

Abstract

Greece has been one of the countries hardest-hit by the global economic crisis since 2008. This has led to the emigration of both native

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

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

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

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

In the 2000s Greece also became a transit country for migrants coming from South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa (Triandafyllidou 2009). It is also one of the main receiving countries for refugees coming from Iraq, Somalia, Afghanistan and most recently from Syria. It is estimated that during 2015 around 857,000 refugees arrived in Europe through Greece (IOM 2015), which has turned Greece into a ‘storage house’ for immigrants unwanted by the Northern European countries (Labrianidis and Pratsinakis 2016).

more specifically on Albanians

Maria	Female	38	cleaner	1995-2013	2013
Elpida	Female	56	Grocery store cashier	1991-2015	2015
Artur	Male	42	Waiter	1991-2013	2013
Rea	Female	31	Housewife	2009- 2013	2013
Ariana	Female				

285

From Albania to Greece, and life in Greece

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

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

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

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

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

As soon as communism started to fall in 1990-1991, the Western embassies in Tirana were occupied by civilians asking for asylum. These symbolic events can be considered as prologues of the vast migration flows that followed. In February 1990, a family of six climbed the wall of the Italian embassy compound – an act which could be

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

Most of my respondents who migrated to Greece between 1991 and 1995 were

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

One day my daughter came home really upset because a mother and her son (school) stole her 1000 yen (10000 yen) bag.

Another ironically said:

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

Furthermore, respondents emphasised the barriers they faced towards finding a job according to their qualifications. Former engineers, economists an

(Labrianidis and Pratsinakis 2016). This is i

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Identities and notions of home

Globalisation has challenged modern definitions of identity and perception. To (t)-2reof maoonsb fi0bwng (e)-10 Tw -20.33-1.33 Td (a)4 (i)d [.33-1.fTc 0.00oand peK o.2d (a)ons j [(o th (and n0)4 0d()i)3 (i.)-.lan T* [(Spa9)4 (lo)2 (i)-CID 2 (5DC /TT1 1 Tf -1

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

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

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

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

Another participant who identified only as Albanian stated:

If someone has only three

Participants also mentioned having purchased a material house in Greece, and those who did not, mentioned that they intended to buy one due to the fall in housing prices after the recession. Two of the participants even expressed a desire to sell their home back in Albania in order to buy in Greece, so they and their ki

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

Another notable trend observed amongst families with young children was that, in most of these cases, men migrated first, found employment and housing, and women and children followed a few months later. For families with grown-up children, the children migrated first and the parents followed. In one instance, a father migrated with a teenage child to the UK, and the mother followed once housing and employment were established. Finally, it was observed that the younger, highly skilled and unemployed strategically migrated to the UK to do further higher education, and subsequently find employment according to their qualifications. This is something that was difficult or impossible in financially stricken Greece. Three o.(e)-6.1 (c)4m2n1i (n1i e)4 (

English language, and the multi-ethnic social environment constitute the main pull factors motivating movement from Greece to the UK. The initial migration to Greece and the accumulation

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