance and empowerment were very useful for my analysis in this paper. I am also influenced by Romero's work (1992). Her study on Chicanas domestic workers illustrate their struggle and their coping strategies for improving working conditions.

⁵ Lamphere (1992) illustrates the significance of research in the workplace, in her study of interaction between new immigrants and established residents.

⁶ In this paper, the emphasis is not on domestic work but on a woman's domestic worker life. So, I am not exploring theoretical issues of domestic work here. I imply or simply mention some of them.

⁷ I mention here Hirschon (1989) and her study on Asia Minor Refugees in Greece. Hirschon illustrates the concept of a people's worldview, or cosmology, as a concept with explanatory value.

⁸ I prefer the term "women from Albania" instead of "Albanian women", to avoid stressing Albania as a country of ethnic affiliation, according to my informants' practices.

strengthen their “place” – their position in the host society – without claiming collectively their labour rights, without many times even mentioning them. I explored the particular practices and strategies employed by migrant women in the context of domestic work.

The concept of strategy is very significant in revealing migrant women’s inventiveness: how they define the framework within they act, how they seek their interests and try to practise some form of power (in a field where each group – employers and employees – struggle for maximizing the advantages domestic work has to offer). The various forms of action that migrant domestic workers develop improve and strengthen their position in the host society, in terms of their own worldview and construction of reality. These are practices of coping with marginalisation. Developing an ethos of adaptability migrants from Albania have a powerful will not to be marginalized in the new social world in which they chose to live.

It is in this context that attitudes towards domestic work can be interpreted. Domestic work becomes widely acceptable between migrant women from Albania. It is relatively easy to find and there’s no need to be qualified for doing this kind of job. In addition, as a work, causes competition and rivalry between the members of the group, as networks of close relatives or friends provide opportunities for domestic work⁹. Finding a good domestic work is considered a success. I claim, thus, that domestic work becomes a powerful means for the achievement of the migrant’s group empowerment and progress.

⁹ A point that cannot be illustrated further, since an analysis of the role of the household should be done.

*Evdoxia, a domestic worker from Albania*¹⁰

I turn next to a presentation of a particular case of paid domestic work, which attracted my interest during my research and was studied over a long period of time. This case of domestic work combines general tasks of cleaning (physical labour) and caring (emotional labour). It is a form of domestic work practiced by many Albanian women of my research, especially middle-aged women. As I have already mentioned, I see domestic space as the migrant women's workplace and a prevalent field of exploring migrant women's experiences.

Evdoxia is a 55-year-old woman from Albania – a widow who has lived for the past years in Patras under the same roof with her two sons and her brides. At the time of my research Evdoxia had already worked for Mrs Areti, who is her Greek employer, for at least two years. Mrs Areti reaches her nineties. She is a widow and also childless. She has a few relatives in Patras, but they don't have a very close. Mrs A. is not bedridden, but because of her age, she has to deal with many health problems that require continuous medico-pharmaceutical care.

When she decided to employ a domestic worker, some years ago, she addressed to the circle of her acquaintances in the parish – people who share a common interest in religious activity. I should mention that Greek old women that have an intense religious life (they are “people of the church” as Patrini usually say) prefer Christian orthodox domestic workers from Albania and more specifically “vorioiprotisses” (as they are called). The church of Patras, through its network, has helped enough ethnic Greek women from Albania to work in Patras' Greek households as domestic workers. It is supposed that migrants of this category can adjust better to the requirements imposed by old Greek women: they speak the same language and have the same religion. In addition, Greeks think that in relation to other categories of migrants, ethnic Greek from Albania, are more familiar culturally.

¹⁰ I call the domestic worker from Albania by her first name “Evdoxia”, and the employer more formally “Mrs Areti”, following the common practice of the subjects in my research.

Evdoxia, who was well known in the networks of church, as she had been looking after an old bedridden priest, was recommended. She has to sleep in her employer's house where she stays until midday, according to their informal negotiations. Afterwards, she can be absent for a couple of hours and return at about eight o' clock in the evening. Sometimes, manipulating the labour time she can be absent even in the morning. She gets up at 6 and returns at 9 or 10. (the time interval that she can be absent is flexible and can be changed depending on the case: this is one of the most controversial matters between the employee and the employer where each one tries to impose the best condition for her, negotiating the time limits).

Her duties include general tasks such as cleaning the house, doing the laundry, ironing or cooking. In addition, she provides the medico-pharmaceutical care of the elderly woman and has to help her taking her bath, combing, cutting her nails etc. Activities that take place out of the domestic space are also included: for example paying bills, shopping, accompanying her employer to the church, for a walk and to her summer holidays.

From about eight o' clock in the morning to one o' clock at noon, certain activities in the domestic space are carried out regularly, with the participation in some degree of the employer. I should mention that for an elderly Greek woman as Mrs Areti, the strict planning of daily time with routine tasks is very important and she insists on it.

Thus, they get up at about seven o' clock, then the prayer follows and Evdoxia prepares the breakfast. She helps Mrs Areti in the bathroom and she gives her the medicines she must take daily. Then she opens the windows and makes the beds. The main space for their morning activities is the kitchen, where they are usually together. They discuss about the daily program.. A common topic for example is the preparing of the meal. Then perhaps Evdoxia has to do the daily shopping, go to the nearest super market, to the groceries, to the bakery etc. Evdoxia cooks according to Mrs Areti' s indications. Sometimes, when she feels well, the employer herself helps her, but she usually watches and gives her instructions. At the same time they discuss various subjects. Until lunch, which is always ready at about 12:30, the time is filled

with other domestic or outside activities, depending on the daily program. Therefore, Evdoxia may dust and mop the house, do the laundry or iron etc.

Evdoxia prefers not to be supervised by her employer. She avoids physical labour, and activities of general housecleaning are carried out hastily and without particular care. Mrs Areti rarely gives instructions on how to clean her house. However she controls special tasks like ironing that demands to be done carefully. She also monitors food preparation, giving her instructions.

Lunch plays a significant role in their relationship as the two women eat together. After they finish, Evdoxia arranges the kitchen, with little help from the employer, and her same routine indications such as "put it there", "these towels need to be washed ". Mrs Areti may also encourage Evdoxia to take some food for her home. Then she can leave.

Sometimes the employer expresses the wish to go out, just for a walk or for shopping. Then they make a small walk in the market, where they meet neighbours or other Mrs Areti' s acquaintances, which Evdoxia knows well now. They always ask about the employee's health and have small talks. Evdoxia participates as if she is not a paid domestic worker but a very close relative to Mrs Areti.

Live- in domestic work is a good choice for women from Albania without pressing familial obligations, for example widows. Evdoxia thinks that this type of work provides her more advantages in relation to other unskilled labour. She prefers the caring of old people. As she explains to me it is difficult for her to clean houses and do heavy- duty jobs. Moreover, as I suggest, staying at night in her employer's house, is a practice for coping with problems of co -residence and lack of space in her own house. In addition she can avoid family conflicts. For this reason Evdoxia says "my brides don' t want me. I am now married with Mrs Areti" , expressing her invidious position in the household.

However, Evdoxia. connects directly her life with the lives of her sons, and she considers herself to be an integral member of their household. Domestic work gives her the ability to support her family. She emphasises the value of family, as most

domestic workers from Albania do. The value of family is presented as the base of their argument that justifies the acceptance of domestic work. Family is Evdoxia's first priority. The following words illustrate this: "For us, the elder, children come first, I do not have anything to wait from life for me".

When she doesn't work, that is to say, when she is absent from her employer's house, during the afternoon, she cares for her family. And, indeed, her program is adapted more to the needs of her family, the needs of the household. The distance from her employer's house to her own is 25 minutes on foot and with quick walking. Evdoxia rarely uses means of transport, because she tries to save money. It's worth noting that Evdoxia herself spends very little for her personal expenses and most of her earnings are saved in the bank. Her sons want to buy a house and she supports them.

When she is at home, she deals with routine tasks. She offers some help to her sons or her brides if she is asked to, and tries to find time for her social obligations: pay a visit to friends and relatives etc. When she returns to Mrs. Areti at about 8 in the evening, she is so tired that the only thing she wants is to climb into bed: "To rest my feet", as she says.

Evdoxia experiences an extremely religious environment working for Mrs Areti. She sleeps in her own room, where pictures of Saints are placed on the walls. There is television in the house but it is out of use. Mrs Areti prefers to listen to the radio and almost always the broadcast of the orthodox church of Patras. Even though Evdoxia has requested to open the television the employer denies it persistently. Mrs Areti likes initiating discussions on religion topics. Furthermore, many tasks performed by Evdoxia are related to religious activity or rules and behaviours in the context of Christian orthodox tradition (for example making altar-bread).

Evdoxia, however has learned how she should behave and she can cope with her employer's requirements. She knows, for example, which are the subjects that her employer likes to talk about, when somebody should keep a fast (that is a basic form of religious behaviour in the Christian religion). Evdoxia, furthermore, never wears trousers (a preferable type of dress for women from Albania): I was impressed

because her employer imposes this behaviour¹¹. Sometimes, when she returns home in the evening, Evdoxia gets into her room with her own key secretly and changes her trousers before her employer sees her. In addition the employer criticises even Evdoxia's young brides that happen to visit her regularly, about the trousers.

In this case we have a form of indirect discipline and control of behaviour according to the employer's cultural beliefs: some rules are said orally, other are implied. I report the following, characteristic, in my opinion, example: one day during the Holy Week (a period of intense religious activity for the Greek Orthodox), I met Evdoxia when she came out of the employer's house. It was seven o'clock in the afternoon and she told me that she was going to church. I wondered, however, where Mrs Areti was. As I was informed, she wasn't feeling well, however she obliged Evdoxia to go to church. Despite the fact that Evdoxia accepted her order as part of the work, she preferred to spend enough time talking with me, and only after a period of time, - for fear of being seen by any of Mrs Areti's acquaintances - she went to church.

Nevertheless, Evdoxia claims that she is patient with her employer, being accustomed to hardship because of her life in Albania. She does not feel intense psychological pressure or boredom¹². However she criticizes the religious environment in her workplace. Furthermore, she has invented practices that help her escape from the routine of her work. She likes creating social relationships in her employer's neighbourhood, and she pursues occasions for activity outside the employer's house so as to meet other people, learn news, and gossip. In addition, work hours outside home cannot be controlled easily and this is to the employee's advantage¹³. If she is late, the employer may complain but Evdoxia knows how to maintain the limits of her employer's tolerance.

¹¹ In Greece women that follow fanatically the traditions of Greek Orthodox Church do not wear (or prefer not to wear) trousers, considering them as an inappropriate dress.

¹² Many women in my research report psychological pressure.

¹³ This practice is usually adopted by domestic workers when performing tasks out of the domestic domain.

I turn now to a description of the relationship of the two women in the domestic space more analytically. It's not a typical employer - employee relationship. They both behave as being members of the same family. And indeed, they use the family metaphor to refer to their relations: Evdoxia says that Mrs Areti is "like mother" to her. The old woman sometimes calls her employee and refers to her as "eulogia" (ευλογία) (paraphrasing her name,) which means "blessing", expressing her gratitude towards her domestic worker Evdoxia calls her employer "kira Areti" (Mrs Areti). Kira is a term that expresses intimacy and differs from the more formal "kyria".

A basic element of this intimate relationship is confidence. The employer needs a confident person for working in her domestic and – hence – private space. On the other hand, confidence is a value for Evdoxia as well, who frequently refers with pride to her employer's trust to her. She mentions for example that Mrs Areti is not worried about her money and is not afraid of being stolen by her employee.

During the day the two women communicate and discuss all the time. This has impressed me, as I observed the same pattern of behaviour in other cases of domestic service, too. Discussion during housework or when they relax before sleeping is a striking aspect of this specific labour relation. Mrs Areti stresses that when Evdoxia is not home she has nobody to talk. Evdoxia has the right of her opinion and can speak easily. I will give an example: I witnessed one day a disagreement between the two women at Mrs Areti's home. Evdoxia's bride was present, and Mrs Areti had observed that she wore trousers and commented it negatively. Then Evdoxia reacted intensely. She said that wearing trousers is justified for a young girl from Albania. Moreover, she compared her bride from Albania with her employer's niece from Patras who visits her often. She made comments about her modern clothing, the trousers, the hairstyle, and all those elements that don't fit in with her age or social status.

The interpersonal relationship between these two women is based on mutual comprehension and sympathy¹⁴. The elderly woman is interested to learn everything about her employee. I observed that she knew about her life and her past in Albania, her familial situation and all the problems that she faces now in Greece.

In response, Evdoxia exaggerate her difficulties. In one of her tactics she uses the dominant stereotype of “vorioipirotis” for her own advantage¹⁵. The pattern of her life narratives is based on the dichotomy between here- the present / there – the past¹⁶. Besides, underlining the fact of her early widowhood, she intensifies the employer’s sympathy. These tactics are interpreted in the broader context of domestic workers coping strategies, aiming at a maximisation of the profits that could result from her work. For example, Evdoxia is not given a day-off normally. Nevertheless, she manages to be away some weekends, claiming a trip to Albania for family obligations.

I have noticed that Mrs Areti often addresses to Evdoxia with words expressing sympathy and pity for her problems. She says for example ”poor woman” («το κακόμοιρο», «το βασανισμένο»).

Gradually the employee improves her working conditions and her position in the work relationship. Understanding the dominant framework, she imposes her own requirements that cannot be expressed explicitly. She knows how to negotiate in a framework of restrictions (for example: it is not easy to press for a wage increase, while it’ s easier to achieve flexibility in domestic tasks).

One of the most impressive employee’ s practices is to hold a second job secretly: three times a week she does domestic work for a second employer, for two or three hours in the afternoon. She cares her family, doing general house cleaning. As she

¹⁴ I should mention Petronoti (2003) that provides an interesting study of an employer- employee interrelationship, in the cross – cultural and hierarchical context of domestic work in Greece. In particular she focus on practices of confrontation in the domestic space.

¹⁵ To understand this tactic I mention that the term “vorioipirotis” is attached special meaning and is related to a nationalistic rhetoric. Ethnic Greek from Albania use this term deliberately or spontaneously depending on the situations.

¹⁶ I notice that this is a common pattern of narratives among my “vorioipirotis” informants. I call these “narratives of collective self – presentation”.

claims, this work is quite easy, giving her the opportunity to add 200 euros monthly in her income. Evdoxia had worked in the past again for this family, caring an elderly woman who was bedridden. Offering to Evdoxia a second job opportunity the family expressed its satisfaction for Evdoxia's good caring.

Another tactic in the framework of domestic work is the employee's cooperation with members of her family in various ways. I will give an example. When Evdoxia's older bride was pregnant (for the second time immediately after a failed pregnancy), she had a lot of health problems. Evdoxia asked to be absent from the employer's home more hours than usual and, indeed, she achieved some flexibility in spite of her employer's objections. Then, Evdoxia "offered" her younger bride to replace her at work. The employer, indeed, paid for this without decreasing Evdoxia's wage. Sometimes, Evdoxia's sons may repair something or restore a technical damage in the employer's house. Usually, it is considered as a paid work, rather than a simple offering of help.

Domestic service, as in the case of Evdoxia, often involves not easily observable tasks: The need for emotional care, company and safety, are very important services for the employer. I observed the same in other cases too, and especially, where the employers were elderly women with a few relatives or without close kinship ties.

I suggest that in these cases, while the employer is vulnerable, a dependence on the domestic worker grows, with the latter taking advantage of it. The relation of dependence and the sense that she can difficultly be replaced, strengthen the vulnerable position of the employee in this case. During my research for example, Evdoxia followed a particular tactic of psychological pressure (I saw it as a form of power exercised by her to the employer): she used to tell her employer constantly that she had many job opportunities in her friendly environment, and above all, near her house. She claimed that she did not want to accept them because she understood the difficult position of her employer. And she did not want to abandon her. I don't know if she was telling the truth about having many job opportunities, but these claims caused her employer great anxiety.

I would like now to proceed to another subject: How does Evdoxia, the domestic worker, think about her work? How does she refer to it or to her employer? My ethnographic material gives me examples on the topic, as I often had the chance to discuss with Evdoxia these matters outside her employer's house.

I observed that Evdoxia didn't complain about her work, reporting the difficulties explicitly. However, she used a metaphor for her work that impressed me: She mentions "slavery". It is the dominant metaphor in order to characterize her work, when her employer is not present. In one of our discussions she stressed: "elderly women are the worst. They exploit you more than the others. Whereas in a house all you do is cleaning and then you leave".

Obviously when Evdoxia talks about exploitation, she refers to many aspects of her work relationship, without giving details. She does not say for example that the money she earns is not enough, but she says that another Greek woman had offered her 600 Euros monthly, (now she takes 500).

Such implicit mentions, confirm the fact that Evdoxia does not aim at a confrontation between her and her employer. An immediate rupture is not acceptable. She struggled to be considered as intimate and hence important person for her employer and to make her work relationship more flexible. I noticed that Evdoxia sometimes, used to express feelings of kindness for her employer. It seems to me that she pities her employer for her health problems. She also admits the abuse of her employer's confidence, when she is absent for a long time or she returns late in the evening.

However when she speaks for her life in Greece she says (in one of our recorded conversations):

«I felt (when I first came to Greece) that I will find a better life here, that I will see different things, I will also live an easy life, but I feel discomfort! Too much. I say it!. I run, I run... from the morning till the evening...I feel exhausted...

And what do we take? Money. We cannot come up to the monthly expenses...you have to pay the telephone, the water, rent... everything».

Migrants from Albania, and especially women domestic workers, emphasise their dependence on money and the need to survive which force them to work hard. They claim that Greek women don't do domestic work. It is one of the difficult, low-paid and degrading jobs, which Albanian women accepted and tried to cope with. And they say: "we clean houses now, we don't want our children to do the same!" In this phrase it is implied that they don't live for the present: migrants from Albania are orientated towards future by wishing to be not in the margins of the host society but a part of the mainstream.

Strategies of managing domestic work

I turn now to discuss the issue of strategies in the context of domestic work, based on Evdoxia's paradigm. I stress, that the improvement of domestic worker's position is linked more to the way that she perceives her interest (hers and her family's), than to an explicit understanding of her rights in the work sector.

One of the most basic strategies of domestic workers is the selection of their employers. This tactic is reflected in their "preferences". In their discourse, domestic work is separated into two categories that refer not only to a series of different tasks but to a different type of commitments and relations with the employer as well. The category "to clean houses¹⁷" refers to a more explicit category of work, where the relation with the employer is more formal. The category "to care for elderly people" (usually, it is live-in domestic work) implies a 'vague picture' and the domestic work is not easily defined: it is strictly interpersonal and requires emotional labour. Generally, the younger women show an explicit preference to the first category, that usually is a live out domestic work, working for more than one employer daily (or weekly). For older women, however, that cannot put up with exhaustive physical labour, live-in domestic work for elderly people is a better choice.

¹⁷ I use the indigenous categories. Domestic workers from Albania when being asked about their work say: I clean houses or I have one/two... house/s, I care for an old man/woman or I have an old man/woman. This distinction is based on the quality of the tasks performed. The emphasis on the houses: physical labour, the emphasis on persons: emotional labour. They never refer to themselves as domestic workers.

Evdoxia specifically, prefers working for an elderly woman. She claims that she got accustomed to old men and old women and she don' t like cleaning houses. Moreover, her employer provides her safety and stability. She is paid regularly without the fear of dismissal. The employer's social status is a factor of preference. She has a network of remarkable acquaintances that Evdoxia can use to promote her own affairs. Furthermore, as I showed, this work provides her flexibility.

Evdoxia' s main strategy lies in the way she manipulates the relationship with her employer: she avoids conflict and confrontation, encouraging a relationship of intimacy. This is a way of confronting with the problems of a strict and "hard" hierarchical work relationship.

In the relative bibliography intimacy is considered an employers' dominant practice in order to manipulate the domestic workers and bring them to a position of dependence. The term *maternalism* is used to define the superficial interest that the employer shows towards the employee, confirming the latter' s subordinate position. *Paternalism* is also a term often used in the bibliography of domestic work, in order to declare the dominant position of the employer. My ethnographic material offers examples, indicating that domestic workers respond to such patterns of work relationships (either paternalism or maternalism), confirming their subordinate position and the relation of dependence. Thus, for example, they accept with pleasure the gifts and the material benefits of all kinds from the employers. In their employer and her family, they often see a powerful person who can support or help them (doctor and lawyer are common examples of this perception: they emphasise being in the service of such an employer). In addition, the employer becomes part of a network of offering job opportunities (domestic work or other). Contracting spiritual kinship with the employer or with a member of her family is a common practice among migrants from Albania.

In this particular case I present here, intimacy is a powerful means of manipulating the relationship with the employer. Evdoxia expects from her Greek employer understanding, concern and protection. She also asks for respect.

She narrates the difficult years she lived in Albania and the difficulties of survival for her and her family in Greece. She asks for help and advice on various subjects. Mrs Areti responds. She feels pity and compassion for the domestic worker and she wishes to help her as much as possible. The various gifts – material benefits – are an expression of this feeling.

On the other hand, Mrs Areti expects the same feelings from the domestic worker. She pursues to reduce professionalism and convert their work relation into a kinship relation. What she expects and what she pays for, is more emotional service than cleaning.

As I described, Evdoxia's presence in the employer's house, is particularly "visible". The two women are always more or less in the same space and they are talking constantly. They gossip, exchange their opinions and comments on various subjects and they tell old stories. The dialogue with the employer strengthens the position of women domestic workers, allowing them "to have a voice" and hence identity, instead of being simply "the woman" or "the Albanida" (as Greek employers usually call the domestic workers from Albania): I believe that this practice is a way of re-interpret and reverse their hierarchic relation with the employer.

Religion, ethnic identity and other cultural patterns like attitudes towards family is a common cultural basis, which helps Evdoxia to emphasise "sameness", in the cross-cultural interaction with her employer. Talking constantly about her family and connecting the members of her family with the employer intensifies intimacy. The employer likes the frequent visits of Evdokia's young brides. Gradually intimacy converts to a relation of dependence. The elderly woman is afraid that Evdoxia will abandon for a better job, and claims that she tries not to disagree with her any more.

Intimacy is a characteristic feature of domestic work in the cases I observed. Generally, in their relations with the employers, migrant women from Albania show a remarkable disposition to extroversion. They may conceive the domestic space, their workplace, as a field of "penetration" in Greeks' world. They try to learn the new social environment and understand the dominant patterns so that they can use them for their own interests (and not only in the framework of their labour relation). Many

women have admitted in our discussions that they have learnt many things working in their employers' houses.

Women domestic workers are very careful, however, in creating relations of intimacy: they try to develop them as far as they serve their interests and in a way that the employer will not turn intimacy into exploitation. Yet, it seems difficult to be avoided.

Conflicts between employer and domestic worker are usually of a mild form. In the cases where the employer is too demanding, behaves in a bad manner or doesn't pay enough, the domestic worker does not overreact. She asks, for example, in a calm way what she wants, presenting her own arguments and then she may quit the work relationship.

The whole manipulation of domestic work suggest that women try to confront the difficulties of their work in an indirect and implicit way: for example telling lies and trying to deceit the employer as in Evdoxia's case of. Such practices are justified by the employees' experience of exploitation in the context of domestic work. In my view this could also be seen as a way of redefining or reversing hierarchical relationships as in the case of women's having a "voice" in the domestic space.

The significance of work in the world of Albanian migrants

To understand domestic workers practices and strategies it should be useful to set domestic work against the background of the wider context of indigenous thought. More specifically, I explore the meanings attached to the concept of *work*. How does the overall perception of work shape and influence the practices of the subjects in a new environment?

Migrants from Albania emphasise work and the way they work as basic elements of their identity: being from Albania means to work hard. Images of the "other", of the "Greek", are constructed in oppositional terms: the general idea they hold about Greeks is that they are lazy, they avoid hard work and especially the younger "wait them all ready from their parents", as they mention. Greek women are also believed to avoid working. They are blamed for keeping their houses dirty and waiting for "the

woman”.¹⁸ Evdoxia in my paradigm believes that her employer does not understand the difficulties she is confronted with, because she has not worked ever in her life. In one of our conversations Evdoxia claims that «Greeks sit in an office or in a shop and wait for the work to come», while «we catch the work from our hands», expressing a popular view among my informants.

For migrants from Albania work is associated with hard physical activity. This connotation is implicit in the term “δουλειά” (an alternative term for work which is more preferable among my informants). It’s worth mentioning the frequency of the adjective «σκληρός» «hard» in their speech. They often say in order to declare their way of working "with sweat and blood": it is precisely an expression of the extreme distress.

Work, “δουλειά”, is highly valued. It is considered the primary source of personal advancement, and collective progress. "With work you can go on" according to popular expression. And also “you accomplish” or “you do” a lot. The central place of work in their system of values has been constituted historically. It is rooted in the dominant ideology of communistic Albania. Employment was one of the main preoccupations of the state, which was obligated to secure jobs for the citizens. Everybody, men and women worked – unemployment as exist in capitalism was unknown. Even the institution of voluntary work functioned additionally in ideological level rendering the work synonymous of offer in the collective good and interest.

In the place of settlement, in Greece, hard work is praised, as I have already mentioned, and the present success is considered to be a result of it. However at the same time, and according to the conditions of a new social world, individual adaptability and flexibility, individual skill in negotiating and making connections or taking opportunities, are praised too.

These attitudes are expressed in their narratives. Migrants from Albania tend to narrate stories of their efforts to earn a living in a framework of constraints. They

¹⁸ The usual expression for calling a domestic worker.

emphasise their cleverness in overcoming the difficulties, and in manipulating the situations for their own advantage.

Such attributes are in accordance with the new framework within migrant from Albania act: from the strict dependence on the state (in Albania) in the individual responsibility of their work setting (in Greece).

Now, in the place of settlement, domestic work is defined in these contexts: it is also highly valued, as it is linked to the economic survival of the household. Men are very proud of women' s work and a commonly heard statement is: “we have been very much helped by our wives”.

For domestic women from Albania, domestic work does not mean only hard work. They redefine work in terms of profit, either material – money and gifts given by their employers – or symbolic: networks with members of the host society that increase their social position. Among migrant women a common pattern of narratives is about their employer's support. (eg offering of a second job,). In the symbolic profit we can also include all kind of knowledge (useful information and advices, learning of Greek language, comprehension of dominant cultural patterns), that is the outcome of cross-cultural relationships and interaction in the domestic space. In the context of domestic work, women adopt practices and strategies for promoting their own and their families' interest.

Since their arrival in Greece, migrants from Albania try to re- construct their lives, re – interpreting and re- defining basic attitudes and beliefs. This is a process that is performed by contrasting past with present, communism with capitalism and western culture, images of Albania with images of Greece. Work is perceived as a more dynamic and more creative force now, as it is linked to individual progress: progress is perceived in terms of material fulfillment: it is connected with accumulation of capital, consumption, and ownership. These new experience affect the way they think of capitalism, of western world. Their overall ideological orientation towards work is in accordance with the basic principles of capitalism. And helps them to adjust to difficult working conditions, by emphasizing not the hierarchical structure of the work relationship but the possibility of not being marginalized and improving their position in the host society.

Images and representations of domestic work in migrant women's discourse

During my fieldwork research, domestic work was a current issue in women's conversations. In my view, images of domestic work constructed in this way, served as a metaphor of identity. By stressing their work ethos, women from Albania claim respect and equal treatment in Greece. Moreover they justify their presence in Greece, redefining negative migrant stereotypes.

In addition, speaking about the difficulties of their work, they set it in the wider context of their experiences after migration and the problems of discontinuity, social and personal disruption, racism and marginalisation. Contrasting images, emphasizing the change in social status that came as a result of migration, are prevalent. I often heard them saying, expressing their bitterness «we came here to clean folk's houses», which is an implicit comment on the dominant and degrading stereotype of Albanian domestic worker in Greek society.

Women from Albania, working in the sector of domestic service, mention exploitation and narrate stories of bad employers. They stress not only physical distress but also depression. However, developing a rhetoric of their predicament, that centers around the economic survival of the family, they justify the great acceptance of domestic work.

Domestic work is indeed orientated to the needs and family's interests. «You earn good money», as they say, a common phrase reflecting the significance of profit and in particular of money. Domestic work is presented as a means for the achievement of their expectations. Most women in my research see domestic work as an immediate way of supporting their families and enjoy its relative independence and flexibility.

In the field of domestic work, migrant women invent strategies of coping. Various forms of action are possible. In the case I presented, I stressed Evdoxia's strategy of intimacy in her relationship with her employer. Other women may pursue more professionalisation, and avoid emotional labor, familiarity or reject their employers' maternalistic practices. Acting in a framework of constraints women from Albania in Greece, redefine work conditions and their position in the host society. In the framework of their ideological orientations, their beliefs and values, this is demonstrated more fully.

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