

# Albania on the Move

*Links between Internal and  
International Migration*

JULIE VULLNETARI



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*Julie Vullnetari*

IMISCOE Research

AMSTERDAM UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cover photo: taken by the author in one of the research villages in 2005, symbolically making reference to internal (Korça) and international (Greece) out-migration.

Cover design: Studio Jan de Boer BNO, Amsterdam

Layout: The DocWorkers, Almere

ISBN 978 90 8964 355 1

e-ISBN 978 90 4851 493 9 (pdf)

e-ISBN 978 90 4851 684 1 (e-Pub)

NUR 741 / 763

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*In memory of my mother*



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## Abbreviations

ALSMS	Albanian Living Standards Measurement Survey
AMC	Albanian Mobile Communications
BoA	Bank of Albania
CESS	Centre for Economic and Social Studies
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EDTO	Special identity cards for co-ethnics given to ethnic-Greek Albanians living in Greece
ELSTAT	Hellenic Statistical Authority
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
ETF	European Training Foundation
FDI	Foreign direct investments
GDP	Gross domestic product
IKA	Greek social security fund
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INSTAT	Albanian National Statistics Office (Instituti i Statistikës)
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LEDC	Less economically developed country
LFS	Labour Force Survey
NB	Agricultural enterprise (ndërmarrje bujqësore)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NSM	National Strategy on Migration
NSHN	Public Enterprise for Construction (ndërmarrje shtetërore e ndërtimit)
ODA	Overseas development assistance
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PHC	Population and Housing Census
REPOBA	Population and Housing Census (Regjistrimi i Popullsisë dhe Banesave)
SMT	Machine and tractor station (stacion i makinave dhe traktorëve)
TCN	Third-country national
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VARP	Voluntary assisted return programme



## Preface

This book derives from my doctoral thesis in migration studies while I was based at the Sussex Centre for Migration Research (SCMR) of the University of Sussex in the United Kingdom. While the SCMR environment, faculty and colleagues were key to the successful completion of my doctoral research, the merit for its publication as a book has to be IMISCOE's. After completing my doctoral research I had turned to new projects, which meant increasingly limited time to contemplate a book publication. Applying for the Maria Ioannis Baganha Dissertation Award was just the fillip I needed.

The award is a wonderful way to commemorate the work of the late Professor Maria Baganha, one of the founders of IMISCOE and one of its key pillars until she sadly passed away in 2009. I did not know Maria personally, but my memory of the 2004 IMISCOE conference in Coimbra – where she taught – is quite vivid. I remember especially the great atmosphere, and how the conference brought the participants together in the spirit of cooperation, in a quest for more and better research, and which could make a difference in the way we and others, especially policymakers, understand migration processes in Europe. IMISCOE has come a long way since its inception and I am glad I have been one (albeit small) part of it. It is, therefore, a great honour to have been selected as the first winner of this prestigious award, especially as competition was extremely strong. I only hope that my work in this book and in the future will continue Maria's legacy in migration studies, as well as her dedication to putting migrants at the centre of the research agenda.

While the award was the main 'push' for the book, the successful completion of the research itself would have not been possible without the support of many people around me, whom I would like to briefly thank.

First of all, I am deeply grateful to my family – especially Olsi, Besim and Nigel – who generously supported me in various practical, financial and emotional ways throughout these years so that I was able to complete this difficult but worthwhile journey. A big thank you also goes to my friends and colleagues at Sussex and elsewhere for their friendship, care and inspiration.

On the academic front, my deepest gratitude goes to my DPhil supervisor Professor Russell King, who patiently led me through the intricate but

enriching paths of academia, for sharing his knowledge and expertise with me, for his tremendous support and encouragement and for being my most inspiring mentor.

I would also like to thank Karina Hof at IMISCOE publications and her colleagues at Amsterdam University Press for working closely with me through the various editorial stages of the book.

Finally, I am particularly indebted to the migrant women and men, and their families, who shared their life stories, their joy and tears with me, for welcoming me into their homes and for the many valuable things I learnt in the process.

The research for the thesis that forms the basis of this book was funded during 2004-2007 by the UK's Economic and Social Research Council (grant number PTA-030-2004-00008), for which I am extremely grateful. I also greatly appreciate the financial support of the Open Access Publishing in European Networks (OAPEN) project, enabling the open access publication of this book.

# 1 Introduction

Nearly twenty years ago, on a brisk spring morning, with just a bag of personal belongings, I said goodbye to my family and left my village in south-east Albania to step into the foreign world of ‘the abroad’. I was the first woman since the fall of communism in Albania to leave my village to work abroad. It was to be the start of a new life and, at eighteen years old, I felt like I was embarking on the greatest adventure of my life: full of uncertainties of the unknown and the joys and dreams of the desired. My journey joined those of hundreds of Albanians who had already emigrated and the hundreds of thousands more who would follow thereafter.

As post-communist Albania was coming to terms with its new-found freedom of movement, the need to escape constraining political and socio-economic conditions at home and, not least, the urge to experience ‘the West’ unleashed migrations of epic proportion. It is estimated that nearly 1.5 million Albanians, equal to almost half the resident population of 3.2 million, emigrated between 1990 and 2010 (World Bank 2011: 54). Many Albanians also moved internally, principally from rural to urban areas. However, for many migrants these journeys abroad and internally have been interlinked in various and complex ways, affecting the communities of both origin and destination. It is the aim of this book to investigate these linkages between internal and international migration and their developmental effects in Albania.

## 1.1 Why link internal and international migration in development?

In the vast array of migration studies, researchers have traditionally tended to consider migration as a process that takes place by crossing *either* administrative borders internal to a country *or* national borders – respectively, internal and international migration. These two migration types have thus been studied as two separate entities, involving separate groups of participants and needing separate conceptualisations. Very rarely have the two processes been considered as part of a linked system. It is the aim of this study to consider precisely this largely unexplored nexus of migration research. This is important for various reasons. First, in a globalising and



polarising world, migrants are using an array of livelihood opportunities to ensure their survival and prosperity. As a result, a combination of mobility strategies is becoming the case nowadays, manifested in more and more families being involved in both internal and international migration. Second, increasingly the same person is involved in both these types of migration. Third, the patterns do not appear to be as clear-cut as a step-wise migration might suggest, i.e. migrating internally first then internationally, or vice versa. As such, analysing the two types of migration within a unified framework would facilitate and promote the understanding of the overall migration process better than a single-analysis context.

These dynamics are important and relevant particularly in relation to development and underdevelopment.<sup>1</sup> First of all, both of these migrations are used as combined livelihood strategies in many developing countries, including Albania. Second, they might not affect, or be affected by, development in the same way. An international move might provide higher remittances for certain groups of households, while an internal move might ensure a lifeline for poorer families. Furthermore, there is a growing realisation that the impact of both internal and international migration on countries of origin goes well beyond remittances, to affect socio-cultural, political and demographic aspects of society. Addressing these various dimensions of the migration-development nexus within a framework of integrated (internal and international) migration types becomes imperative.

Albania is one such country where internal and international migration strategies are combined by individuals and households. Shaped by challenges of post-communist transformations, the impact of such strategies has become vitally important for the development potentialities of every aspect of society. However, these migration-development dynamics cannot be easily understood outside of the socio-historical context that frames and conditions them, as explained below.

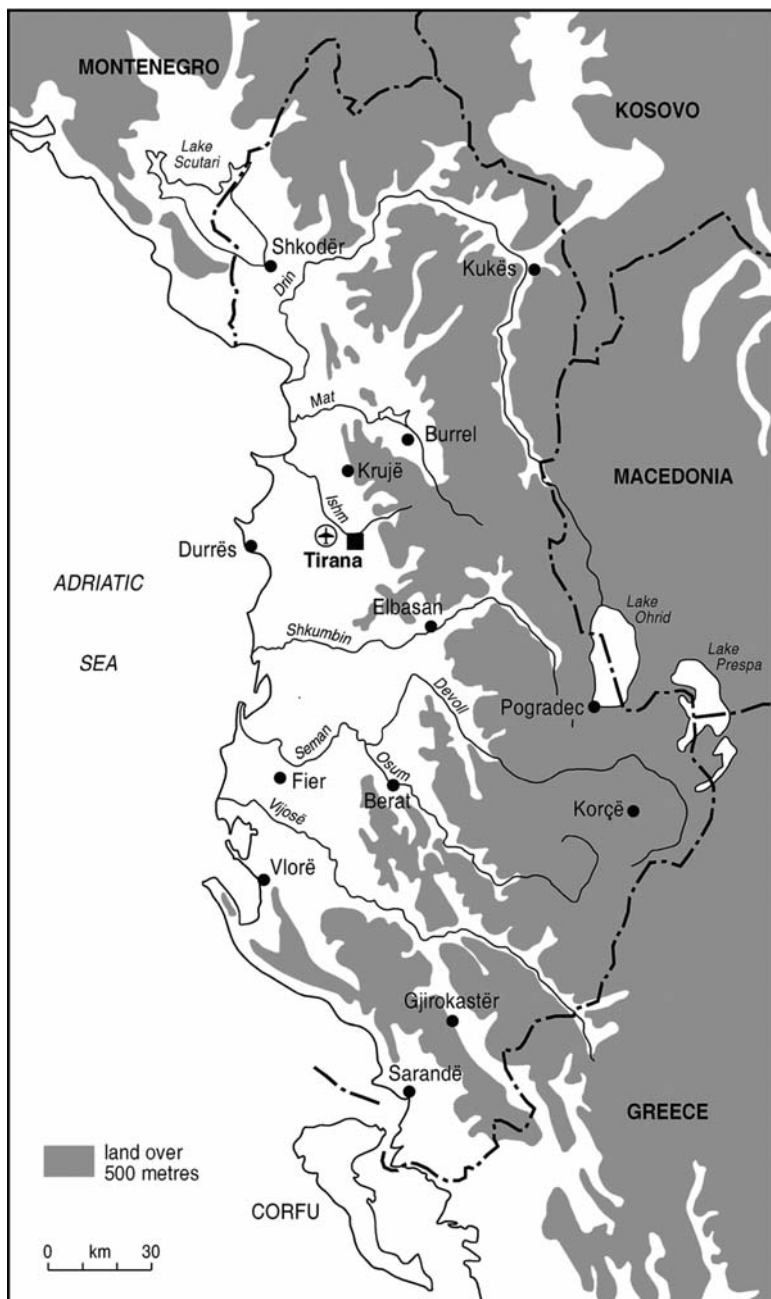
## **1.2 Albania: Some background notes**

Having been the last people in the Balkans to fall to the Ottoman conquest in the fourteenth century, Albanians were also the last to gain independence. At the end of five centuries of Ottoman rule, the territories that constitute today's Albania were characterised by deeply feudal socio-economic relations and general poverty (Logoreci 1977).<sup>2</sup> The country formally declared its independence in 1912, confirmed internationally when it joined the League of Nations in 1920. The years until World War II were dominated by the conservative leadership of Ahmed Zog, first as president (1925-1928), then as King Zog (until 1939). Zog's dictatorial rule was marked by economic stagnation, although some improvements in education were achieved and the country became more stable. However, Zog failed

to resolve the question of land reform, and the peasantry remained impoverished (Vickers 1995: 124-126). He is also attributed with laying the foundations of the Albanian nation-state by bringing some form of national unity. However, this was undermined by the increasing influence that Italy exercised over Albanian affairs during the later years of his rule. By the time Italy invaded in 1939, the country was already de facto an Italian protectorate. This lasted until the surrender of Italy in 1943 and the take-over of the Albanian territory by German troops. During the war, nationalists, communists and monarchists in Albania resisted the country's occupation with varying degrees of zeal and effectiveness. The communists eventually prevailed, seizing power and ousting the Germans in November 1944. Enver Hoxha was installed as the country's new leader, ruling with absolute and commanding authority until his death in 1985. The Hoxha regime launched a radical reform programme that destroyed the power of the landlords, nationalised all industry, banks and commercial properties and created a state-controlled socialist society. However, considerable positive achievements were recorded in eradicating illiteracy, improving access to free medical care and instituting old-age pensions. The positive legacy of its social policy meant that Albania's social indicators were some of the highest in the region (Tahiraj 2007). On the other hand, its record of human rights was abysmal, the true extent of which only became apparent after the regime fell in 1990-1991. Although claiming to be economically self-reliant, Albania received a significant amount of foreign aid from 'sister' socialist countries (Backer 1982). Nonetheless, its relationship with these countries was fickle, as it broke first with former Yugoslavia in 1948, then with the former Soviet Union in 1961 and lastly with China in 1977.

Although Albanians had emigrated far and wide throughout history, especially during (and within) the Ottoman Empire and later to North America and Australia, emigration was banned under the Hoxha regime. The few successful defectors were mainly political opponents of the regime. Internal migration during this period was also strictly regulated and such population movements were centrally planned. Most of the population was fixed in rural areas providing labour for collectivised agriculture; the towns were centres of basic services or industry. Albania in the 1980s was unique in Europe for having a young and growing population – two thirds of which lived in rural areas – and for having a low rate of urbanisation. In fact, through most of the communist period Tirana, the capital, accounted for a *decreasing* share of total population in Albania (Carter 1986; Hall 1994). I stress these demographic facts because of their background relevance to this book, especially given the explosive nature of rural-urban migration and of Tirana's growth after 1990.

After Hoxha's death in 1985, and reflecting some of the changes that were taking place in neighbouring communist countries, the successor government headed by Ramiz Alia started to loosen its grip. However, the

**Figure 1.1** *Albania: Location map*

Source: King and Vullnetari (2003: 13)

reforms were too little, too late. In the winter of 1990 and early 1991, popular student protests forced the government into democratic elections. Following these changes, international migration took place on a massive scale, primarily to neighbouring Greece and Italy, but also to other European Union countries and North America. Internal movements, particularly in the rural-urban direction, have also been intense. These migrations have had important impacts on the communities left behind and on destination areas in Albania, including transformations through remittances, depopulation or overpopulation, social mobility, chaotic urbanisation, etc. ‘Development’ thus went hand-in-hand with migration. Figure 1.1 is a location map of Albania, depicting the main towns and the country’s relief.

### 1.3 About the book

This book examines the links, differences and co-dynamics between internal and international migration seen from a country-of-origin perspective. It further seeks to understand the developmental impacts of these linkages on migrants and their families, as well as regions and countries of origin, by taking post-communist Albania as a case study. The starting point for this investigation consisted of the following two key research questions:

- What are the interconnections between internal and international migration, seen from a country-of-origin perspective, in this case Albania?
- How do these internal-international migration dynamics impact processes of development in Albania?

In order to explore these links and relationships further, it is important to understand the complexities of migrants’ lives and migration strategies. Therefore, a number of further subsidiary questions need to be asked, organised under the umbrella of the two key aims set out above. The first set of questions is related to the two migration types, and I start this line of inquiry by seeking to find out if there are differences between these migrations. In this context, I look at the categories of migrants participating in each type of migration; the migration intentions and regimes; the geographical and socio-cultural distance between places of origin and places of destination; the legal aspects of migration; access to citizenship and the cost of migration.<sup>3</sup>

Once the differences have been established, I proceed with questions related to the links that exist between these two types of migration. What are the links, precisely, and how are they manifested? Here, I seek to establish a sequence of movement: does one migration type precede the other? Or are they carried out simultaneously by different members of the same family?

Relevant to these links are also the decision-making processes prior to migration. Thus, I seek to find what the key differences and influences are

over the decision-making prior to migration. The different influencing factors are considered with regard to structural determinants as well as meso- and micro-level elements contributing to the decision.

With reference to the dynamics of these links on the one hand, and development or underdevelopment on the other, I present a second set of subsidiary questions. These are directed towards finding out what the respective impacts of the two types of migration are on the communities of origin at the micro-, meso- and macro-levels.

The analysis will not stop here, however. After having established these differences, links and impacts, I also seek to address issues relevant to policymaking and theorising. Thus, a third and last set of subsidiary questions is outlined. I first map out the benefits and problems that migrants and their families experience during the migration process, from the first intention to leave to the actual act of moving to another place. The question that follows is whether and how the positive effects of migration for community members, migrants and non-migrants can be enhanced, and the negative effects reduced. Can these findings on development be brought to the attention of policymakers, and what recommendations should be presented for them? Last but not least, considering the limited pool of knowledge around the conceptualisation of the links between internal and international migration, can a contribution be made to theory in this area? If so, what would be the nature of such a contribution?

## 1.4 Methods and sites of data collection

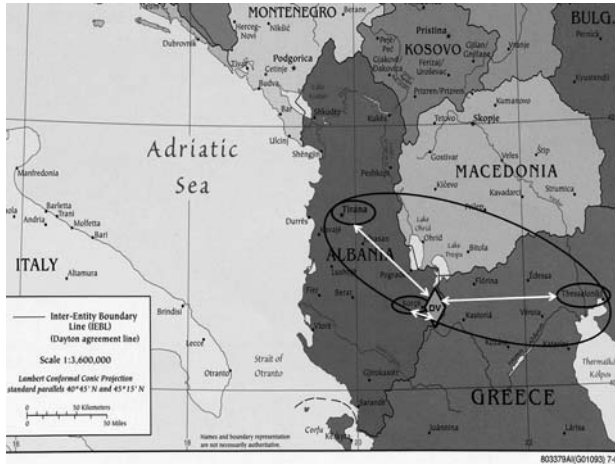
Migration is a complex process, the study of which requires a multidimensional approach. Equally important for choosing a particular methodology is the set of aims for that specific research. As detailed in the previous discussion, I wanted to find out about the ‘what’, the ‘how’ and the ‘why’; in other words, I wanted to learn about what processes are taking place, and how and why these processes are happening. More than that, I wanted to learn about lived experiences and feelings of migrants and their families. Thus, my emphasis is on migrants’ worlds, seeking to present reality through their eyes. Therefore, an in-depth qualitative approach was the most appropriate research design, allowing me to analyse these relationships and experiences and understand them in their complexity through time and across the spatial contexts within which they exist (Holdaway 2000). My approach exemplifies a strategy that ‘aims to place non-dominant, neglected knowledges at the heart of the research agenda’ (Smith 2001: 25) and consider migration and related issues through the eyes of those who are the subject of research. Ethnography is particularly suitable in this context, since by revealing the ‘*processes and meanings*’ that underpin social life across space, it can shed light on the relationships that exist

between 'structure, agency and geographic context' (Herbert 2000: 550, emphasis in the original). The richness of data that can be produced through participant observation and in-depth interviews yields significant potential for allowing the voices of the migrants to be heard and bringing back the 'human' in human migration (McHugh 2000: 72). King, Iosifides and Myrivili (1998: 159) emphasise the power such voices can have when directly and emphatically listened to: after all, they point out, 'the real experts on migration are the migrants themselves'. As these migrants move across a range of internal and international locations, their multiple linkages and experiences encompass several geographical, socio-cultural, economic, political and identity dimensions. Thus, the application of multi-sited ethnography *à la* Marcus (1995) is in order. Scholars have emphasised the suitability of such an approach in studying experiences in transnational settings and social fields (Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004: 1012-1013; Vertovec 1999: 457).

Inspired by Marcus' (1995) multi-sited ethnography, I 'followed the people' (migrants) from their origin to their destination areas and back again. By applying a 'village outward' approach (Baily 1992), I began my fieldwork in a cluster of four villages in south-east Albania, in the district of Devoll, from where I traced individual migrants and families to their destination areas in urban and peri-urban Tirana (Albania's capital); in urban Korçë (a regional town close to the villages);<sup>4</sup> and in Thessaloniki, Greece (the single most important international destination). Once I had mapped out the various migratory fields, internal and international sites and migrants' profiles in the four villages, I followed the links to the study destinations given to me by 'residual' migrant families still living in the villages. I then continued to use the snowballing technique as a 'method of contact in a practical sense' throughout my fieldwork (Atkinson & Flint 2001; Cornelius 1982).

This 'village outward' approach presented an opportunity for an integrated analysis of families and migrants in their sending and (multiple) receiving communities. As Bourdieu and Wacquant (2000) assert, the full system of determinants that first trigger and then sustain migration cannot be understood without reconstituting the complete migration trajectory of the migrating individuals and their families. Thus, starting the research from the communities of origin, analysing attentively their structure, history and contradictions, becomes imperative. This exercise further allows for the application of the social field, a concept I will outline in more detail in Chapter 2. For now, this is visually presented in Figure 1.2 as an imaginary field encompassing multiple locations and social relations, generating a multi-sited terrain of a 'diasporic world, independent of the mere movement' of migrants between these locations (Marcus 1995: 106). As such, internal and international migration are examined as interlinked processes. Their combined and differentiated impacts on the development of

**Figure 1.2** *Fieldwork sites and imaginary social field, Albania-Greece*



Source: Adjusted from Central Balkan Region political map 2008<sup>5</sup>

Albania are considered at a macro-scale and in terms of individual families and village communities.

The bulk of my analysis is based on 150 in-depth interviews with participants in the locations mentioned earlier. However, many of the interviews were not with single individuals, but with couples as well as larger family/household units, thus bringing the number of interviewee ‘voices’ to 197. Along with migrants, these interviews included family members remaining in the villages and returnees; a variety of ages, education levels, socio-economic statuses and migration trajectories were represented. In addition, I also interviewed several key informants such as Albanian researchers with expertise in migration and development as well as local key informants in the villages and representatives of migrant associations in Thessaloniki. Participant observation was also very important in understanding many issues, not least the environment where the respondents lived. During my thirteen months in the field, I lived in the communities I studied and participated in their everyday life. This included a range of activities from the very ordinary and daily such as household chores, chatting with the neighbours, visiting some friend’s place for a coffee, to more complex community gatherings such as weddings and festivities. I visited migrants’ homes, places of work, leisure and entertainment; walked along a travel route (involving a mountain pass) taken by migrants going to Greece during the 1990s; travelled to Tirana, Korçë and Thessaloniki by public transport as well as private car – this included the torturous border crossing between Albania and Greece at Kapshticë/Krystallopigi in a bus; and I went to offices of public service

provisions in all these sites, including health, education and immigration services in Thessaloniki. All these experiences and observations were very valuable in understanding the migrants' 'lifeworld' and the complexities of the dilemmas they often expressed during our conversations. This would have not been possible through interviewing alone. Although I have never lived and worked in Greece as a migrant, my own migratory experience proved helpful for understanding and empathising with the issues presented by the participants.

In addition to the interviews and ethnographic observation, I also conducted two group discussions in Thessaloniki. Both comprised male participants, between the ages of 22 and 35 and 44 and 55, respectively. These individuals belonged to the social network of two of my male key informants, who helped arrange the two meetings in the caf  s where these migrants socialised during their days off – one near Kamara (the Triumphal Arch of Galerius in the centre of the city) and the other near the railway station.

#### 1.4.1 *Field sites in Albania*

##### *Devoll and the villages of origin*

Devoll is one of four districts of Kor    prefecture in south-east Albania, bordering Greece on its eastern flank, from the Prespa Lakes down to the Pindus Mountains (see the upright triangle in Figure 1.2).

This geographical position enabled intensive emigration to Greece from the early 1990s, much of which was circulatory and temporary in character. The 2001 Population and Housing Census (PHC) enumerated 34,641 inhabitants (INSTAT 2004a), or a loss of a little more than 9 per cent of the 1989 population of 38,094. Devoll is also one of the most rural districts in the country, with more than 80 per cent of its population living in villages. Its only town and principal administrative centre, Bilisht, had around 7,000 inhabitants according to the 2001 census (INSTAT 2004a). The district is also characterised by a 'top-heavy' demographic profile with a high proportion of aged persons and a low proportion of under-fifteens in the general population, similar to a group of six other contiguous districts in the south-east of the country (Kotzamanis, Duquenne, Pappas & Kaklamani 2003: 28).

The cluster of four villages included in my study had a population of around 3,600 by 2001, principally ethnic Albanians of Muslim religion.<sup>6</sup> However, a number of Balkan Egyptians (Evgjit), Arumanians, ethnic Greeks, as well as ethnic-Albanian Orthodox Christians can be found in this cluster.<sup>7</sup> Some of the Christian population here lay claim to forms of Greek citizenship. These links date to before 1944 and include ethnic Greek ancestry and citizenship, ethnic Albanian ancestry but Greek



citizenship, ethnic Slav-Macedonian ancestry but Greek citizenship, etc. (for these variations, see also Psimmenos & Georgoulas 2001).

The area has also been an important origin place for historical migrations to the Balkans and overseas, much of which has been revived to link to contemporary flows. The benefits accrued from this historical migration – the transmission of knowledge, attitudes and money down through the generations – have been reinforced by other factors. First, there is the geographical location. Although at an altitude of 850 metres above sea level and surrounded by mountains, with very harsh winters and hot summers, the villages have high-quality soil and access to water due to their location in the rich valley of the Devoll River. Second, and relatedly, there is the infrastructure. Being located along one of the two major roads linking Albania with Greece, the area further benefits from transport, trade and information. This road also links the villages to the biggest local market of Korçë where farmers go to sell their produce, while at the same time making the villages more accessible to traders who buy produce directly from the farmers in the field. And third, there is a highly educated and hard-working population that, despite out-migration, remains quite demographically robust. These factors combined have enabled higher living standards and more open societal attitudes and gender relations than the upper highland districts, which are more isolated and poorer. They have also prevented the communities from extreme depopulation, isolation and deterioration, as has happened in other more remote villages.

The main economic activity in the area is farming, most of which is at subsistence levels. The major crops produced are potatoes, beans, tomatoes, peppers, onions, cereal crops such as grain and corn, fodder for the livestock, etc. Livestock mainly consist of cows, fowl, sheep and some goats. A variety of fruit trees are also grown in the area, where a dominance of apple trees is apparent. Many inhabitants have vineyards in their gardens, but separate areas of viticulture for the market are being developed only slowly.

The trade sector is one of the most significant after agriculture, dominated by small grocery shops and bars. The services sector covers transport, personal services such as barbers and hairdressers, blacksmiths and carpenters, a petrol station, a small motel and an undertaker. Construction has been especially buoyant, mostly improving dwellings, but also building new ones. Two limestone quarries in the area and sand extraction from the riverbed provide much-needed material for the Korçë construction industry. Besides agriculture, the main employment sector for women with lower education levels is in the only factory – a Greek-Albanian joint venture producing baby diapers. Many day labourers commute to the nearby towns for work – men in construction, women in garment factories. The highly educated and the political elite are employed primarily in the public sector,

which covers the local administration and government, teaching, medical services and the police force.

However, migration has been the key to survival and prosperity since 1990. This links directly to my other research sites – Tirana, Korçë and Thessaloniki.

### *Tirana*

As Albania's capital, Tirana is by far the most important administrative, economic, social and cultural centre in the country. Located in the western lowlands, it is situated at 110 metres above sea level, enjoying a mild climate throughout the year. The city was founded in 1614 and became the capital of Albania in 1920 (Carter 1986). This certainly influenced its population, which by the end of World War II stood at around 60,000 inhabitants (Tirta 1999: 89).

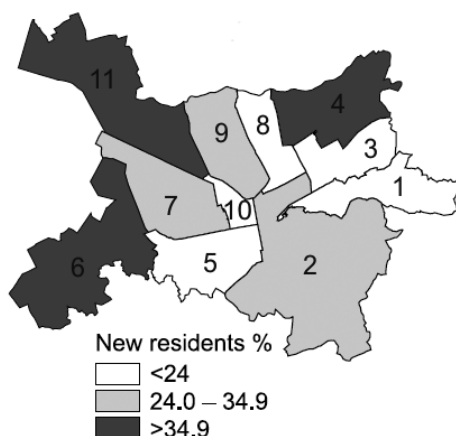
During the communist years the capital enjoyed considerable growth as it became not only the most important administrative city, but also one of the most important industrial hubs in the country (Carter 1986: 274). The city's industrial pool included light industry (especially textile manufacturing), engineering (especially tools and equipment maintenance), food-processing and building materials. The majority of the city's population growth of almost 130 per cent between 1945 and 1960 resulted from immigration from all parts of the country (Carter 1986). In addition, the city became the most important educational centre after the founding of the first university in Albania there in 1957. Construction was also a major employment sector, given this industrial and demographic expansion. However, starting from the 1960s – due to the loss of Soviet help with industry and the party-state's policy to stem rural-urban migration – the city's share of the country's population *declined* (see discussion earlier in this chapter). A few years before the regime collapsed, the spectacular growth of the city that was to follow was almost unimaginable, even for attentive scholars such as Carter. He wrote: '[T]he idea of a Tirana-Durrësi urban agglomeration emerging in the near or more distant future seems remote' (Carter 1986: 281).

A little more than twenty years later, this is a clear and undisputed reality. The transformation started as soon as the regime fell, accompanied by massive unrestricted Tirana-bound migration from all parts of the country. The 1989-2001 intercensal increase of the city attributed to migration was between 90,000 and 100,000 individuals, or more than 25 per cent of the 2001 population (Agorastakis & Sidiropoulos 2007: 479; Zezza, Carletto & Davis 2005: 189). Most authorities agree that the actual population is much higher than that officially recorded, as many newcomers have not registered. Furthermore, it has become a challenge to capture the city's rapid transformation in the form of coherent figures and data (Tirana Regional Council 2005: 32).<sup>8</sup>

Available data suggest that the majority of these in-migrants have settled on former agricultural and state-owned land, forming squatter settlements on the fringes of the city. By 2003, almost 45 per cent of Tirana district's population lived in such informal settlements. The Kamëz area to the north-west of the city, housing an estimated 60,000-80,000 inhabitants – only around 7,000 of whom lived there before 1990 – is the biggest of them all (Cila 2006: 34; Göler 2006: 7). Other such settlements have been formed within the city itself, primarily within the bounds of the many former industrial plants that have now become obsolete. The majority of migrants in both types of informal settlements come from the north and north-east of the country, with a certain specialisation. While the majority in peri-urban Kamëz (in Bathore, for instance) originate from Kukës and Dibër, an estimated 40 per cent of those living in the city's 'industrial settlements' originate from the district of Tropojë alone (Cila 2006: 33; Göler 2006: 13).

Tirana district houses the largest number of public and private providers of education, health and social services, as well as the largest number of international agencies, NGOs and businesses in the country. While chiefly employing the highly skilled, these institutions have also spurred a large services and trading sector where the less skilled work. As far as industry is concerned, besides some key areas within the city itself, there is a clearly defined industrial zone to the west of the city along the Tirana-Durrës dual carriageway (Tirana Regional Council 2005). Here, some of the biggest industrial plants in the country have been located, providing employment opportunities for the young labour force. These are mainly in food-processing, wholesale trade and construction materials. Within the city, a number of labour-intensive garment factories – usually Italian- or Greek-owned – are major centres of employment for women. However, figures for Tirana city show a gender-biased picture, as employment for men is twice as high as that for women (Tirana Regional Council 2005: 44). One of the most important sectors of growth is also transport, and Tirana is perfectly situated in that respect since the only functional civil airport of the country is located close to the city. Following its privatisation, it has become an important income-generating source, especially in terms of local jobs and benefits.

But Tirana is also a city of contrasts: simultaneously serving as home to some of the country's most affluent and its poorest. The former reside primarily in newly built multi-storey apartment blocks in the inner-city areas, especially in the *Bllok*,<sup>9</sup> while the latter are concentrated in the peri-urban squatter settlements. For instance, the 2002 Albanian Living Standards Measurement Survey (ALSMS) data show that centrally located mini-municipalities 5 and 10 have the lowest poverty incidence and the highest per capita consumption, while mini-municipalities 4, 6 and 11 located on the fringes of the city show the opposite typology (Tirana Regional Council 2005). The 2001 census data reveal that these are also the mini-municipalities with the highest share of in-migrants, as Figure 1.3 shows.

**Figure 1.3** *Tirana: In-flow of migrants by mini-municipality*

Source: PHC data in Zezza et al. (2005: 190)

### Korçë

The most important regional pole of the south-east is the university city of Korçë, located along one of the principal transport and trading routes that link Albania with the Balkans and the EU through Macedonia and Greece (refer back to Figure 1.2).<sup>10</sup> Situated at 850 metres above sea level, almost 60 per cent of its prefectural terrain is dominated by mountains. However, its plains, such as those of Korçë and Devoll, are some of the most fertile in the country, making it a major area of agricultural production (Korça Regional Council 2005).

Founded in the thirteenth century, Korçë was historically an important market town which by the mid-nineteenth century had around 1,000 shops. By 1945, its population was about 25,000, making it one of the most important towns in Albania (INSTAT 2004a: 9; Korçë Municipality 2005: 13). Although it lost its place from then on – along with other older towns – to the fast-growing urban areas along the littoral, it has managed to retain a significant degree of socio-economic importance.

During the communist years the district, and the town in particular, developed an industrial base that included food-processing factories, ore extraction mines, a glass factory, as well as one of the biggest textile factories in the country. While the latter two became obsolete as the regime collapsed, food-processing has been revived and is a major employment sector for the city's labour force, especially for women. Trade and commerce have also grown considerably, but rapid growth is particularly observed in the garment industry, which is characterised by small businesses, usually of foreign (especially Greek) ownership (Korça Regional

Council 2005). In fact, more than a quarter of all foreign enterprises in the Korçë region by the mid-2000s were Greek, making it one of the most important poles of Greek investment in Albania (Belba 2005: 88).

As in the case of Tirana, in-migration has resulted in informal squatter settlements around the city, located mainly in formerly state-owned industrial zones such as the former Machine and Tractor Station (SMT), the former Public Enterprise for Construction (NSHN) and the former Korçë Agricultural Enterprise (NB). Other settlements have formed along the Ersekë road and between the roads leading to the adjacent villages of Mborje and Drenovë.<sup>11</sup> These areas have inadequate infrastructure, suffering from mud roads, interrupted electricity and water supplies and problematic sewage systems, although the situation is better than in Tirana (Korçë Municipality 2005: 15). Most of these migrants come from the mountainous hinterland, which lost as much as 30 per cent of its population in the 1989-2001 intercensal period. Besides this rural to urban and peri-urban migration within the region, there is also more distant out-migration internally and abroad. In fact, Korçë district scores high as a top sender of both internal and international migrants, the outflow of the latter being twice as high as the former (Carletto, Davis, Stampini & Zezza 2004: 27, Table 8). Internally, almost 60 per cent of migrants moved to Tirana, but Durrës and Vlorë were also important destinations (Korça Regional Council 2005: 24). The majority of international migrants have moved to neighbouring Greece. Other international destinations include Italy, the United States, Australia and Macedonia.<sup>12</sup> The overall balance of these movements is an intercensal population loss of almost 60,000 individuals at the district level (Carletto et al. 2004: 24, Table 8). By 2001, the census enumerated a population of 142,909 for the district, around 55,000 of whom lived in the town of Korçë (INSTAT 2004a). However, according to the population registers, the town's population was almost 85,000 by 2004 (Korça Regional Council 2005: 15).<sup>13</sup>

But migration is not a new phenomenon, as Korçë was one of the major sending areas of labour migrants during Ottoman times and later on, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to the US and Australia. Closer to home, a key destination was neighbouring Thessaloniki, a prelude to contemporary migration patterns and events.

#### 1.4.2 *Field sites in Greece*

##### *Thessaloniki*

My interest in choosing this site is manifold. First, I was guided by the general literature according to which Thessaloniki is an important city in terms of Albanian migrants' concentration in Greece, second only to Athens. In the course of my fieldwork I found that this applied to the migrants I was studying as well, indeed having even greater importance than

Athens for my villages of origin. Second, most of the existing research on Albanian migration focused on migrants in Athens, in particular, while Thessaloniki had, at the inception of my research, attracted little academic attention.<sup>14</sup> Third, since this city is rather close to the origin villages, yet is a large metropolitan area, I was interested in the cross-border dynamics of migration and the resulting social field between these villages and the Greek city. And finally, this proximity fitted well with my limited resources and logistics within an already widely spread research field.

My fieldwork there took place in the Thessaloniki conurbation (Figure 1.4), that is to say the built-up urban surface consisting of the mini-municipality of Thessaloniki (no. 15) and twelve other mini-municipalities adjoining it (except for in mini-municipalities 3, 10 and 9). Geographically, this is spread from Menemeni south-west of the centre, all the way to Kalamariá to the south-east extending around the Thermaic Gulf for around seventeen kilometres. This area is situated largely between the city's ring road above and the seafront below, forming thus a visible

**Figure 1.4** *Thessaloniki: Conurbation map*



*Source:* Courtesy of Nikos Vogiatzis, Regional Development and Policy Research Unit, Department of Economics, University of Macedonia, Thessaloniki

'pocket' so to speak. The village of Kalohori, situated in the industrial area to the south of Menemeni (does not appear on the map in Figure 1.4), is an exception, being the only rural settlement where my snowballing exercise took me to.

Thessaloniki is the second-largest city in Greece after Athens and the most important political, economic and cultural centre in the north of the country. The 2001 census recorded a population of 1.1 million in the prefecture of Thessaloniki, 70 per cent of whom lived in the conurbation (Hatziprokopiou 2006: 82).<sup>15</sup> Immigrants make up nearly 9 per cent of the prefecture's total population, with the vast majority originating from the Balkans and the republics of the former Soviet Union (mainly Pontian Greeks). Thus, nearly half of the Ukrainians in Greece (46 per cent), 38 per cent of Georgians and 26 per cent of Russians lived here by 2001, while the corresponding figure for Bulgarians is 8 per cent. As for Albanians, their presence is at 7 per cent, making Thessaloniki the second place of concentration after Athens. Here too, as elsewhere, they constituted the dominant migrant group, namely nearly half of the prefecture's migrant population (Hatziprokopiou 2006: 311, Table A3; Kokkali 2008: 391). Numerically, they were the most important group of immigrants also in the urban Thessaloniki area at 25 per cent, followed by Georgians at 14 per cent (Labrianidis, Hatziprokopiou, Pratsinakis & Vogiatzis 2008: 33). The main sectors of employment for the Greek population are services (trade, education and health, transport and communications, financial services, hotels and restaurants, etc.), manufacturing, construction and agriculture. Migrants' employment largely follows these trends, namely, in services, construction, manufacturing and agriculture in that order. However, there are qualitative differences in that migrants have higher levels of working informally and much lower levels of skilled occupations than their Greek counterparts.

Albanian migrants in the prefecture of Thessaloniki are employed primarily in services (31 per cent), construction (28 per cent) and agriculture (13 per cent). Around half of Albanian women are recorded as working in the domestic and care sectors. The character of the Thessaloniki economy has affected female employment, particularly with regard to its share in manufacturing and agriculture, the former recording higher employment shares than countrywide (25 per cent compared to 9 per cent, respectively), while the latter presenting an opposite trend (6 per cent compared to 15 per cent countrywide) (Baldwin-Edwards 2004a; Hatziprokopiou 2006: 83). Of course, the dominance of Thessaloniki's industrial sector, especially manufacturing, is a major factor that helps explain this discrepancy. A significant part of the industrial activity, however, is unrecorded and consists of family-run and labour-intensive small businesses. These include small manufacturing firms that are particularly important for the local economy and are typical places of employment for Albanian women (Hatziprokopiou 2003: 1043-1044). Although there is a slight concen-

tration of industry to the west and north-west of the city, the smaller firms are spread relatively equally all over the city, as are most commercial activities, entertainment venues and migrants' working places (Hatziprokopiou 2004: 330-331; Kokkali 2008: 386-390).

In fact, a distinctive feature of Thessaloniki has long been its mixed nature of social classes and places. What segregation there was took place mostly vertically (in literal terms: the affluent living on the upper floors) rather than horizontally across the urban space (Hatziprokopiou 2004, 2006: 46; Kokkali 2008). However, both Hatziprokopiou and Kokkali argue that this is changing, and that social differences are becoming increasingly evident in the spatial diffusion of the city. They divide the conurbation into three main parts of somewhat distinct social character (refer back to Figure 1.4): the more prosperous, better conserved and more expensive east whose construction has been more planned (especially Kalamariá); the poorer, more run-down and cheaper west that has suffered from chaotic urbanisation; and a more socially mixed centre (the principal mini-municipality including the historical area) in between. But even within these three parts, there are small areas or neighbourhoods that do not conform to the general pattern. For instance, some downgraded areas can be found in the northern and western zones of the centre (e.g. Kassandrou Street, or Vardaris) or in the east (e.g. Foinikas), while some nicer, upgraded neighbourhoods can be found in the west (parts of Stavroupoli) (Hatziprokopiou 2006: 82).

Besides a mixed social-class background, the areas also display ethnically mixed populations, i.e. migrants generally live along with Greeks. The 2001 Greek census data show that the majority of migrants live in inner-city areas, with a somewhat higher concentration in the north-western mini-municipalities of the conurbation. However, in general, for Albanians as for other migrants, there appears to be no 'ghetto-like situations' that would involve the 'concentration of large numbers of migrants in specific "downgraded" neighbourhoods, displacing locals' (Hatziprokopiou 2006: 173-174).

Finally, Thessaloniki's long history of multiculturalism, hosting various populations from all over the Balkans and the Mediterranean, is regenerated through the immigration and settlement in the city of new populations with diverse ethnic, social, religious and cultural backgrounds (Kokkali 2008; Mazower 2004). In some cases these historical links have been revived and reshaped into new transnational fields based on historical and cultural bonds and facilitated by geographical proximity. At the heart of these fields stand the cross-border social networks channelling not only migrants' mobility, but also trade, transport, business and investment. The Thessaloniki-Korçë 'corridor' is the perfect example of this (see Hatziprokopiou 2006: 85, 106-108). Such social relations and networks, embedded within a wider migrant-centred approach, are at the centre of my analysis in the ensuing chapters.



## 1.5 Some ethical issues

As multi-positioned authors of research projects, we bring to bear various degrees of power in our research. Particularly the relationships we build with those who become the subject of our research – our research participants – are ‘saturated with power’, to use Foucault’s (1980) words. But more fundamentally, our own subjectivity and multidimensional positionality affect the entire research process, from choosing which topic to study to deciding which interview quote to include in our written articles and other research outputs (De Souza 2004). Therefore, critically reflecting on issues of power, knowledge and ‘self’ is an important part of the knowledge production process that we engage in (Daley 2010).

Most of the ethical issues I had to consider in my research were related to ensuring that informed consent to participate was obtained in an ongoing process, protecting participants’ anonymity and confidentiality as well as being reflexive of power relations. Several techniques were employed in this process, such as informing participants through an information sheet (as well as orally) about the aims and expectations of the research; using pseudonyms instead of real names and, where necessary, changing other characteristics in written citations, such as age and occupation; holding the data in a secure location, etc. However, I was also confronted with challenges resulting from my positionality as an insider to the local communities of origin – I was born and grew up in a village close to the research area – and as a migrant. For example, during my fieldwork many interviewees referred to me as a ‘daughter’ or ‘sister’ from the village and a migrant. They thus inferred similarities in experiences with their children (as older parents) or themselves (as migrants). This would be reflected when respondents would suggest that I should ‘know how these things are’ (related to my questions of experiences of migration, remittances and future plans) because of this position. The trust that results from such a relationship is exactly where researchers base their strategy for gaining access to communities, participants and information. Yet, this comes with significant responsibility to their communities in the way trust and information are used (see also Markova 2009).

Besides the obvious advantages of this accumulated knowledge and the quality of material collected, the insider’s position has certain pitfalls as well. Most of all, one’s familiarity with the research material can result in failing to spot important clues through taken-for-granted knowledge that risks being neglected (De Souza 2004). Using return trips to the UK as ‘analytical breaks’ to critically reflect on my material gave me the chance to assess things in a different light. For those positioned as insiders it, thus becomes equally imperative to be constantly reflexive about processes, data collection, analysis and relationships.

## 1.6 Book outline

This introduction now ends with a chapter-by-chapter overview of the book. While the key research questions were provided earlier, Chapter 2 proceeds with a theoretical elaboration of some of the key concepts and debates that frame my research. I examine the linkages between internal and international migration as well as the various ways in which these migrations differ from one another. Their impact on origin developing countries is, in turn, discussed through a critical review of the key literature on migration and development. I close the chapter by proposing a framework for the study of these issues within an integrated analysis of internal and international migration, embedded within the literature on transnationalism and social fields.

Chapter 3 focuses on the specific situation of Albanian migration and development. I follow a dual temporal and thematic line of inquiry. A brief historical account of both migration types is presented here, in order to make linkages to contemporary patterns and processes, not least to contextualise the large-scale migrations in the post-communist years. The latter also forms the heart of the discussion, itself structured around chronologies, figures, typologies and destinations for both international and internal migrants. I pay special attention to reviewing some key literature on Albanian migrants in Greece as the main destination country for this group generally, but also as the field of my research specifically. I round off with an analysis of the developmental effects of the linkages between both types of migration on Albania. Considering the fact that this book has come together more than three years after submitting my thesis for the doctoral degree, I deemed it necessary to update statistics presented in this chapter – where possible – with the most recent data. However, this does not affect the specific analysis in the book since the statistics are used to provide the overall background to the events.

Chapter 4 is the first of four findings chapters. I start by describing the patterns of internal and international migration as they take place in the research villages. This is followed by a thematic discussion of the differences between these two migration types in terms of the characteristics of participants, migration regimes, cost-opportunity structures, legality issues and socio-economic patterns. However, these differences are often blurred and substantial overlapping occurs. Thus, the links are potentially more important in exploring these two migration types as integral parts of household strategies. These linkages, especially their sequencing – internal then international, or vice versa – are mapped out accordingly. I conclude by pointing out some of the essential characteristics of both migration types and the ways they interact with one another as part of complex migratory trajectories.

Chapter 5 carries forth the analysis, placed within the ‘social fields’ framework. Taking the reader with me on the journey from Devoll across the border to Thessaloniki, I examine issues of everyday life from the perspective of migrants in this international destination. These include aspects of identity such as ethnicity, gender, religion; migrants’ employment; their living conditions and spatial diffusion in the city; as well as their thoughts about the future. Although various barriers are put in the way of migrants’ incorporation into Greek society, they use a number of strategies to overcome difficulties and achieve their migratory objectives.

In Chapter 6, I move back across the border, this time to consider the combined impact of both internal and international migration on origin communities at the micro-level, i.e. on individual migrants and their families. I start by analysing the uses and effects of internal and international remittances. I continue with a discussion of how skills gained during migration are employed in Albania. Ideas and behaviours are examined in the subsequent section, especially regarding gender and generational roles and attitudes. I conclude with a discussion of some of the most important ways in which both migration types are interlinked.

In Chapter 7, I step up vertically in scale to examine the internal and international migration-development nexus at the next two levels. Analysing the impacts of migration and the resulting dynamics on local communities of origin and destination, I pay attention to financial transfers, agriculture, urbanisation and social remittances. At the macro-level, I provide a wider analysis of these issues and dynamics for the country as a whole, including the role of macro-level policies on migration and development. The last section presents a number of conclusions, which link, in turn, with the final chapter.

Here, in Chapter 8, I discuss the key findings of the research, drawing together the main conclusions and suggesting a number of policy and research recommendations. The strengths and weaknesses of this study, as well as potential areas of future research, are also outlined.

## **2 The migration-development nexus**

Discussions about the ways migration and development are linked together and affect one another have been going on for half a century now, with the pendulum swinging back and forth on whether migration is positive or negative for development. The two key questions in this debate have revolved around the issue of whether migration is a product of development and underdevelopment, or is itself a cause of them. International migration has, by far, taken centre stage in this discussion, although internal movements are just as – if, at times, not more – essential to aspects of development such as poverty and inequality. It is the aim of this chapter to unravel some of these complexities by analysing key theoretical and empirical contributions from around the world. The approach will be one that demonstrates a concern for the development of areas and countries where migrants originate from. It is also an approach that brings to the centre of the debate the links between internal and international migration and how they together interact with development.

### **2.1 Internal and international migration: Towards an integrated approach**

As migration has become a prolific field of study, there is an increasing realisation of the benefits of an integrated approach stemming from the understanding that migration is a complex process, part of broader socio-economic transformations (Castles 2007). As such, previously existing divisions between binary strands of scholarship are also beginning to be addressed. For example, there is now more talk across disciplines than before (see Brettell & Hollifield 2008), while there is an emerging interest to examine ‘mixed migration’ rather than the binaries of voluntary versus forced flows (Richmond 1994; Van Hear, Brubaker & Bessa 2009; Turton 2003). A similar trend has been recently observed in relation to the scholarship on internal and international migration, the relevant strands of which have for decades developed alongside one another with very few crossing points (see e.g. King & Skeldon 2010; UNDP 2009).

Similar to the pendulum of the migration-development debate, the focus on internal and international migration has swung back and forth in the

global discussions on migration. Thus, the very first theorising on migration by Ravenstein (1889) more than a century ago was based on a survey of internal movements. In contrast, some of the key works that followed in the 1920s and 1930s associated migration with international movements. Attention swung once again to internal migration as urbanisation and rising urban unemployment, especially in less economically developed countries (LEDCs), presented cause for concern. Migration modelling and theorisations throughout the 1960s and 1970s were thus about population movements *within* countries. Yet, from the late 1980s onwards, it was international migration that once again captured the attention and imagination of scholars and policymakers worldwide: migration became synonymous with international movements. In a landmark paper, Skeldon (2006) suggests that this re-orientation developed as a consequence of changes in immigration laws in the Global North and immigration pressures to these countries, mainly from non-European migrants from the Global South. Indeed, much of the debate about migration and development has been about how to use development as a tool to ward off emigration, as we shall see later. It is only in the last decade or so that researchers' gaze has been turned once again towards the 'forgotten migrants' (see Laczko 2008) – those moving internally – as policymakers struggle with questions of how migration can work to bring about development. It is beyond the scope of this account to analyse the reasons behind such compartmentalisation between the two migration types; suffice it to note that it has not been conducive to improving our understanding of the role that migration plays in the social, political, economic, cultural and demographic transformations of our societies (Salt & Kitching 1992; King & Skeldon 2010). My purpose here is to put forward the case for 'reintegrating' internal and international migration.

There is increasing recognition of the benefits of an integrated approach, primarily due to the realities of migration and development in the twenty-first century, especially from an origin-country perspective. First, in an era of globalisation, there is a high degree of interdependency between countries, which manifests itself both in terms of (visible) international migration flows and (less well-known) internal population redistributions. The combined impacts of these two migration types are not easy to fathom. Second, a combination of migration strategies and types in order to ensure economic survival and prosperity is probably much more widespread than is commonly realised for individuals and families in LEDCs. An illustrative case is that of Albania. In the Albanian context, internal and international migration are jointly used as livelihood strategies for survival and prosperity by families and individuals alike. It is more often the rule than the exception that members of the same family will have migrated internally and internationally, and very often the same person experiences both types of migration during their life cycle (Carletto et al. 2004; King & Vullnetari 2003; King, Mai & Dalipaj 2003). Third, migration patterns and

contexts are changing rapidly, and there is an increasing diversity of migratory experiences and complexity of interactions (Bailey & Boyle 2004: 233; Castles 2007). This is also relevant for industrialised countries, particularly for geopolitical formations such as the EU, movements within which blur the distinctions between internal and international migrations and challenge the existing conceptual and methodological tools (Bailey & Boyle 2004; Salt & Kitching 1992). In such an environment, any approach that deals with just one migration type would not reflect the complex livelihoods of migrants. In terms of development outcomes, such a fragmented approach would fail to explain the combined impacts of the two types of migration on individuals, communities and origin countries. Consequently, our understanding of these complexities, and therefore the application and advancement of adequate theoretical frameworks, would be hampered (DeWind & Holdaway 2008; Salt & Kitching 1992).

When looking at the literature that brings together internal and international migration, two strands are noted: one is theoretical and the other empirical. The seminal paper by Pryor (1981) focused primarily on the potential application of internal migration theories to international migration. Although he found that no direct transfer from one field to another was possible (1981: 124), certain elements present in almost all models offer a platform upon which integration may be pursued. These are: migrants' selectivity; migrants' motivations; patterns in migration flows; consequences of migration; and the political and human rights aspects of migration. Following Pryor's suggestion that a systems approach might reveal possible avenues, Salt and Kitching (1992) and Champion (1993) explored this idea further.<sup>1</sup> Their focus was on the effects of international migration on internal mobility in a receiving country, taking the UK as a case study. However, they differed in their conclusions and most importantly on the significance of international borders.

Renewed interest on the interlinkage theme was awakened by Skeldon (1997, 2006), who embedded his analysis more firmly within the migration-development debate, based on empirical evidence from South and East Asia. Finally, King and Skeldon (2010), building on earlier work, chart new territory by proposing a schematic model for sequencing and linking both migration types and by proposing three models which can act as integrative frameworks. These are: the system's model (Mabogunje 1970); the integration model used in international migration but also having potential for internal moves; and the migration-development approach, particularly from a country-of-origin perspective.

Emerging over the years has been a limited number of empirical studies that take a country-of-origin (often an LEDC) perspective on the interrelations between internal and international migration. While the vast majority is purely empirical, the studies provide extremely valuable insights into the processes of migration and development in a range of countries and

regions, such as Mexico (Del Rey Poveda 2007; Lindstrom & Lauster 2001; Lozano-Ascencio, Roberts & Bean 1999; VanWey 2005; Zabin & Hughes 1995), North and sub-Saharan Africa (Adepoju 1988, 1998; Zohry 2005), the Philippines (Arnold & Abad 1987; De Jong, Abad, Arnold, Carino, Fawcett & Gardner 1983), China (Pieke & Mallee 1999), Indonesia (Lyons & Ford 2009) and South Asia (Oda 2007; Bohra & Massey 2009). They are used in the following discussion to illustrate the differences and then links between internal and international migration. For an integrated approach does not exclude – indeed it recognises – that there are differences, as well as overlaps, between the two migration types.

### 2.1.1 *Internal versus international*

That two separate migration strands have evolved over the years implies that there are some distinct differences between the two, the most important of which are outlined in this section.

#### – Country borders

Arguably, the most important difference between the two migrations is crossing or not crossing a country border. Indeed, some would maintain that this is the only essential difference and that, in all other respects, the mechanics and theorisation of migration are the same. This, however, ignores the political economy of migration. The very definition of these types of migration focuses on the container of the state. Zolberg (1989: 405) argues that migration theory has recognised the control that states exercise over their own borders as the most important element that defines international migration as a ‘distinctive social process’. Immigration controls and regulations have major implications for migrants in terms of accessing rights to enter (through a visa, for instance), to reside in the host country, citizenship (to work, vote, access health care, education and other social rights) as well as in terms of cost (paying for a visa or paying a smuggler). Although globalisation and transnational communities have somewhat weakened its position, the state remains the most important unit where rights are prescribed and applied. For instance, although certain individuals may hold double or multiple citizenships, they access the rights that derive from them through the respective states.

Although most internal movements are not affected by restrictive regulations, the application of limitations by some governments has had similar consequences to international migration. One such example is the pass system that controlled internal movements of the black population in South Africa during the apartheid era. Another typical example comes from China and its *hukou* system whereby each Chinese citizen is registered according to their household origin as either an urban dweller, giving them access to social welfare in urban areas, or as a rural peasant, giving them

access to agricultural land. Movement without a *hukou* was highly restricted until the mid-1980s; since then, movement has been possible, although settlement still remains a problem (UNDP 2009: 52). One consequence is the structural segmentation in urban areas, especially of the labour market, between migrants in possession of required permits and 'irregular' ones, the latter known as the 'floating population'. They cannot get stable, highly paid and skilled jobs, and lack the rights to health care, education and housing associated with urban citizenship (Chan 1999; Li 2004: 681). Internal migration thus becomes comparable to international flows not only in terms of legal and other associated barriers, but also in terms of outcomes (Davin 1999).

These situations are not static, however, as historical and political factors intertwine to change the context. For instance, in the first example above, changing political factors resulted in freedom of movement within South Africa. In other instances, such as in parts of Africa or Asia, pre-colonial movements could be defined as internal, based on ethnic and tribal affiliations within the wider continental territories. Following the post-colonial independent state formation from the early 1960s, some of these movements became international and subject to immigration regulations (Adepoju 1998; Lyons & Ford 2007). A similar outcome can be noted for peoples from the Former Soviet Union after its break-up into independent republics at the end of the Cold War. The opposite, i.e. international movements becoming internal, may also be the case, as in the reunification of East and West Germany around the same time period.

Even across clearly delineated *de jure* country borders, many international movements – often irregular – may resemble, for all intents and purposes, internal migrations. Such situations, occurring especially in Africa but also in many parts of Asia, result from a combination of arbitrarily imposed borders that separate ethnic communities over two or more countries, as well as ineffective border controls by relevant authorities (for a more extensive elaboration on the African situation, see Adepoju 1998; for the Asian situation, see Skeldon 2006).

#### – Cultural and social distance

Some authors believe that emigrating abroad is likely to involve a greater cultural and social change for migrants than emigrating internally, particularly in terms of language (see Kleiner, Sorensen, Dalgard, Moum & Drews 1986). This would result in greater difficulties in accessing housing, adequate employment, education and health services, especially in the early phase of migration. On the other hand, this might also translate into opportunities to learn other languages, acquire new skills and other knowledge. For instance, Salt and Kitching (1992) suggest that some labour migrants move to a country like the UK precisely with the purpose of improving their language skills. Skill acquisition is important when considered from a



development perspective, particularly if positive human and cultural capital can be transmitted back to the origin country or community.

However, cultural distance may not always be the case in international migration. The creation of cultures of migration – for instance, through intensive and sustained chain migration between two countries – may have transmitted sufficient information in the origin country so that locals know all about life in a destination area without having ever been there themselves (see the classic study of Algerian migration to France by Sayad 1975). On the other hand, the sheer size and cultural and ethnic diversity of countries such as China and India generate particular conditions whereby internal moves resemble international migrations (Skeldon & Hugo 1999: 333-334).

#### – Geographical distance

Often, it is presumed that an international move is likely to take a migrant farther away geographically than an internal move. Once again, this is not a clear-cut situation but one where much blurring occurs. Moves within vast countries such as China and Russia, juxtaposed against international migration over fairly short distances – e.g. between Belgium and Luxembourg – speak for themselves. Indeed, in terms of cultural difference, the gap is bound to be much wider between the rural Siberian peasant and the urban Muscovite than between citizens of Belgium and Luxembourg. But geographical distance is important in terms of the costs involved in migration.

#### – Cost-opportunity structure

An international move often involves higher monetary costs than an internal move and can thus be less accessible for poorer potential migrants. For instance, Balán (1988: 52-53) found that migrants from Bolivian valley rural areas had higher rates of migration (compared to those from the highlands) to Argentina and the US, which was explained in part by their better-off socio-economic position and higher levels of education. Scholars of Mexican migration (Cornelius & Martin 1993: 494) have contended that, in fact, migration to the US was only possible for those who had relatives already settled there: the high cost of intermediaries for undocumented migrants could only be met by wage-earners in the US and hardly ever through work in communities of origin, or even from internal migration within Mexico. The barriers to international migration, often related to the cost of travel, searching for work, the cost of learning and adapting to a new culture, acquiring legal papers and evading arrest, are much greater than for an internal move. Consequently, migration clearly has a higher cost for those moving abroad than internally (Massey, Arango, Hugo, Kouaouci, Pellegrino & Taylor 1993: 461). This affects networks, which in some cases are much stronger – precisely because they need to be – for

international than for internal migration (Stark & Taylor 1991). This higher cost, however, is counter-balanced by the expectation that earnings abroad will be higher not only to justify and cover these costs, but also to attain higher goals such as capital accumulation. Indeed, remittances from abroad are usually higher than internal transfers. I will come back to this particular point in the second part of this chapter.

#### – Temporary versus permanent flows

Considering the temporal dimension of migration, a move abroad is often imagined by some as more irreversible, and hence permanent, than an internal move (Kleiner et al. 1986: 313). This results chiefly from the costs involved in each migration – and therefore the time to recuperate them – and the impossibility to move back and forth when migrants lack documentation. However, this need not be the case, as exemplified by the Southern European ‘guest workers’ who returned from countries such as Germany, the Netherlands and France as well as the South Korean and other Asian migrants who returned from overseas once their countries of origin had developed economically (King & Skeldon 2010). Furthermore, migrants’ intentions may change along the way, and what may have started out as a temporary move becomes permanent migration, or vice versa.

#### – Research and policy interest

The division between the two migration types has also been influenced by different policy interest, often translated into research agendas (Skeldon 2006). Internal migration has been strongly linked to development and urbanisation, while interest in international migration is clearly related to the integration of migrants into destination countries and, more recently (post-2001), to security concerns. As powerful global actors in the migration debate struggle with the perceived ‘threat’ of international migration flows, their attention has recently turned to development yet again, as a way to ‘manage’ this migration or indeed curb its flows. Internal migration, although more important in terms of volumes of people and perhaps as important in terms of remittances and other socio-economic impacts as international migration, seems to have fallen behind (Adepoju 1998; Deshingkar 2006; IOM 2005a; Skeldon 2006). A recent spur in interest on internal moves, related especially to LEDCs in Africa and Asia, is once more a one-sided approach, in spite of the many interlinked dimensions with international migration. Let us now examine these links in more detail.

### 2.1.2 *Linking and sequencing migrations within and across borders*

In spite of the differences outlined above, which become blurred in many ways, internal and international migration display strong similarities, one of which is related to the factors affecting migration decision-making. In

this context, both migration types have been considered as ‘different spatial responses to similar [outside] forces’ (Skeldon 2006: 23), as deriving ‘from the same set of fundamental causes’ (Adepoju 1998: 389) and as ‘alternative paths of social advancement’ (Pieke 1999: 5). Likewise, there are similarities in the various ways these migration types impact the origin and destination areas – for instance, the effect of remittances and the integration paths followed (Skeldon & Hugo 1999: 337-338; Tomba 1999). Very important in this context are migrants’ networks as a common feature of both internal and international migration, as examples from China and Mexico demonstrate (see Lindstrom & Lauster 2001; Pieke & Mallee 1999). In the case of the Philippines, De Jong et al. (1983: 481) also found that kinship and friendship networks were the most salient factor in deciding to move both internally and internationally: from the rural north to the capital city of Manila; and abroad to Hawaii.

As far as sequencing is concerned, the existing literature has provided two overarching typologies, which suggest a step-wise migration pattern though few potential others. More recently, King has conceptualised a ‘Migration pathways’ diagram that provides a total of ten such typologies or pathways (in King & Skeldon 2010: 1622). As this diagram is precisely the tool I use in Chapter 4 to map out the patterns resulting from my field-work, below I only focus on the literature prior to that.

#### – Internal migration leading to international migration

This step-wise movement often occurs when migrants move from their villages of origin, first to provincial towns and then to larger cities within their country where they acquire the necessary financial and social resources to emigrate internationally (Lozano-Ascencio et al. 1999: 139). According to the Sassen (1988) thesis, this sequencing is underpinned by the predatory behaviour of global capital, which first dislodges rural labour to work in manufacturing zones within LEDCs and then, when the industrial zone contracts or the labour is otherwise regarded as ‘expendable’, a move abroad may follow. Ample evidence for this type of stage-migration can be found in several studies on migration from Mexico to the US (see the review in Lozano-Ascencio et al. 1999).

Empirical evidence from Mexico and elsewhere also suggests a more refined and complex process: migration also involves direct moves from villages to the largest cities within countries internally, as well as from villages directly to international destinations. Often provincial towns are not able to absorb large numbers of rural migrants and provide the expected economic and social benefits. This process may develop over time, which causes the migration to change direction. Consequently, migrants may ‘leapfrog’ provincial towns and migrate directly to capital cities or to large border towns and export-oriented zones, as with Indonesian migration to Singapore and Malaysia (Lyons & Ford 2007) or with Mexican migration

to the US (Cornelius & Martin 1993; Del Rey Poveda 2007; Lozano-Ascencio et al. 1999; Zabin & Hughes 1995). A similar example is migration from rural Thailand to urban Singapore and Japan in the 1990s. Rural Thai migrants omitted moves to regional towns and used only one step – the capital Bangkok – as an intermediary station before emigrating abroad (Skeldon 2006: 22).

However, migrants may move directly from rural areas abroad, as in the case of Mirpuris (Pakistan) and Sylhetis (Bangladesh) migrating directly to the UK, a process in which colonial ties were central (Skeldon 2006). Other direct links between origin and destination areas may develop over time from earlier migrations, thus ‘bypassing the internal step in the migration system’ altogether (Skeldon 2006: 22). The development of new links may also result from migration channelled by smugglers, as in the case of direct migration from Veracruz, Mexico, to the US, where historical links were absent (Del Rey Poveda 2007).

#### – International migration leading to internal migration

This is the reverse sequence to that described above. After a direct migration from rural areas abroad, another move internally may take place, which may be either in the destination country or in the country of origin (King & Skeldon 2010). There is a fairly rich body of research on the first type of trajectory, for instance, of South Asian immigrants moving internally in the UK (Fielding 1995) or Albanians in Italy (King & Mai 2002, 2004). This spatial move can also be linked to social mobility, especially when considering the integration of the second generation. However, the review of this literature is beyond the scope of my book, which focuses on origin countries.

Regarding the second type of trajectory, remittances from abroad may facilitate an internal move in the origin country for the migrant’s family either upon the migrant’s return, or for the ‘residual’ household while the migrant is still abroad. For example, in Mexico, Lozano-Ascencio et al. (1999: 151) found that almost half of their sample moved internally within Mexico after their return from the US; the internal destination was overwhelmingly an urban area. Similarly, Chinese migrants from rural Zhejiang who had emigrated to Europe settled in coastal cities upon their return to China (Thunø 1999).

On the other hand, international migration may stimulate internal moves within origin countries in a form of replacement migration. Areas of out-migration benefit from an increased level of economic prosperity, but suffer from labour shortages; other internal migrants from poorer regions step in to fill the vacancies. Skeldon (2006) provides numerous examples of such patterns from areas of large-scale overseas emigration in Bangladesh, India, China and other Asian countries (see also Deshingkar & Natali 2008). De Haas (2007a: 25-26) notes similar patterns in Morocco, where

internal migrant labourers from poorer villages and regions are attracted not only to the rural areas of origin of international migrants, but also to regional 'migrant boomtowns'. Here, internal migrants work primarily in the construction industry, fuelled by investment in housing from international returnees.

– Other variations

Besides the links proposed so far, other more complex situations can arise. First, these two migration types may occur more or less simultaneously. Zabin and Hughes (1995) showed that a more complex step-wise migration took place amongst Oaxacans in Mexico. The family first migrated to the export-oriented zone of Baja California, in the northern border with the US. The manufacturing industry in this 'hybrid' zone offered better employment opportunities for women and children and, at the same time, provided men with the necessary skills and networks to emigrate to the US. Thus, after a family move internally, only the husband emigrates abroad while the wife and children remain in the internal destination, often forming an important cushioning environment should the emigration of the husband fail.

Second, an internal move may be followed by international migration and then return to yet another internal destination in the origin country. Lozano-Ascencio et al. (1999: 151) bring evidence in support of this sequence from their study of Mexican migration: more than 40 per cent of their sample had migrated first internally within Mexico, then to the US and then again internally upon their return to Mexico.

The importance of these multiple linkages between internal and international migration becomes more relevant when they are considered within the broader debate of migration and development, to which I now turn.

## 2.2 Migration and development

Migration and development are symbiotically linked to each other. Yet the closeness of this relationship has only recently been appreciated, since the 'migration' and the 'development' literatures have also remained rather separate. Moreover, the nature of these links remains complex and thus highly debated by researchers and policymakers alike (Ammassari & Black 2001; Appleyard 1989; Deshingkar & Grimm 2005; Hammar, Brochmann, Tamas & Faist 1997; Nyberg Sørensen, Van Hear & Engberg-Pedersen 2002; Papademetriou 1991; Skeldon 1997). Its complexity derives from a number of factors. These include: origin or destination country perspectives, macro- or micro-analyses, discipline-based approaches, concerns over short- or long-term impacts, varying types of migration and development spatially and over time and, not least, various ways of measuring the two. Increasing interdependencies of social, economic and political aspects

require an approach that takes these global interdependencies into account, but also embeds the analysis in a specific social and geo-historical context relevant to the study. As briefly mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the migration-development debate revolves around two main questions.

1. Does development or underdevelopment generate migration?
2. Does migration lead to development and underdevelopment?

Before continuing with the elaboration of the links between internal and international migration and development, I present briefly, at the risk of oversimplification, three main positions that have been central to this debate.<sup>2</sup> The first, which addresses the second question above, is that migration hinders development in origin countries and thus implicitly exacerbates underdevelopment and inequality. According to this line of thinking, emigration is largely caused by the penetration of foreign capital from core to periphery zones within the world economy (Castles & Miller 2003; Sassen 1988; Wallerstein 1979). The consequential dislocation of labour from rural to urban and from periphery to core areas only serves to fuel the process of capital accumulation in core areas. Origin countries and rural areas, in particular, are starved from the loss of the most active, creative and young populations, especially when they are highly educated, who, when going abroad, either undergo a de-skilling process or do not gain any new skills. Such are the negative effects of acute labour shortages that, in a study of migration from Yemen, children had to replace adult male labour (Fergany 1982: 762). Meanwhile, migrants' remittances, although significant in volume, increase inequalities, because it is often the better-off who migrate and, in turn, benefit from them (Lipton 1980). Remittances are not development-conducive because they are often spent on what are considered unproductive purchases: consumption (such as food and clothing) and conspicuous goods (such as lavish houses and expensive customary rituals), thus hindering any structural change to ease dependency on them (Fergany 1982; Lipton 1980). Remittances may even be inhibiting development through maintaining the traditional rural systems, which are often very gender-biased in favour of men (Rempel & Lobdell 1978). When migrants return, not only do they not bring new skills with them, but they return because they have either failed abroad or are retiring (Cerase 1974). The best and the brightest – thus the successful ones – not only stay in destination countries, but gradually sever links with their home country, cutting thereby any hope for any positive contribution there. This line of thinking was particularly prominent during the 1970s and 1980s, being presented in what became a torrent of literature. It is not the purpose of this chapter to review this, especially since a number of detailed and very effective reviews already exist (for gloomy conclusions, see Lipton 1980; for a more balanced view, see Appleyard 1989; De Haas 2010; Hermele 1997).

The second position, also related to the second question above, is that migration in fact stimulates development and is beneficial for origin as well as destination countries. Arguments used to support the previous position are turned on their head. Since I will come back to this optimistic perspective later on in this section, I do not go into detail here. At this point, it suffices to note that this line of thinking, like the previous one, drew much interest and generated a large body of literature. Taylor, Arango, Hugo, Kouaouci, Massey and Pellegrino (1996a, 1996b; also Taylor 1999) make a very effective critique of the theoretical and empirical literature that had presented the consequences of internal and international migration for community and national development in a negative light. They maintain that there is reason to be more optimistic, since the previous negative conclusions failed to take into account the complex, especially indirect ways in which these links are played out.

A third position has become increasingly prominent in recent years and more relevant to the complexities and inter-dependencies of the age of globalisation. This is that it is not an either/or situation, but rather a complex set of interactions where positive and negative impacts of migration on developing countries are intertwined. This perspective of an 'unsettled relationship' was vocally advocated by Papademetriou (1991) and has since been followed by another considerable accumulation of literature (for key readings, see Hammar et al. 1997; Nyberg Sørensen et al. 2002; Skeldon 1997). De Haas (2010), who has recently provided a critical in-depth analysis of the key migration-development scholarship, likens the history of the swing from one position to the other with that of a pendulum. He calls for a 'pluralist' approach of this complex process acknowledging benefits as well as negative impacts, suggesting that an optimal understanding of these can be gained by bringing together structural factors and migrants' agency.

Using development as a lens for analysing migration, we can once again identify two positions. The first of these is that underdevelopment – in other words, poverty, low economic growth, socio-economic inequalities, etc. – leads to migration, and this can be resolved by addressing the 'root causes' of migration (Lipton 1980). The second position is that in fact growth and development are the motors of migration, until a certain level of development has been reached – the so-called migration hump – when migration then decreases (see e.g. Martin & Taylor 1996).

To conclude this very brief summary of a rich, broad and complex literature, there is no doubt that (internal and international) migration and development are symbiotically interrelated. However, several questions remain as to how this interaction actually works in practice for migrants, their communities and their countries of origin. In the remaining part of this section I review some of the key aspects of this relationship, which later frame the discussion of my empirical material.

### 2.2.1 *Underdevelopment, poverty and inequality*

It is widely understood that a lack of local development opportunities generates economic migration. In addition, bad governance, conflict, environmental disasters, population pressures as well as better life prospects elsewhere and the search for adventure and freedom all affect different types of migration. The long-held belief that poverty causes emigration has been challenged in the light of much literature pointing out that in fact the poorest of the poor do not migrate (Black, Natali & Skinner 2006; Fischer, Martin & Straubhaar 1997). Indeed, the high cost of travel and lack of other socio-economic resources needed to access emigration, especially networks, are lacking for the poor (Lipton 1980; Waddington & Sabates-Wheeler 2003). Kothari (2003: 652) captures this succinctly when she states that '... it is their condition of poverty, through the particularities of their exclusion... which prohibits migration as an option'. If they do migrate, it is often as a measure of 'last resort' (Waddington & Sabates-Wheeler 2003). In a study of 40 villages in India, Lipton (1980) found that while better-off people were 'pulled' to the city or abroad by work prospects, the poor were 'pushed' by their condition of rural poverty. Some very poor people thus do participate in migration, but only over short distances, usually within the same country and overwhelmingly between rural regions. Such migration has a strong seasonal character and is a crucial part of livelihood strategies for poor households in regions such as South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa (for an extensive literature review, see Waddington & Sabates-Wheeler 2003; see also UNDP 2009).

What makes neglect of internal migration even more unacceptable is the issue of numbers: individuals participating in internal migration in the world far outweigh those categorised as international migrants, particularly in LEDCs. By 2009, there were an estimated 740 million internal migrants in the world,<sup>3</sup> three and a half times as many as international migrants (214 million or 3 per cent of the world's population) (UNDP 2009: 21). Just from the sheer magnitude of numbers involved in internal migration, one can imagine that although individual remittances might be low, especially when labour is employed in rural areas, they ensure the survival of a much wider group of poorer households and individuals. Internal migration can thus potentially play a greater role than international migration in reducing poverty because of access to income through migration for a larger section of the population (World Bank 2006: 65). For example, according to a 1989 study, although the poverty-reduction effect of internal remittances in China amounted to an estimated 1 per cent, this translated to twelve million fewer poor people (in UNDP 2009: 72-73). Empirical findings from other research in India, Bangladesh, Tanzania, Indonesia and Mexico demonstrate similar effects, albeit at various scales (UNDP 2009: 72-73).



It is widely understood that those who participate in international migration come from the better-off sections of the origin-country society, as pointed out earlier. Adams and Page (2003) found that in the 74 developing countries they surveyed, most international migrants came from the income groups that were just above the poverty line. But over time, as the better-off migrate and migration networks are consolidated, opportunities for poorer people to migrate abroad become increasingly available through the reduced cost of migration (Massey et al. 1993).

Other researchers have questioned the notion of absolute poverty generating migration. Instead, they argue that it is inequality and relative deprivation that serve as a stimulant for people to migrate. In their study of 61 households in Mexico, Stark and Taylor (1989) found that Mexico-US migration was a strategy used to improve the position of households relative to others in their origin village. In a later study they found that relative deprivation was a more significant factor for international migrants to the US than for internal migrants within Mexico (Stark & Taylor 1991). Linked to the question of inequality influencing migration is also the question as to whether migration reduces inequality and which type of migration does so. Drawing on case studies from Latin America, Eastern Europe, Western Africa and South Asia, Black et al. (2006) suggest that much of this relationship will depend on several factors including the initial income distribution that may favour the better-off in terms of access to migration, the prevalence of migration experience in a community that may open up access to poorer people and the strength of social networks.

Migration may also have implications for regional inequalities within the same country, as empirical data in Albania (King & Vullnetari 2003) and in China suggest (Deshingkar 2005: 41). This in-country polarisation may occur through return migration that takes place primarily to large urban areas. De Haas (2007a) observes in Morocco that successful international migrants return to an urban area in contrast to less well-off returnees who go back to the countryside. The key factor often used to measure, or link to, inequality is the distribution of remittances, to which I now turn.

### *2.2.2 Financial remittances*

‘Remittances are one of the most visible – and beneficial – aspects of how international migration is reshaping the countries of origin’ (Kapur 2004: 18). Policymakers and researchers alike have been concerned for some time to find ways to best harness them, and the literature generated is overwhelming (for key literature reviews, see Ghosh 2006; Kapur 2004; Nyberg Sørensen 2005; Orozco 2007; Ratha 2003; Russell 1986; Taylor 1999; World Bank 2006; Carling 2008).

Like migration, remittances also affect individuals and structures at the micro-, meso- and macro-levels. International remittances have been hailed

as 'the largest direct positive impact of migration on migrant sending areas' (Taylor 1999: 67). They are crucial for the survival and prosperity of many individuals, families and communities (Nyberg Sørensen et al. 2002). In terms of volumes, the magnitude of such transfers is impressive: in 2010 they were estimated to have surpassed \$ 440 billion globally; nearly 74 per cent (\$ 325 billion) of them went to developing countries, an increase of 6 per cent over 2009 (World Bank 2011: x).<sup>4</sup>

But, remittances sent through formal channels such as banks are 'only the tip of the iceberg' (Puri & Ritzema 1999: 3). Unrecorded flows, i.e. financial transfers through friends and family, self-carrying cash during return visits, etc., as well as in-kind transfers such as furniture and clothes, are estimated to contribute 35-75 per cent of the official flows (Ghosh 2006; Puri & Ritzema 1999; Spatafora & Freund 2004). In spite of these figures, it must be remembered that often the poorest countries do not participate so much in international migration. Consequently, they are more dependent on overseas development assistance (ODA) as an income source (Ghosh 2006). This has to be reflected in policy considerations whereby international remittances, although an important 'source of external development finance', need to be considered as complementary, rather than as a substitute for ODA (Nyberg Sørensen et al. 2002; Ratha 2003).

Within developing countries there are concerns that the bulk of these transfers go to the better-off, since they constitute the majority of international migrants. Thus, the inequalities that existed before migration took place are reinforced (Lipton 1980). Nonetheless, poor people may benefit from international remittances through the trickle-down or multiplier effect, for instance, related to increased demand for local goods and services (De Haas 2007a; Taylor 1999). In their multi-country study, Adams and Page (2003) found that a 10 per cent rise in the share of international migrants for a country resulted in an almost 2 per cent decline in the share of people living on \$ 1 a day. A figure of 2 per cent might not seem impressive at first, but at an individual level the difference it makes can be significant.

On the other hand, internal remittances, although lower than international transfers at an individual level, affect a wider base of people and are important for food security and poverty reduction (Rempel & Lobdell 1978: 329; Murphy 2005a; World Bank 2006: 65). Overwhelmingly in African, but also in some Asian and Latin American countries, studies have found that internal remittances were an important part of the income portfolio for rural residual families (Deshingkar 2006).<sup>5</sup> In 2005, Chinese internal migrants sent an estimated \$ 30 billion to their rural families, contributing 20-50 per cent of total income for recipient rural households and surpassing transfers received from China's international migrants, estimated at around \$ 20 billion for that year (Murphy 2005a: 5-6). Internal transfers were also shown to provide an important safety net for poor households in

Bangladesh (Afsar 2005) and found to reduce 'the level, depth, and severity of poverty' in rural Ghana (Adams 2006).

It needs to be acknowledged that, despite a sharply increasing policy interest in remittances as a developmental strategy for poor countries (for an effective summary, see IOM 2005b), the gendered aspects of remittances have attracted relatively limited attention (Nyberg Sørensen 2005; Ramírez, García Domínguez & Míguez Morais 2005; Kunz 2008).<sup>6</sup> Conventional wisdom seems to suggest that women are more frequent remitters than men, even though they often earn less than men. Deshingkar (2005) suggests that in the Asian situation this might result from a deeper commitment women feel towards their families. In the Albanian situation, however, earnings from both the husband and wife are generally pooled under the administration of the husband and remitted to *his* parents (King, Dalipaj & Mai 2006). This contradictory evidence is found throughout most of the literature worldwide, which emphasises the need for more focused and systematic attention to the role that gender plays in remittances (see e.g. King, Castaldo & Vullnetari 2011; Vullnetari & King 2011). These situations often reflect gender roles and relations that are, in turn, embedded in deep-set cultural norms. As for the Albanian situation, further light will be thrown on this later in the book.

For remittances to make a difference to origin communities, simply recording the size of the sums sent is not enough. Perhaps more important is the way they are used by recipients. Most researchers agree that the primary use of remittances is consumption, which ensures the survival of the family, including in refugee situations (on Afghan refugees, see Jazayery 2002). However, opinions are divided on the topic of development beyond survival. First, there are disagreements between what conventionally constitutes uses that are 'productive' (investment in agriculture, industry and services) versus 'unproductive' (consumption such as food, clothing, housing and family rituals). Such definitions are based on narrow economic perspectives, do not reflect realities in LEDCs and ignore the private nature of such transfers (Koc & Onan 2004; Nikas & King 2005; Orozco 2007). As Oberai and Singh (1980: 236-237) suggest, consumption-oriented expenditure 'should not be interpreted as mainly unproductive; in an economy in which levels of living are low, consumption expenditure may often be functional and may induce significant improvements in labour productivity'. Remittances affect the well-being of families by enabling them to improve their diets, their accommodation, their apparel and thus constitute a healthier and more productive workforce and population. Furthermore, through remittances there is increased access to better education and health as well as improved continuation of family rituals and obligations. For instance, remittances from 40 per cent of temporary migrant households in Bangladesh went towards their children's education and family members' health care (Afsar 2005: 12). Even if some of the consumption items have

to be imported, a number of services related to them can only be provided locally. Construction and associated sectors in Albania, Bangladesh, Morocco and other such countries with high emigration figures and levels of remittance inflows have provided jobs for a considerable number of people within the country (Afsar 2005; De Haas 2007a).

From a macro-level perspective, remittances contribute significantly to foreign exchange earnings and capital formation, although the latter may often be for small and medium enterprises. In their study of eleven transition countries in Central and Eastern Europe, Léon-Ledesma and Piracha (2004) found that remittances contributed significantly in increasing investment levels. However, more conservative conclusions suggest that this might be overstated and that, beyond development in small-scale initiatives, remittances have not in fact proved to be a 'prime mover for economic take off or sustained growth' (Ghosh 2006; De Haas 2010). It is also important to observe that they may increase inflation and impede structural adjustments (Ammassari & Black 2001; Russell 1986). In the absence of overarching and well-planned strategies, the sustainability of such remittance-led development is put to question (Skeldon 2008). This difficulty is increased in volatile political situations, as Black, Jones, Pantiru, Sabates-Wheeler, Skeldon and Vathi (2007) found in the Balkans and Central Asian countries.

### *2.2.3 The role of non-monetary remittances in development*

Remittances have for decades dominated the migration-development debate – financial remittances, that is. In contrast, the *social* dimension of the impact of migration on sending communities has been rarely explored systematically (Hugo 2005; Piper 2005). Two perspectives can illuminate this dimension in relation to remittances. First, there is a need to acknowledge more directly that financial remittances have a number of impacts on migrants and areas of origin that go beyond the simple economics of income growth and GDP. Their social and cultural impacts are reflected in the ways in which these monies are perceived by migrants and wider communities and how they are used in the areas of origin. Furthermore, such transfers do play a role in shaping models, norms and expectations in these origin communities. The second dimension is the transmission of non-monetary remittances: in-kind, technological and 'social' remittances (see Goldring 2003). Levitt (2008: 927) has conceptualised social remittances as the 'ideas, behaviours, identities and social capital that flow from receiving- to sending-country communities'. They are considered as key to understanding migrants as agents of social and political change, as well as the ways in which migration affects change for those left behind (Nyberg Sørensen 2005). Indeed, some would argue that social remittances might even be more important than financial transfers in the long run (Kapur 2004).

Transmitted through visits and other communication channels such as telephones, letters, videos and the internet, these ideas and practices impact gender and generational roles, ethnic and national identity, class and social status, as well as demography, politics and social participation. However, the way social remittances are created and the degree to which they are transferred to origin communities depend on the intensity of interaction of migrants with host societies and the socio-economic context where migrants establish themselves. These can vary by country and by migration situation. Fargues (2006), for instance, found that Moroccan and Turkish migrants living in Western Europe transmitted 'Western-style' models and ideas about demographic reproduction to their origin communities, as reflected in lower birth rates. These models differed significantly from those transmitted by Egyptian migrants who emigrated to the Gulf, this time reflected in higher birth rates.

Other situations involve the transmission of models and ideas about political organisation, participation and democratic processes, more generally (Skeldon 1997). This is especially relevant in situations where home governments and policymakers have failed to deliver reliable democratic structures for the people. In a recent study, Pérez-Armendáriz and Crow (2010) examine the extent to which Mexican migrants residing in the US 'remit democracy' to their origin communities. They find that this does indeed take place and migrants play an important role in helping to strengthen democracy in their countries of origin through the diffusion of democratic ideas and behaviours. Once again, however, most of this debate has focused around international migration situations (see e.g. Basch, Glick Schiller & Szanton Blanc 1994; Glick Schiller & Fouron 1999). It is thus not clear from the available literature if internal migrants effect more change in this respect than – or do this differently from – international migrants. Finally, it must also be remembered that host societies offer both positive and negative role models, which can equally be transmitted to origin communities (Levitt 1998).

#### *2.2.4 Considerations of gender and generation*

Migration is a highly gendered process in that it is experienced by, and affects, men and women differently. Increased awareness of women's role in migration has revealed a feminisation of migration quantitatively and qualitatively. In terms of numbers, at present, women constitute half of international migrants and for some countries, such as the Philippines, they make up much higher shares of (internal and international) migrants' flows (IOM 2005a: 176). Qualitatively, women are increasingly participating in internal and international migration as 'autonomous migrants' (Deshingkar & Grimm 2005). This trend is particularly strong in Latin America and South-East Asia, but less so in South Asia. The gendering of migration

streams demonstrates that such regional variations are largely affected by local cultural norms as well as by demand in particular labour sectors of the economy. More recently, even where migration is largely male-dominated, female migration has been on the increase, particularly for employment in sectors perceived as 'female oriented' such as the garment industry or nursing (Piper 2005). Internally, on the other hand, females have traditionally been more numerous than males – an observation affirmed by Ravenstein (1889: 288) in one of his famous 'laws of migration' 120 years ago.

Socially constructed gender roles are important also when considering the outcomes of migration for development. This is reflected, for instance, in the transfer and deployment of remittances (Carling 2005), but also in the type of social change that migration may bring about. Afsar (2005: 6) shows how rural-urban female migrants in Bangladesh moved from having no income of their own prior to migration to 80 per cent of them having earned enough through migration to put them above the poverty threshold. In turn, these migrant women played a significant role in social change in origin communities, through financing and encouraging education of their siblings and other relatives, including other women. In other situations, migration was found to lead to young Bangladeshi migrant men challenging their father's authority within the family (Piper 2005).

Evidence from other countries suggests opposite effects, however. Migration, whether internal or international, can reinforce gender inequalities at worst, or have neutral effects on gender relations. Where emancipation and empowerment do take place, the effects may last only during the migration episode. For instance, Filipino left-behind husbands took on the care of their children and the household chores while their wives migrated, but gender roles reverted back to their pre-migration status upon the wife's return (Piper 2005).

Such a mixture of outcomes is also the case for migration of the highly skilled. According to Raghuram (2004: 309), international migration among the skilled seems to have negative effects on women's labour force participation, whereas evidence from internal migration is mixed. She argues that a combination of patriarchy, capitalism and immigration regulations helps create a gendered structure of such international migration. Researching highly skilled couples emigrating from India to the UK, Raghuram found that men continued to be the primary migrants, whereas most women followed their male partners as 'tied migrants' or 'trailing spouses'.<sup>7</sup>

The impact of migration on the two most common 'left-behind' groups – the very young and the very old – can be quite adverse. Apart from a heavy burden of work and care for one another, the very young and the very old are deeply affected by the loss of close emotional links with, respectively, their adult parents or children. Particularly in the case of older

persons who have no income in the form of pensions and are too frail to work, power within the family and thus their share of resources may be drastically limited. Describing such situations in China, Murphy (2005b) points out how their social conditions have worsened, followed by dramatic consequences such as a rise in suicide rates. A number of discussions look to return migration as a way to mitigate such adverse effects, whereas the transnational turn in migration studies has shown the importance of transnational practices and forms of care. Examples of the latter include practices of Latina transnational mothers and Albanian transnational grandparents (Escrivá 2005; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila 1997; Vullnetari & King 2008).

### 2.2.5 *The impact of return migration*

Return was for a long time regarded as the end of the migration cycle and as a prerequisite for a migrant's continued engagement in local development (Nyberg Sørensen et al. 2002). According to this perspective, the optimal situation that brought most benefits to origin countries was one where emigrants, after several years of work abroad – often a figure of ten to fifteen years of optimal duration was suggested (Olesen 2002: 138) – returned to inject their money and skills into the local economy.

Although return is generally regarded as beneficial for the development of origin countries, it is important to consider that this positive result is likely to be achieved only under specific circumstances (Black & Gent 2006); differences in contexts affect outcomes of the return process on development. To name a few, these contexts include types and volumes of return migrants, reasons for return – failure, conservatism, retirement and innovation (Cerase 1974), duration of return – occasional, seasonal, temporary and permanent (King 1978), as well as the socio-economic and infrastructural environment in origin countries (Nyberg Sørensen et al. 2002). However, as empirical evidence from migration selectivity has shown, in the case of return, too, the literature suggests that those migrants who are at the two poles of the continuum – i.e. the least and the most successful abroad – are least likely to return: the first because they may not have enough resources to return and do not want their peers and family to know of their 'failure'; the second because they are already well-established in the socio-economic life of host societies (Ammassari & Black 2001: 14) .

Ammassari and Black (2001) point out three forms of 'returning' capital that principally affect development in origin countries: financial, human and social capital. Financial transfers upon return differ from remittances that migrants send to their family and relatives while abroad. However, the debates and concerns about their use and effectiveness in the development of origin countries have been similar to the discourse on remittances.

Highly debated is also the impact of human capital. While some scholars optimistically argue that migrants return ‘home’ equipped with new skills and ideas and the desire to instigate change, others suggest that most migrants either do not learn any skills abroad or, at worst, even lose those they had before migrating. Of the minority who gain skills, these can rarely be applied in origin areas, particularly in rural settings. Thus settlement in urban areas upon return may further exacerbate regional disparities. This is particularly the case when origin countries or regions have to grapple with political upheavals and crisis (on the Western Balkans and Central Asia, see e.g. Black et al. 2007).

However, ‘return migration no longer represents the “closure” of the migration cycle, but a stage along the process of increasingly fluid movements between countries’ (Ammassari & Black 2001: 26). Migrants can and do contribute to their origin countries and communities without having to return there. One of these ways is through transnational and translocal engagement, briefly mentioned earlier. The final section in this chapter will now explore this option within a social fields framework.

### **2.3 Social fields: Linking internal and international migration**

So far, I have discussed the differences and linkages between internal and international migration, as well as their developmental impact from an origin-country perspective. It has been clear from this discussion that the two migration types differ from one another in their features and their impacts. On the other hand, these differences are not always clear-cut and much blurring occurs. Furthermore, capturing the different ways in which they impact developing countries is not easy. What I hope to have achieved through this discussion is to show that internal and international migration are interlinked in various ways. In addition, since most LEDCs of origin participate in both types of migration at the macro- and micro-levels, the analytical integration of these migration types becomes imperative. Such an approach would first and foremost require a bridging of origin and destination areas linking migrants and their families together. The concept of such a fluid space of interaction and interconnectedness has been employed before in the migration literature, but it has overwhelmingly referred *either* to internal *or* international migration. Let us now look if there is scope in using some of these concepts to link the two and integrate them into one analysis, which ultimately has migrants at its centre.

Starting with internal migration, it was the Manchester School of Anthropology that pioneered the social field approach during the study of rural-urban migration in South-Central Africa. Its leaders – Gluckman, Epstein and Mitchell, among others – focused on understanding social change among African peoples and studied how colonialism,



industrialisation and labour migration were interlinked (for some relevant key readings, see the edited volume by Banton 1966; also Epstein 1958, 1967; Gluckman 1941; Mitchell 1966). They placed their analysis in a social field that constituted two spheres: the urban-industrial and the rural-tribal, linked together through the process of labour migration and migrants' networks (Kapferer 1987; Werbner 1984). In fact, the migratory process that took place resembled circulatory moves as rural inhabitants would move to the cities for wage labour, but return to work their land in the village when shortages in urban employment occurred. Mitchell (1966: 57, 1957) specified this social field in more detail as created by a network of interconnecting and interdependent networks, or a 'field of fields' (for discussions on this, see also Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004: 1008-1009; Vertovec 2001: 24).

This approach informed later work – four decades later – on migrants, this time in an international setting. The pioneering work on migrant transnationalism of US anthropologists Glick Schiller, Basch, Szanton Blanc, Fournon and, later, Levitt included the concept of transnational social fields (Basch et al. 1994; Glick Schiller & Fournon 1999; Glick Schiller, Basch & Szanton Blanc 1995). This was an adjusted term to reflect situations where migrants moved between two countries rather than internally, and was applied to migration from the Caribbean to North America. The 'new' concept was defined as 'a set of multiple, interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized and transformed' (Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004: 1009). Black (2003: 48) proposes the 'recognition of such "transnational" social fields' of migrant communities as a minimum condition for the researcher to be able to acquire a deeper understanding of their lived experiences. In fact, the French-Algerian sociologist Sayad (1999) had a couple of decades earlier pleaded for such an approach. Through his work on migration from Algeria to France, he emphasised that before she or he becomes an immigrant, the migrating individual is first an emigrant. This resonates – although in a different setting – very closely with the Manchester School which recognised that the tribal-rural out-migrants were at the same time also colonial-industrial city in-migrants.

Building on this discussion, I suggest that there is scope to apply the concept of the social field to encompass the interlinkages between internal and international migration. In this context, such an intra-national and transnational social field is constituted by sets of interdependent, heterogeneous and overlapping networks (or sub-fields) of social relations through which ideas, practices and resources are unequally exchanged, organised and transformed. The importance of this approach is threefold. First, the focus is the social relations as units of analysis, rather than spatial (origin or destination) categories – although geography is also important, not least as it is closely related to geopolitical and other power relations. Second,

these networks connect migrants with those who stay behind (Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004: 1009), thus providing a space for integrating the experiences of those who are indirectly affected by migration. And third, migrants and their families are not only connected between two places of initial origin and destination location, whether this is an internal or international one, but also among these destination places as well. Thus, multidimensionality and pluri-locality can potentially address the complexity of combined internal and international migration processes and trajectories through a less spatially and methodologically fragmented analysis. Such an approach contributes to understanding not only the everyday life of migrants and their families, but also the global and local processes and structures that shape, and are shaped by, migrants' incorporation into destination societies.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

The vast and fast-growing body of literature that has been generated so far on internal and international migration (albeit separately), on development and on their multiple linkages, presents challenges for any piece of work that aims at comprehensive coverage of the issues. Thus, in order to avoid the risk of superficiality, given the length constraints of a single book chapter, I have focused on selected key works that I consider to be the most pertinent to the aims of my research and to my approach of the study. The key conclusion to draw after this review is that there is evidence to support the claim that internal and international migration are closely linked in the ways they are deployed by migrants and in the ways they impact development. Poverty and inequality in migrant-sending areas are impacted differently by internal and international monetary and non-monetary remittances and by migration more broadly. As migrants from developing countries are increasingly using both migration types as integral parts of their livelihood strategies, it is imperative that an integrated approach to these debates is adopted. In this chapter I have proposed the – I would claim – relatively original theoretical notion of intra-national and transnational social field, which I employ as a key framing device for the main analysis of this study, evidenced in my results, found in Chapters 4 through 7. My discussion in this chapter has drawn on a conceptually wide range of studies, 'grounded' in a number of migrant-sending contexts around the world. Now, in the next chapter, I take the reader to Albania and survey the evolving scenario of migration and development in that country, based on existing literature and secondary data.



### 3 Albanian migration and development

Although Albania's borders were sealed off for nearly half a century during the communist period, migration from Albania was not without historical precedent: Albanians had migrated far and wide for centuries. However, the post-communist migration had specific features which make it one of the most noteworthy flows in the world. The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of these migrations – both international and internal – and the ways they have been linked to development. To set the post-communist flows into perspective, I start with a brief historical account divided into two periods – migration until 1945 and during the communist years. The discussion of both international and internal movements after 1990 – as the main focus of the chapter – is structured around migration statistics, typologies and patterns, as well as destinations, migrants' profiles, their lives and experiences. Their relationship with development is analysed through the impact of remittances, demography and spatial effects. Return migration is briefly elaborated in the closing sections.<sup>1</sup>

#### 3.1 Historical migration

Probably the earliest mass migration in the collective historical memory of Albanians took place in the second half of the fifteenth century, after the death of Albania's national hero Scanderbeg in 1467. His death and the capture of his stronghold in Krujë, in northern Albania, signified the fall of the Albanian lands to the Ottomans. In the aftermath, his family and other Albanian nobles fled to Italy, while others moved north to the Dalmatian coast and south to Greece. It is estimated that around 200,000 Albanians emigrated during this time (Tirta 1999: 97).<sup>2</sup>

Five centuries under Ottoman rule were accompanied by further migration to other destinations. Many Albanian men fled to escape blood vendettas and the Ottoman persecution, yet others simply emigrated to escape poverty or to work in various trades and professions within the borderless Ottoman Empire. This emigration is known in the Albanian history and collective memory as *kurbet*. Originating from the Turkish *gurbet*, the word refers to the act of going away and being distant in a foreign land, usually for work (King & Vullnetari 2003). Embedded in the Albanian

folklore (there are, for instance, *kurbeti* folksongs, narratives and place names) and memory, it was ideologically re-loaded by the party-state during communism and then reclaimed by migrants and their families in the post-1990 migrations, as we shall see in later sections of this chapter (see also Mai & Schwandner-Sievers 2003: 944-945; Papailias 2003: 1064).

At the turn of the twentieth century, Albanians looked to fulfill their aspirations overseas and became (a very small) part of the transatlantic migrations from Southern Europe to North America and Australia. Some of them were refugees who fled the bloodshed that resulted from the Balkan Wars and the two World Wars. Others sought to improve their life by emigrating for work in the rapidly expanding industrial cities of North America and the agricultural industries of Australia. Labour migrants were in the majority men, but especially after the 1930s, more women emigrated to join their male relatives or their future husbands abroad (see e.g. Federal Writers' Project 1939). Photo 1 is a rare record of such historical Albanian female migration.<sup>3</sup>

Most labour migrants during the pre-communist era originated from south and south-east Albania, including the villages I studied for this research. This has implications for links with 'new migrations', as we shall see. The impacts of these migrations on origin areas were mixed and complex. Emotionally, the separation of families over such long distances was

**Photo 1** 'Albanian woman with head cloth, Ellis Island' (Lewis Hine 1905)



painful and hard to bear. Demographically, emigration, especially overseas, stripped entire villages and regions of their labour force, since most emigrants were men of working age. However, emigration also became a motor for economic and social progress, by bringing in much-needed money through remittances as well as skills and knowledge and more open societal and democratic norms. Much of the country's modernisation during the reign of King Zog is attributed to return migrants, particularly from the US (Rouçek 1946: 532). But this effect was mostly felt in the areas of origin of migrants – overwhelmingly the south and south-east of the country (Tirta 1999). Given that very few overseas migrants originated from the north, the socio-economic gap – including educational levels and gender relations – between the north and the south of the country widened (UNDP-Albania 2000).

As a result of these historical migrations, significant communities of Albanians formed in destination countries, including Greece, Italy, Romania, Egypt and the US (Tirta 1999). Of particular significance are the Arbëresh communities in the South of Italy and Sicily – descendents of Albanian emigrants who settled there following the fall of Albanian lands to the Ottomans. Remarkably, they have preserved their language and customs after more than five centuries (Hall 1994: 50).<sup>4</sup> Another destination was Australia, which became increasingly important after the US imposed immigration quotas in the 1920s and 1930s (Carne 1979; Price 1963). Although numerically insignificant when compared to US-bound migration, I mention it here because of its link with the post-1990 Albanian migration to Australia, especially from my study villages.

Meanwhile, internal movements were not negligible either. Internally displaced people sought refuge from the border areas that were being constantly disputed until the end of World War II. Equally, peasants were moving to the slowly expanding cities where they hoped to find work and escape poverty and a hopeless rural existence. Up to the early twentieth century, urban-bound migration was directed towards the old urban centres such as Shkodër, Elbasan, Berat, Gjirokastër and Korçë (Tirta 1999: 78). However, most of these were situated in mountainous terrain (see Figure 1.1) and this, combined with the changing socio-economic circumstances in the country more generally, influenced a shift towards warmer, coastal areas. By 1945, Tirana had emerged as the most important city in Albania with almost 60,000 inhabitants (Tirta 1999: 88). Some of this might have been due to the effects of return migration from abroad, whereby return migrants – for instance, of Korçë origin – settled in the more affluent cities of Tirana and Durrës: an interesting prelude to some current migration patterns, as we shall see later. Despite this seemingly rapid urbanisation, in 1945 almost 80 per cent of Albania's population lived in rural areas (Bërxfholi 2000: 20; Sjöberg 1989: 106; UNDP-Albania 2000: 46).

### 3.2 Albania 1945-1990: An era of no migration?

Albania emerged from World War II economically devastated. The power vacuum created after the withdrawal of German troops was swiftly filled by the communists, who consolidated their position as the leading political force. Albania embarked on the road to socialism, framed within a political ideology of self-reliance, isolation, strong ethno-nationalism, but also class warfare and ruthless purges of dissident opinion. There were various crucial factors of influence that framed the policy of the state as well as the trajectories of many individuals and families during almost half a century of communist rule: the reconstruction of industry and the national economy, yet strict controls over urbanisation; the retention of rural population, yet a high birth rate accompanied by a growing impoverishment of villages; a worsening of the gap in living conditions between rural and urban areas. Overall, this period is characterised by centrally controlled internal movements and a ban on international migration (Sjöberg 1994).

Two distinct phases of internal relocations can be distinguished. The first, corresponding roughly to 1945-1965, was characterised by large-scale internal movements, albeit centrally regulated, and a high degree of urbanisation. In contrast, the second phase that followed and which continued largely until the end of the communist era, was characterised by stricter regulations that aimed at retaining rural populations in their place. Let us look at these internal movements in a little more detail.

In the first five post-war years, internal migration took place primarily towards rural lowland areas. This was strongly influenced by the first Agrarian Reform of 1945-1946 through which the state confiscated land from large landowners, religious institutions and foreign concerns and distributed it to landless peasants (Sjöberg 1992a: 52). However, starting from the early 1950s and with the help of the Soviets, the country embarked on an ambitious industrialisation project, which required labour for the various manufacturing and production plants. This labour boosted the urban population of existing towns where most industrial projects were situated. A number of new towns were specifically created at this time around these industries; the majority of them was associated with metal extraction and processing, energy production and armaments (Rugg 1994: 63). An additional contributing factor to these movements is thought to be the second Agrarian Reform, which began in the late 1950s (Bërxfholi, Hana, Lulo, Çaro, Xhaxhiu, Seferkolli, Zeqiri, Zotaj & Gjeçka 2005: 70). This time, the collectivisation of land and livestock into Soviet-type socialist cooperatives stripped peasants of their private possessions and turned them into a rural proletariat. Some of them joined the urban proletariat by moving to the cities.

Numerically, movements during this first phase were relatively large-scale. According to census data, the urban population during 1950-1955

grew by more than half, while rural population growth was barely 4 per cent (Bërxfholi 2000: 27; Borchert 1975: 183). Most of this was attributed to rural-urban migration. The majority of these internal labour migrants were young men and, to a lesser extent, women between the ages of 20 and 34 (Bërxfholi et al. 2005: 70).

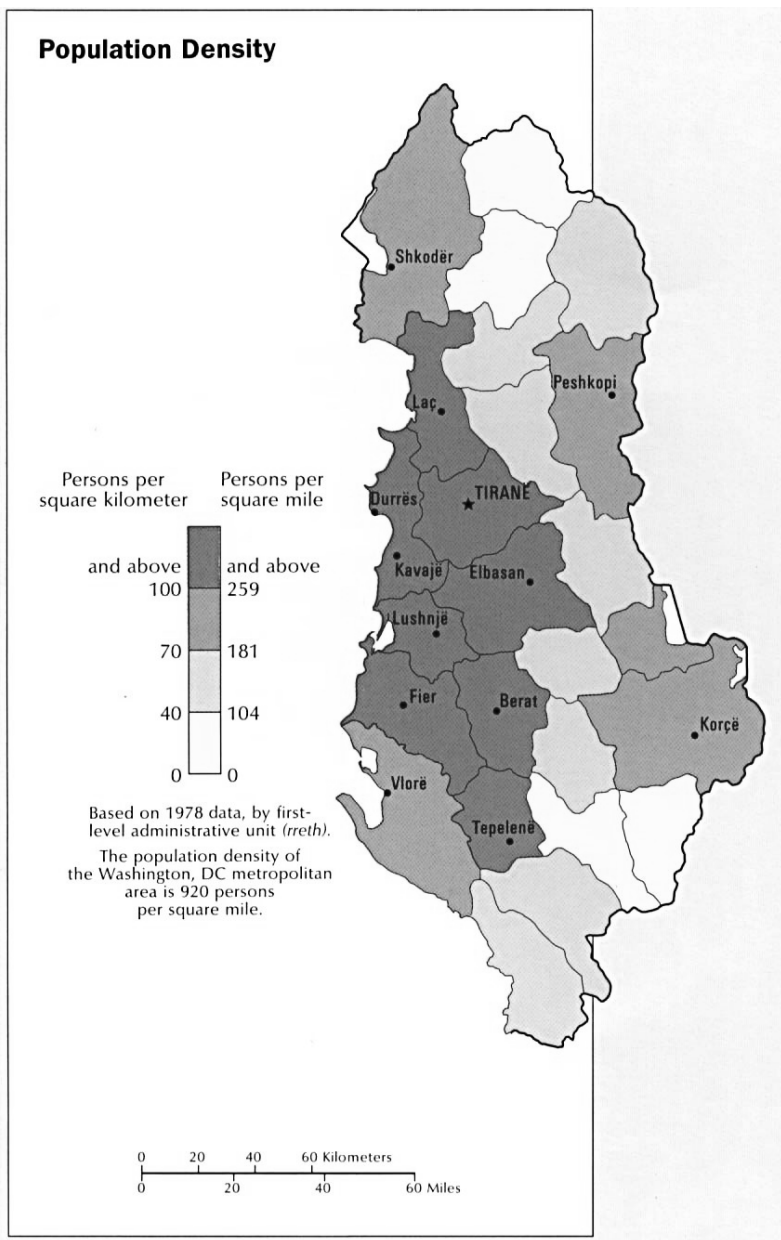
However, having set the industrial revolution in motion and being guided to a certain extent by the relationship with a new ally, China, the party-state turned its focus more strongly on agriculture. This initiates our second phase, starting in the early 1960s, during which the Albanian authorities pursued a policy of rural retention and minimal urbanisation. Although there were some 'pro-rural and pro-upland' schemes aimed at improving living conditions in rural and mountainous areas, they alone were not sufficient to curb the flow (Sjöberg 1994). Sjöberg (1994) argues that it was administrative restrictions, many of which simply involved 'legal prohibition on migration', that achieved this aim.<sup>5</sup>

Nonetheless, some migration outside the prescribed parameters did take place (Sjöberg 1992b). Arguably, the growth of peri-urban areas around Tirana resulted from a fair amount of such 'unofficial' migration. Others used marriage as a way to circumvent the rules. For instance, data from the 1979 and 1989 censuses reveal that the share of working-age females in urban areas was higher than that of males, while the opposite had been the case in previous decades (Bërxfholi 2000). These measures were particularly aimed at curbing rural-urban migration. Rural-rural movement continued with less limitation; this constituted more than 60 per cent of internal migration between 1979 and 1989 (Civici & Lerin 2001). There was also a certain amount of urban-rural migration, especially of cadres and intelligentsia towards the villages during the Cultural Revolution in the mid-1970s.

Geographically, the most significant population shifts took place from the northern and southern highlands towards rural areas adjoining the major cities in the coastal plain, mainly in the Tirana-Durrës-Elbasan triangle, although the cities themselves increased too (Borchert 1975; Sjöberg 1992a). By 1971, the highest rural population density was reached in the districts of Durrës, Lushnjë and Fier, which form a belt of prime farming land along the coast (see Figure 3.1). The second highest was in the belt of districts adjoining it to the east: Lezhë, Krujë, Tirana, Elbasan and Berat (Borchert 1975). Other movements were regional in character, directed from remote highlands towards the regional cities or rural areas surrounding them. Both of these patterns are in fact a continuation of what had become apparent from the first decades of the twentieth century and which continued to be dominant after the collapse of the communist regime.

Tirana, more than any other city, was the focus of such moves – the most desirable destination for a considerable number of Albanians, especially young people. As a major industrial, administrative, educational and



**Figure 3.1** *Albania: Population density, 1978*

Source: Adjusted from map in CIA Atlas of Eastern Europe 1990<sup>6</sup>

cultural centre, its periphery attracted what Sjöberg (1992b) calls 'diverted migration'. In other words, migratory flows heading for Tirana experienced a deflection to the rural periphery adjoining it. Since most would-be migrants were not able to obtain permission to move their residence to Tirana proper, they managed to migrate to one of the rural cooperatives or state farms close to the city. These 'diverted in-migrants', in turn, contributed to the formation of densely populated 'extra-urban settlements' (Sjöberg 1992b: 13). A significant number of them commuted to the capital, and their aim continued to be settlement in the capital itself. Thus, the post-1990 large-scale migration to Tirana was not without historical precedent.

Externally, emigration became a matter of high treason and anyone caught trying to escape the Albanian gulag was either shot on sight or put behind bars for many years, while their families were internally exiled. As the country became isolated after subsequent breakdowns in relations with its former allies, its militarisation further increased. From the mid-1970s, a number of parallel measures was taken as safeguards against foreign invasion (such as the building of thousands of concrete bunkers)<sup>7</sup> and against the defection of Albanians to 'the West'. First, defection became the highest form of treason against the homeland, punishable by no less than ten years imprisonment and even death, as well as internal exile for the family of the defector.<sup>8</sup> Second, a barbed-wire high-voltage fence, with frequent sentry posts, ran the entire length of the land border with Greece and the former Yugoslavia. Border villages were sectioned off as part of a 'border zone' and entry therein was only possible with a special permit obtained at the district police office. Powerful propaganda also played a key role: migration was portrayed as a 'wound' of the past and the notion of *kurbet* was re-invoked and loaded with negative connotations of separation, suffering, loss and destruction. As a result, emigration between the 1950s and 1990 was but a trickle.

As the country broke its relations with allies, it lost the much-needed financial and technical help it was receiving from them, which was crucial for the large industrial projects. Consequently, while the economy was relatively buoyant with Soviet help, this could not be sustained with the Chinese support that replaced it, and deteriorated even further when the tap of foreign aid was turned off. Meanwhile, agriculture had barely mechanised and although some productivity was gained, this was largely due to labour input, a combination of population growth and immobility. In fact, from the mid-1950s, population grew at a constant of more than 2 per cent, a rate higher than any other country in Europe besides Turkey. By the late 1980s, more than a third of Albania's population was under fifteen years of age and the average population age was 26 (Sjöberg 1989). Two thirds of this population was fixed in rural areas, while urban growth remained remarkably low, despite a total of 43 rural centres being upgraded to the administrative category of town (Bërxfholi 2000).

**Photo 2** *Communist-era bunkers, Devoll*



Migration was effectively legalised as a human right soon after the collapse of the totalitarian regime. Article 22 of the Law on Amendments to the Constitutional Provisions in 1993 enshrined the right of every Albanian citizen to choose their place of residence and move freely within the state's territory, and emigrate abroad. However, by that date massive spontaneous emigration and internal migration had already started.

### **3.3 'A new migration order': Contemporary migration in Albania**

Contemporary Albanian emigration presents a unique case not only in post-communist Europe, but also more widely, by reason of its massive concentration over a short period of time and its specific features. Van Hear (1998: 119) has described it as 'a new migration order', King (2005: 133) considers Albania a 'laboratory for the study of migration and development', while Carletto, Davis, Stampini and Zezza (2006) talk about a 'country on the move'. I now discuss some of the features of this migration, drawing on a number of key analyses such as Barjaba and King (2005), King (2003, 2005), King and Mai (2002, 2008) and King and Vullnetari (2003). The section starts with an overview of the key events

regarding Albanian migration. It continues with a presentation of some figures, followed by a discussion of the evolving character of Albanian migration. Last but not least, I provide an analysis of the integration process of migrants in their major destination: Greece.

### 3.3.1 *Main peaks of intensity*

Although emigration from Albania has continued throughout these two post-communist decades, three major episodes stand out.

The first, during 1990-1993, was triggered by the violent and chaotic exit of the country from 45 years of poverty, appalling violation of human rights and almost hermetical closure to the outside world. The first sign of this exodus was the 'embassy occupation' in July 1990 when around 5,000 people climbed the walls of Western embassies in Tirana and requested protection. Eventually, they were allowed to leave for the West, primarily to Germany, Italy and France, where they became the nuclei for the follow-up chain migration of the years to come. In the following weeks and months, thousands of people from all over the country flocked towards Tirana in the hope of entering one of the embassies, while others targeted the ships in the port of Durrës, intending to sail them to Italy (Vickers & Pettifer 1997: 27). In March and then later in August of 1991, around 45,000 Albanian migrants reached the southern Italian shores by boat. However, while the March 'boat people' were accepted as refugees by the Italian authorities, those arriving there in August were soon repatriated as illegal migrants. Meanwhile, more significant events were taking place on the southern frontier, as thousands trekked from all over the country towards and over the harsh border mountains to reach Greece (Photo 3). These numbers are unknown as it was impossible to keep records, and there was much to and fro movement.

The second intense movement followed the collapse of unsustainable pyramid investment schemes in 1997. During 1993-1996, there was a rapid economic recovery primarily due to migrants' remittances from abroad. By the mid-1990s, these were estimated at around \$ 700 million per year, or a quarter of the country's GDP (Korovilas 1999: 399). An unquantifiable share of them was invested in high-interest private 'saving' schemes, which flourished particularly during 1995-1996 due to the under-developed financial sector in the country. Interest rates reached almost 50 per cent a month, which of course could not be sustained (Jarvis 2000). At their height in 1996, these pyramids had attracted deposits equivalent to half of the country's GDP (Korovilas 1999: 409). Their collapse in early 1997 led to a period of political and economic turmoil verging on civil war in some parts of the country. This chaos produced another boat exodus to Italy in the early spring of 1997. Initially, 10,600 Albanians were accepted by Italy, but further sea-borne migrations were repulsed.

Sometimes these attempts resulted in the tragic end of dozens of emigrants.<sup>9</sup> As before, larger but unquantifiable crossings of the Greek border took place.

The third moment refers to the migration influenced by the Kosovo crisis of 1999-2000. The Albanian economy recovered rapidly again after the fall of the pyramid schemes, principally due to more remittances sent by more emigrants. However, in 1999, around half a million ethnic Albanian refugees from Kosovo entered the country, fleeing the ethnic cleansing of Milosevic's regime. The Kosovar refugee crisis destabilised the already fragile economic and demographic situation, especially in northern Albania. As Kosovar Albanians moved onwards to European asylum destinations, many citizens of Albania mixed themselves in with them.

Although the main destinations continued to be Greece and Italy, throughout these years there was much onward migration to other EU countries such as France, Germany and Belgium, where scattered Albanian communities that had started with the 'embassy refugees' were strengthened by new arrivals. The evolving diasporic network then spread to the UK, especially after the influx of Kosovar refugees to that country. Further away, a new Albanian community was developing alongside the historical diaspora settled in the US. Let us now look at what story the statistics convey.

**Photo 3** *Mountain pass to Greece, Devoll*



### 3.3.2 *Figures*

Until 2000, statistics on Albanian emigrants abroad were patchy. However, since then, more and better data from Albania and the major destination countries have been provided, which helps piece together a quantitative picture of this migration.

#### – Albania

On the Albanian side, I single out three key sources: the government of Albania with data coming from the Department of Emigration within the Albanian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs,<sup>10</sup> and the National Institute of Diaspora (NID)<sup>11</sup> within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the population censuses carried out by the National Statistics Office INSTAT; and the ALSMS conducted by INSTAT with the support of the World Bank.<sup>12</sup>

According to data from MOLSAEO, there were nearly 750,000 and 1.1 million Albanian migrants living abroad in 1999 and 2005, respectively. The majority of them lived in Greece and Italy. By 2010, this number had jumped to 1.7 million, according to NID data (2010: 7-8). The second source – the 2001 census – seems to provide compatible figures. Thus, the census data revealed an estimated total loss of 710,000 individuals due to migration between 1989 and 2001 (INSTAT 2004b: 34). Of these, more than 600,000 represented the net loss calculated by the census residual method (calculating net emigration as the residual of intercensal population change, minus the net difference between births and deaths). This figure, however, excluded migration of less-than-one-year's duration and thus much emigration to Greece, which was temporary. The remaining 110,000 was estimated as the indirect impact of emigration, i.e. the children not born, or born abroad, to migrants of reproductive age. The 2011 census which took place in October will hopefully provide a more updated statistical picture.<sup>13</sup>

Table 3.1 is composed of data provided by the government of Albania. It presents cumulative estimates at three points in time for the most important migrant destinations and their shares in the total for the respective year. Unfortunately, no disaggregation of this data by sex was available.<sup>14</sup> I will refer to this table when discussing data from host countries, especially for the 'big four' destinations: Greece, Italy, the US and the UK.

We can draw a number of conclusions from this table. First, we see a progressive increase of absolute numbers of Albanians living abroad, which more than doubled between 1999 and 2010, even if we consider a more conservative total for 2010. For example, the corresponding figure from the World Bank data is 1.44 million, equivalent to almost half (45.4 per cent) of Albania's resident population of 3.2 million (World Bank 2011: 54). Already by 2008, Eurostat estimated that just over one million

**Table 3.1** *Estimates of Albanians living abroad, 1999, 2005 and 2010*

Country	1999	%	2005	%	2010	%
Greece	500,000	67.3	600,000	54.9	750,000	44.0
Italy	200,000	27.0	250,000	22.9	450,000	26.4
US	12,000	1.6	150,000	13.7	400,000	23.5
UK	5,000	0.7	50,000	4.6	50,000	2.9
Germany	12,000	1.6	15,000	1.4	15,000	0.9
Canada	5,000	0.7	11,500	1.0	15,500	0.9
Belgium	2,500	0.3	5,000	0.5	5,000	0.3
Turkey	1,000	0.1	5,000	0.5	5,000	0.3
France	2,000	0.3	2,000	0.2	10,000	0.6
Austria	2,000	0.3	2,000	0.2	2,500	0.2
Switzerland	1,000	0.1	1,500	<0.1	1,500	<0.1
Netherlands	n.a.	n.a.	1,000	<0.1	1,000	<0.1
TOTAL	742,500	100	1,093,000	100	1,705,500	100

Sources: 1999: Barjaba (2000); 2005: Government of Albania (2005: 36); 2010: NID (2010: 7-8)

Albanians were living in the EU-27 alone; Albanians comprised the third most numerous non-EU foreign citizens usually resident in these countries after the Turks and Moroccans, and constituted 3.3 per cent of EU-27's foreign population (Vasileva 2009: 4-5). This increase may reflect improved rates of regularisation in host countries and better counting, but essentially continued emigration as the preliminary results of the 2011 census indicate. According to these results, Albania's population decreased by about 8 per cent in the 2001-2011 inter-censal period, the primary reason being none other than emigration (INSTAT 2011). The second conclusion to draw is that the major destination countries remain Greece and Italy, although as a proportional share of total emigrants there has been a steady decrease for Greece. Third, the data indicate a shift in the relative importance of the US and the UK, although the 2010 figure for the former may be somewhat exaggerated. Let us now see what the sources in the 'big four' have to say.

#### – Greece

Data on migrants in Greece were limited until the late 1990s, especially since much of this migration was irregular and of a to-and-fro nature. The only official sources were the statistics provided for the forced repatriations during the *skoupa* (σκούπα, Greek for 'broom') operations.<sup>15</sup> Until the mid-1990s, these were estimated at an average of 200,000 expulsions per year (Baldwin-Edwards & Fakiolas 1998: 197).<sup>16</sup> Although more official data have been available in recent years, there is much criticism that the Greek statistics are of very poor quality (Baldwin-Edwards & Apostolatos 2009; Baldwin-Edwards & Kolios 2008). Furthermore, some government departments refused until quite late to release certain data, such as those on

ethnic-Greek Albanian migrants, on grounds of ‘national security’ (Baldwin-Edwards 2004a).

There are five main sources of data collection on immigrants in Greece relevant to our case: a) the regularisation programmes carried out in 1998, 2001, 2005 and 2007; b) the 1991, 2001 and 2011 censuses carried out by the National Statistical Service of Greece; c) the residence permits register for third-country nationals (TCNs) held at the Ministry of Interior; d) a register of the special identity cards known as EDTOs given to ethnic-Greek Albanians and held at the Ministry of Public Order; and e) the quarterly Labour Force Surveys (LFS).<sup>17</sup> Table 3.2 is composed of data from these various sources and it presents absolute numbers, shares of females in Albanian migrant population and shares of Albanians in totals of immigrants, where these data were available.

First, the regularisations. According to data released by the Greek authorities, 241,561 Albanian immigrants applied in the first 1998 regularisation, constituting 65 per cent of the total non-EU, ‘non-ethnic Greek’ immigrant population in Greece. Only 17 per cent of them were women (Cavounidis 2004: 41). However, the number of those who did not apply for regularisation was considerable. Barjaba and King (2005: 12-13) estimated that some 500,000 documented and undocumented Albanian citizens were living in Greece by the end of the 1990s. No data have been released for the 2001 regularisation, other than a total figure of 367,504 applicants for all nationalities and 341,278 grants of permits (an acceptance rate of 93 per cent). In

**Table 3.2** *Albanians in Greece according to various sources, 1990-2010*

Year	Stay permits			Regularisation applications			Census			EDTO	EDTO citizenship
	No.	% F	% Total	No.	% F	% Total	No.	% F	% Total	No.	No.
1990	855	n.a.	n.a.								
1991	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.				20,556	n.a.	n.a.		
1998	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	241,561	17	65					56
2001	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	438,036	41	58	55,000	58
2004	291,665	19	65								23
2005	347,477	22	65	35,090	35	37					66
2006	368,625	23	63							200,000	68
2007	303,225	35	n.a.	16,698	31	84					5,634
2008	274,390	37	64							185,000	n.a.
2010	368,269	40	71								n.a.

*Sources:* Data from 1991 and 2001 Greek censuses, OAED, Greek Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Public Order in Baldwin-Edwards (2009: 58, 61, 2008: 2); Cavounidis (2004: 41); Gemi, Yiannis, Michalis and Kyriaki (2010: 26); Maroukis (2008: 54-57); Maroukis and Gemi (2010: 13, 15, 16); Triandafyllidou, Marouf & Nikolova (2009: 68)

*Note:* Valid stay permits as of 15 January 2004, 2005, 2006; 15 October 2007; April 2008; March 2010



2004, the authorities indicated that 20,344 individuals of this wave had been regularised as family members of those residing legally in Greece, 70 per cent of whom (14,241 individuals) were Albanian nationals. The figures for the 2005 and 2007 regularisations (Table 3.2) are for applications from new irregular migrants only. By then, most Albanians held some kind of regular permit which had to be renewed every two years; no data have become available on applications for renewal of expired permits (Baldwin-Edwards 2009: 58, 61).<sup>18</sup>

Second, the census data. The 1991 census enumerated a little more than 20,000 Albanians although the numbers will have been much higher, as we saw earlier. More reliable information came forth from the 2001 census that enumerated 438,036 Albanians, making up 58 per cent of total immigrants (Baldwin-Edwards & Apostolatos 2009; Cavounidis 2004: 40-41). However, this might again be an underestimate for two reasons. To start with, censuses generally tend to miss migrants, especially irregular ones as they have a higher propensity to 'hide' from enumerators than the native population (Barjaba & King 2005). Moreover – and more specific to the Greek context – as Baldwin-Edwards (2004a) suggests, many ethnic-Greek Albanian migrants might have been counted as Greeks by the enumerators. Gender ratios were markedly more balanced than previously, with around 41 per cent women enumerated in 2001 (Baldwin-Edwards 2004a: 5; Cavounidis 2004: 41-43). The 2011 census took place in May and fully-analysed results are not expected to become available until 2013; preliminary results only indicate a decrease in the total number of residents (ELSTAT 2011).

For a more updated picture, we turn our attention to the third source – the residence permit registers for ethnic Albanians (Table 3.2). The absolute numbers show a steady increase between 2004 and 2006, followed by a decrease that is more pronounced in 2008 and again an increase in 2010, although the number for this year is still below that of 2006. There are two possible explanations for this. First, staying 'regular' – i.e. continuing to have a regular residence permit – in Greece is extremely difficult due to the various bureaucratic requirements, the way the system for permits has been set up and the reality of the Greek economy (for a detailed and critical analysis of this, see Baldwin-Edwards 2009; Maroukis 2009). Maroukis (2009: 16-17) suggests that the main reason for the high propensity of regular migrants to lapse into illegality is 'their difficulty to acquire the number of required social security stamps' (known in Greek as *ensima* [ένσημα]; see also Fakiolas 2003). The second reason might be that some Albanians may have returned to Albania, as a result of the recent global economic crisis in which Greece has been particularly hard-hit. However, this remains a speculation in the absence of statistics and studies. As mentioned earlier, these data do not include ethnic-Greek Albanians, to which we now turn.

Data on ethnic-Greek Albanians living in Greece – also known as *homogeneis* (ομογενής, Greek for ‘co-ethnics’) – were not released until the mid-2000s. In the first instance, a figure of 200,000 was supplied;<sup>19</sup> starting from 2002, they were given EDTO cards of a three-year duration. In 2008 it was revealed that 185,000 EDTO cards were valid as of January of that year: 33,000 of three-year and 152,000 of ten-year duration (Maroukis & Gemi 2010: 13). If we presume that this number stayed more or less the same in the last two years, we can estimate the total number of Albanians with a regular status in Greece by 2010 at around 550,000. To this, we need to add an estimate of irregular migrants; some Greek researchers have argued that Albanians have a rate of 30 per cent irregularity in Greece, but this is contested as rather high by others (see Maroukis 2009: 62). If we accept a more conservative share than that – e.g. 20 per cent – we come to a total of around 670,000 for all Albanian migrants in Greece in 2010, which is rather lower than that supplied by NID (Table 3.2). In a country with a total population of around eleven million, this is nevertheless a considerable presence: around 6 per cent of the total population.

#### – Italy

In contrast to the situation in Greece, Italian data have been available from the early years, although the different sources are far from consistent with each other.<sup>20</sup> The recorded ‘boat people’ during the 1991 and 1997 Albanian waves give a glimpse of the numbers in the early years. More systematic and reliable data come from four sources. First, there are the periodic regularisations. Previously undocumented Albanians who applied for these schemes were 29,724 in the 1995 regularisation, 39,454 for 1998 and 55,035 for 2002 (King & Mai 2008: 86). The second source is the ‘permits to stay’ database held by the Ministry of Interior. According to these, Albanians were in the 65th place among all migrant communities in Italy in 1990 with only 2,034 permits, but jumped straight to ninth place in 1991, progressed to seventh place in 1992 and then to second place in 1996 (King & Mai 2008: 85). They continued to retain this position thereafter and, from 2000, they have constituted at least a tenth of the total immigrant population in Italy. Table 3.3 shows this progression since 2003.<sup>21</sup> By 2009, Albanians numbered 466,684, a figure quite compatible with that of 450,000 provided by the NID (Table 3.1); they were just ahead of the Moroccans who stood at 10.2 per cent of the immigrant population, but well behind the Romanians at 21 per cent.

The third source of data for Italy is the municipal population register according to which Albanians at the end of 2004 numbered 316,700, or 13.2 per cent of the total foreign population. According to this source, they were *the* leading immigrant nationality. Fourthly, the 2001 Italian census enumerated 173,100 Albanians, or 13.0 per cent of foreigners enumerated, just behind the Moroccans at 13.2 per cent (see Bonifazi 2007: 137). The 2011

**Table 3.3** *Albanians in Italy with 'permits to stay': End of year, 2003-2009*

<i>Year</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>% F</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>% total</i>	<i>Total immigrants</i>
2003	233,616	38.4	2	10.6	2,193,999
2005	255,704	n.a.	2	11.3	2,271,680
2006	381,011	42.3	3	10.3	3,690,052
2007	401,949	44.7	2	11.7	3,432,651
2008	441,396	45.2	2	11.3	3,891,295
2009	466,684	45.8	2	11.0	4,235,059

*Source:* Caritas/Migrantes (2010: 8, 2009: 6-7, 2008: 8, 2007: 12, 2006: 8, 2004: 4)

census will provide a more updated picture, when the results become available, although some undercounting can be anticipated.

In terms of gender, Albanian women in Italy accounted for around a third of Albanians residing there throughout most of the 1990s, and their share increased steadily thereafter to reach around 40 per cent by 2001 and 45 per cent by the late 2000s (King & Mai 2008: 88; see also Table 3.3 above).

Each of the above sources has its own shortcomings. First, the Italian census, like the Greek one, probably 'missed' many Albanians (and other immigrants) for the same reason as explained earlier. Second, both the permits to stay and the population register have a built-in tendency to over-record immigrant numbers, as they may not regularly update their records of when permits expire or migrants move out of a municipality. Third, undocumented migrants may be missing from these figures. However, recent estimates – which include irregular migrants – project higher totals. For instance, the well-regarded ISMU institute (in Bonifazi 2007: 130) gives a total of 458,600 Albanians for mid-2005 (13.7 per cent of total immigrants, just ahead of the Romanians at 13.0 per cent and the Moroccans at 12.2 per cent). By 1 January 2009, this number had climbed to 538,000, an increase of 4.7 per cent; Albanians thus constituted 11.7 of total immigrants, just ahead of the Moroccans at 10.8 per cent but well behind the Romanians at 21 per cent (Blangiardo 2010: 35-36). Albanians retained their second place in exactly the same order of nationalities even in 2010; by 1 January of that year, ISMU's estimate stood at 586,000 (out of a total of 5.3 million immigrants) or a share of just over 11 per cent (Cesareo 2011: 1).

#### – US and UK

Data for the US come from two main sources: the censuses and the permits for permanent residence. The 2000 US census reported 113,661 Americans of Albanian ancestry (Orgocka 2005: 140), a figure that is close to the 150,000 reported by the Albanian authorities for 2005 (Table 3.1). When we look at the second source, i.e. immigration statistics compiled by the US Department of Homeland Security, we see some striking figures.

According to this source, a stock of nearly 77,000 Albania-born migrants had obtained legal permanent residence in the US between 1990 and 2010 (my calculation of data by country of birth from US Census Bureau and the US Department of Homeland Security 2009, 2010).<sup>22</sup> This figure does not include the second generation, i.e. those born in the US or in first emigration countries such as Greece; those residing under other types of permits such as students, academic staff or temporary workers; irregular migrants; and those who may have registered under a Kosovar identity. Thus, the true figure is much higher.

According to Orgocka (2005: 140), the most important route of emigration to the US has been through the annual Diversity Visa lottery,<sup>23</sup> accounting for more than three quarters (76 per cent) of Albanian immigrants as of 2000. However, as migration matures and migrants settle, we see a steady shift towards family reunification becoming more important in recent years. For example, immigration statistics from the US Department of Homeland Security reveal that in 2009 the shares of those settling permanently in the US through a diversity visa were almost equal to those settling as immediate relatives of US citizens, i.e. naturalised Albanians<sup>24</sup> (37.9 per cent and 37.8 per cent respectively). In 2010, however, the latter group saw an increase and the respective ratios were 35 per cent and 43 per cent. In contrast to emigration in Greece and Italy, the US hosts a more gender-balanced post-communist Albanian migrant community. For example, of those who settled permanently during 2010 – whether through a status change or new arrivals – some 52 per cent were women.

As in the case of the US, research on Albanians in the UK has been rather limited, thus affecting data availability and analysis. Unlike the US, however, data for Albanians in the UK are also affected by higher rates of citizens of Albania registering as Kosovars. As such, data from official sources differ widely from those from community sources. The 2001 UK census enumerated 2,270 people born in Albania living in the UK, a significant increase from the 150 enumerated in the 1991 census. In fact, Albanians were the immigrant community with the highest increase in the 1991-2001 intercensal period. Some 36 per cent of these lived in London (Kyambi 2005). However, according to community estimates, there were between 50,000 and 60,000 individuals from Albania living in the UK by the end of the second post-communist decade (IOM 2008). Data from the UK census held in March 2011 will throw more light on this, especially as the community is now well established and maturing.

### 3.3.3 *An Albanian migration model*

The peculiar conditions under which Albanian migration took place during the first post-communist decade prompted Barjaba (2000) to suggest a model of Albanian emigration. Subsequently, Barjaba and King (2005) refined

this model to include other migratory conditions that had evolved since 2000, as well as to examine how Albanian migration could fit within general migration theory. Here are the Albanian model's basic features: migration was intense (a rate of emigration much higher than any other Eastern Bloc country); displaying a high degree of irregularity, with many undocumented migrants; lots of to and fro, especially with Greece; it was largely economically driven – a form of 'survival migration'; and it was dynamic and rapidly evolving, especially as regards new destinations and routes of migration. As I discuss each of these features in turn, a note of caution should be made: this typology reflects primarily migrants' experiences and the migratory situations in Greece and Italy, essentially during the 1990s.

First, we turn to intensity. Particularly in the early 1990s, but also immediately after the chaos of 1997, tens of thousands of emigrants left within a matter of months. By the mid-1990s, approximately 20 per cent of the working population had emigrated (King & Vullnetari 2003). In the first three years (1991-1993), Albania's average annual emigration rate per capita was six times higher than that of other Balkan countries and four to five times higher than that of other former communist countries in Europe (Barjaba 2000; Misja 1998). These rates of emigration continued to be high until the end of the decade, but then fell after that (Barjaba & King 2005: 19; Carletto et al. 2004: 18). Regularisations in destination countries combined with increased political and economic stability in Albania have been key factors in stabilising the flows and have even triggered some return (on return, see Labrianidis & Hatziprokopiou 2005; Labrianidis & Lyberaki 2004). Analysing data from the 2005 ALSMS, Azzarri and Carletto (2009: 409) show this downward trend taking place since 2000: while around 50,000 emigrants were estimated to have left the country in the year 2000, only 25,000 did so in 2004. Cumulatively, by 2005, a third of the total resident population had emigrated; by the end of the second post-communist decade, this share had reached 45 per cent (World Bank 2011: 54). This puts Albania in the top ten of emigration countries in the world in terms of emigration scale relative to its resident population. Such a position is rather unique, considering that the other countries above Albania in this ranking are primarily small island states with histories of post-colonial emigration over several generations dating back many decades (King, Uruçi & Vullnetari 2011).

Turning now to the next feature of the model, the ratio of irregular to regular migration, we see that here, too, much has changed. This ratio in the early 1990s was higher than for any other immigrant group in the main host countries (Barjaba & King 2005). In 1997, Greece counted 40 irregular Albanian migrants for every one regularised, whereas in Italy this ratio was two irregular for every one regularised. After the Presidential Decree of November 1997 in Greece and the Turco-Napolitano decree in Italy a year later – and subject to regularisation of all those who have applied –

these ratios became approximately 1:1 in Greece and 1:4 in Italy by the end of the 1990s (Barjaba 2000: 61, 2003: 160-161, 166). However, one must bear in mind that migrants in Greece were likely to fall into an irregular situation within a very short time, mostly due to the short-term validity of most permits, the bureaucratic obstacles and 'the discretionality and corruption involved' during the process of acquiring the documents (Barjaba & King 2005: 13; Fakiolas 2003). For example, only around half of those who applied for the first stage of regularisation in 1998 (the short-term White Card valid for a few months) were able to progress to the second stage for receiving the Green Card (longer term, valid for one year or more) (Baldwin-Edwards 2009: 44, 48).

Regularisation has probably been the major factor influencing the to and fro, characteristic of the 1990s, especially to Greece. The *skoupa* operations of the Greek authorities, which fuelled this type of migration to a certain extent, reduced dramatically after the regularisations. Although to-and-fro movements have not disappeared altogether, they are now qualitatively different from earlier years. For instance, much migration of Roma and Egyptian Albanians for seasonal agricultural work in Greece is of such a character, particularly as they also lack regular papers (De Soto, Beddies & Gedeshi 2005). On the other hand, frequent transnational movements between the two countries are facilitated by the regular status, particularly for those who live in the border areas of Greece and originate from border areas in Albania, as we shall see from the empirical evidence later on in the book.

The model's feature that presents Albanian emigration as a survival strategy has also changed over the years, reflecting both changes in Albania and in the migrants' situation in their destination countries. Albania emerged from the communist years as the poorest country in Europe, with a young population, a stagnant economy and very few future prospects (Sandström & Sjöberg 1991). Chronic food shortages and starvation threatened as strikes brought the already collapsing economy to a standstill. The ultra-liberal 'shock-therapy' reforms of Berisha's government, supported largely by the IMF and the World Bank, had indeed shocking effects. High unemployment rates due to the closure of industries affected the urban population, while the destruction of farm infrastructures followed by a parcelised privatisation of farmland returned peasants to their pre-communist roots and living standards. Under these circumstances, mass emigration became the only means of survival for many households (King 2003). This continued to be the case for most of the 1990s and especially again after the collapse of the pyramid schemes in 1997. As tens of thousands of Albanians lost most and, in some cases, all their savings, even their house and other property, they turned to migration yet again as a way to survive. According to King (2005: 141), emigration was until recently

considered by many Albanians as the ‘most effective way of coping with the country’s disastrous economic conditions’.

Economic motivations were, however, inextricably linked to the turmoil of the political situation in the country, which adds to this migration certain features of a refugee displacement phenomenon, hence the term ‘economic refugees’ used by Barjaba and King (2005: 9).<sup>25</sup> This was particularly prevalent in the first years of the 1990s and in 1997, but it also reflected the motivations of specific groups of people throughout the decade. King (2005: 141) strengthens this analysis by presenting three additional migration motivations, especially relevant for the first post-communist years. First, emigration was an expression of ‘political resistance’ against the authoritarian culture of surveillance and control exercised by the totalitarian regime. This fed into the aspirations of particularly young people, for whom emigration was also an act of ‘personal liberation and self-expression’ in a society where the individual voice was silenced (Lubonja 2001). Mai (2002) clearly shows how many of these youth, particularly from urban areas, were motivated to emigrate by a quest for self-realisation. Third, a re-emergence of the blood feuds in northern Albania has served as a catalyst for many men to flee the country and seek safety abroad.

That Albanian migration has been dynamic and rapidly evolving is more than justified in light of the above analysis and continues to be a valid observation, as the following discussion shows.

### 3.3.4 *Continuing evolution and diversification*

Besides the features mentioned so far, Albanian migration has continued to display its dynamic character in other ways, too. First, there is the ‘elite’ migration – academics, scientists and other professionals – who leave Albania in search of better working conditions and professional achievements.<sup>26</sup> According to the Centre for Economic and Social Studies (CESS) in Albania, half of the country’s lecturers, researchers and academics had emigrated between 1990 and 2005 (Gedeshi & Black 2006). Even more alarming was the finding that more than 70 per cent of them had emigrated together with their families, which means that the chances for an eventual return are very small indeed. A number of these have emigrated through the Skilled Worker Visa programme run by the Canadian government. In addition, the same study revealed that between 2,000 and 4,000 university students leave Albania each year to study abroad in Western Europe and North America (Gedeshi & Black 2006: 8). Financed either by affluent parents or through various scholarships, many of them do not return upon completion of their studies.

Second, there is the gender dimension in that the migratory flow has transformed from one where young males dominated in the early 1990s to one where families are the norm rather than the exception. The presence of

women has been particularly strong in the transatlantic flows. A distinct group of women often written about are those who participate in the sex industry. The problematic portrayal of the 'innocent, naïve, young, uneducated village girl, often of Roma ethnicity' is far from the reality of the complex continuum of age, education, social class, geographical background, consent for migration and participation in sex work. In most accounts, these women are denied agency and infantilised by often being categorised together with children (see e.g. Van Hook, Haxhiymeri & Gjermani 2006). While exploitation and violence should be addressed at every stage, care should be taken that women's experiences, including those outside the hegemonic spaces of NGO shelters or police stations, benefit from multidimensional and dispassionate analyses (see e.g. Campani 2000; Mai 2001; for a more in-depth analysis, see Davies 2009).

Although most migrant women are young and of working age, there is an increasing trend of 'migrating grannies' (King & Vullnetari 2006). These are grandmothers who travel to provide child-care for their migrant sons' (and less often daughters') families and thus transmit socio-cultural practices to the young generation.

Third, as Albanian migration has been maturing (see also King et al. 2011; Nikas & Aspasios 2011), a considerable second generation has become an important group to reckon with, particularly in the four major destination countries (for analysis of this group in Greece, Italy and the UK, see Vathi 2011). Finally, although most migrants have settled in their countries of destination, temporary migration is a continuing feature of the overall Albanian migration, particularly to Greece. Most of this relates to work in agriculture; migrants are primarily drawn from rural areas and are almost exclusively men with low levels of education (Azzarri & Carletto 2009).

To conclude, Albanian migration displays features that resonate within three migration theoretical frameworks (see Barjaba & King 2005). First, it is clear from the above analysis that strong 'push' and 'pull' factors – according to neo-classical migration theory – were behind most of these movements. In other words, socio-economic and political difficulties and hardships pushed Albanians to emigrate to countries where wages are higher, socio-economic prospects better, opportunities for professional and personal development much wider and where life – as imagined through viewing foreign television – was more glamorous (see Mai 2002). Second, the importance of social networks, family and kinship – as theorised by the new economics of migration – has been crucial for sustaining much of this migration.<sup>27</sup> We saw that not only was migration initiated for the survival of the family unit, but much migration took place for family-related motives (see Carletto, Davis & Stampini 2005; Sintès 2003). This takes us to the third framework – transnationalism. As migrants' communities have been established in the various host countries mentioned earlier, transnationalism has been on the rise. Emerging patterns of transnational fluid



identities, transnational practices as well as embryonic diasporic communities have become reality for Albanian migrants as well (Hatziprokopiou 2006; Mai 2005; Maroukis 2005).

### 3.3.5 *Incorporation in host societies: The case of Greece*

In this last subsection on contemporary Albanian emigration, I discuss the reception and incorporation of Albanian migrants in their host destinations by focusing specifically on Greece. I select Greece for a number of reasons. First, my research for this book includes migration in Greece and part of the fieldwork took place there. Therefore, situating my own research within the wider Greek context is essential to help the reader understand my findings and their interpretation. Second, Greece is the single most important destination for Albanian emigration, and there is now substantial literature on this subject to draw from. Third, as the other key destination, Italy displays many similar features with the Greek context, in that they both fit within the Southern European immigration model proposed by King (2000), a model itself embedded within a specific Southern European post-industrial society.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, these similarities are even more pronounced in the case of Albanian migration to both countries (see e.g. the theorisation in Barjaba & King 2005). I thus make reference to these characteristics, besides those already mentioned, at certain points during my discussion of the Greek case, without developing a separate in-depth analysis for Italy. Although there are specific features which reflect the Italo-Albanian relationship and migrants' integration in this country (see King & Mai 2004, 2008), such an in-depth analysis is beyond the remit of this book.

#### – Arrival

Albania shares a long and mountainous border and a much shorter sea link (Sarandë to Corfu) with Greece (Figure 3.2). Most of this landline has been the stage where many migration dramas have been played out, its passes the setting for many journeys of tragedies and despair, but also of hopes and aspirations. In the early to mid-1990s, Albanian migrants, mostly men, would walk the entire length of Albania to reach these southern mountains, where they would then join others for the final clandestine border crossing, following treacherous paths in remote places. Accounts of abuse and violence from the Greek army were quite common in those early years (for one vivid example, see King et al. 1998). Following the regularisations, travelling between the two countries now takes place overwhelmingly through the official border-crossing points. However, recent data show a disturbing picture of continued high numbers of expulsions to Albania, although not comparable to the 1990s. For instance, during 2005 nearly 48,000 irregular Albanians apprehended in Greece were removed, constituting 86 per cent of total removals (Kanellopoulos & Gregou 2006: 27-28).

Figure 3.2 Greece: Location map



Source: CIA maps<sup>29</sup>

#### – Demographic composition

Although migration started off as a typically male-led phenomenon – that is, men migrated first and then women followed (see also King & Vullnetari 2009) – it has resulted in a more balanced picture in recent years. Referring back to Table 3.2, we see that women constituted only 17 per cent of Albanian immigrants in the 1998 regularisation, but this figure rose slowly to 19 per cent in the 2004 residence permits, was at around 20 per cent for the next two years, climbed to over 30 thereafter to reach 40 per cent in 2010. This is constantly a lower share than among Albanians in Italy (Table 3.3). One possible explanation for the women's lower rates of regular stay may be their employment pattern. As we shall see later, the vast majority is employed in domestic and care services, which are activities with a high rate of informality. As such, women find it difficult to obtain the required insurance stamps needed for the permit renewals (see

Maroukis 2009: 62; Baldwin-Edwards 2009). Yet, there is no doubt that their presence in Greece has grown, which is an unmistakable sign of stabilisation and settlement in the host society. This is also reflected in shares of migrants whose spouses are with them in Greece. According to a survey carried out amongst regularised migrants of different nationalities in Greece in 2000, in almost 95 per cent of the cases for both Albanian married men and women, their spouse was with them in Greece (Cavounidis 2004: 43). The analysis of a 10 per cent sample of the 2001 census data comes to similar conclusions. When looking at types of living arrangements, the share of Albanians who live as a married couple with or without children ranges from 61 per cent in rural areas to 77 per cent in the large cities of Athens and Thessaloniki. They have the highest shares in this type of household than any other immigrant community in Greece. In contrast, the shares of those living in multi-member households without nuclear relationship, i.e. (mainly) single migrant men, varies from 6 per cent in large cities to 20 per cent in rural areas (Baldwin-Edwards & Kolios 2008: 13-14).

The pattern of settlement is further confirmed by the presence of children. According to the Greek Ministry of Education, Albanian children enrolled in Greek state schools during the school year 2002-2003 numbered almost 70,000 (Baldwin-Edwards 2004a: 18-20), accounting for over 72 per cent of all non-ethnic Greek foreign children in such schools. Data on residence permits valid in January 2006 also recorded more than 90,000 ethnic Albanian children under the age of sixteen, constituting around 25 per cent of the Albanian population in Greece (Baldwin-Edwards & Kolios 2008: 4). More recent data on residence permits indicate that more than 100,000 Albanian children and youth (0-18 years of age) had a valid permit in 2010 (Baldwin-Edwards 2009). Meanwhile, analysing the 2001 census data and data for births to foreign mothers in Greece, Baldwin-Edwards (2009: 36-38) estimates that around 110,000 children were born to Albanian parents living in Greece by 2007. This 'true second generation' as he calls them, constituted around 37 per cent of total non-Greeks born in Greece by 2001 and around 60 per cent of foreign births thereafter. As for their share of Albanians in Greece, it was suggested at around 20 per cent.

The young age composition of Albanian migrants is confirmed by the 2001 census, which recorded more than 70 per cent of Albanians being in the working-age bracket of 16-64 years (Cavounidis 2004). Tsimbos (2006: 247) argues that such an age composition has a dual positive effect of mitigating against the ageing process of the general population in Greece as well as balancing the public social security system through increased and sustained contributions. This is particularly the case in rural areas, as we shall see presently. A considerable but not easily quantifiable number of older grandparents is also part of this mosaic. The 2001 Greek

census recorded around 10,500 Albanians 65 years and older, constituting almost 2.4 per cent of total Albanian presence there (Cavounidis 2004: 42). A closer look at this age data suggests that 'mature' women are more numerous, especially at older ages (Baldwin-Edwards & Kolios 2008: 4-5). These 'migrant grannies' are mainly involved in child-care and other household chores in the migrant family, but sometimes may also provide such services for (older) Greek citizens in the informal labour market (King & Vullnetari 2006).

#### – Spatial dispersion

Within Greece, Albanians are the most widely dispersed immigrant community (for similar findings in Italy, see King & Mai 2008). With the exception of a tendency to concentrate slightly more along the Greek-Albanian border, they display very similar spatial patterns to the Greek population, namely, large concentrations in the Athens and Thessaloniki areas (Baldwin-Edwards 2004a: 8-11; Baldwin-Edwards & Kolios 2008; Rovolis & Tragaki 2006). For example, according to the 2001 census, more than 33 per cent of enumerated Albanians lived in the prefecture of Athens, while some 7 per cent lived in that of Thessaloniki (Kokkali 2008: 557). However, they have a higher relative concentration in rural areas than the Greek population (Kasimis & Papadopoulos 2005; Kasimis, Papadopoulos & Zacopoulou 2003: 169-170). Spatial distribution within the larger cities displays similar characteristics and indicates temporal improvement. Unlike in accounts of the 1990s (Iosifides & King 1998: 216), or for other migrant groups such as Bulgarians (Kokkali 2008), Albanian migrants nowadays do not tend to cluster in particular areas. For instance, Hatziprokopiou (2006: 173-174) found that Albanians in Thessaloniki did not live in 'ghetto-like situations involving the concentration of large numbers of immigrants in specific "downgraded" neighbourhoods, displacing locals'. Similar results come from another study in Thessaloniki by Kokkali (2008), who examined the diffusion patterns of Albanian and Bulgarian migrant populations as they were recorded by the 2001 Greek census. She found that Bulgarians were more spatially concentrated within the Greater Thessaloniki conurbation than Albanians. The author argued that this spatial dispersion was a part of Albanian migrants' strategy to become invisible in Greek society, alongside the other tactics that will be discussed shortly.

There are at least three important factors in the spatial distribution of Albanians: geographical proximity to Albania, the strength of networks and the availability of employment. The first two are particularly strong influencers for those residing along the Greek-Albanian border. Analysing data from the 2001 Greek census, Sintès (2008: 265) shows that in some of these border areas the presence of migrants is proportionally much higher than in the big urban centres. For example, foreigners – mostly

Albanians – constitute around 44 per cent of the total population in the communes of Pogoniani and Périvoli along the Albanian border. Other studies of migrants in Greece continue to emphasise the importance of social networks. But there is also a clear relationship with types of employment available. Urban areas such as Athens and Thessaloniki offer the possibility of year-round employment (albeit often in casual, temporary jobs); farming areas and tourist sites offer mainly seasonal work (King & Vullnetari 2003).

#### – Employment

According to the 2001 census, 42 per cent of Albanian male immigrants worked in construction, 23 per cent in agriculture and 12 per cent each in industry and tourism. By contrasting, more than half of the women – 52 per cent – reported working in the category ‘other’ which mainly refers to the domestic and care sector; 19 per cent worked in tourism, 15 per cent in agriculture and 9 per cent in industry (Baldwin-Edwards 2004b: 55). Several qualitative studies give a consistent overall picture in terms of the geography of Albanians’ labour in Greece (Droukas 1998; Fakiolas 2000; Hatziprokopiou 2006; Iosifides & King 1998; Kasimis & Papadopoulos 2005; Kasimis et al. 2003; Lazaridis & Psimmenos 2000; Lianos 2007).

In Athens, Thessaloniki and other cities, Albanians are employed as unskilled or semi-skilled labour in the construction industry, in hotels and restaurants, in small manufacturing or service concerns involved in activities such as clothing, painting and decorating, removals, car garages and small trade. Women, in particular, work overwhelmingly in personal services such as domestic cleaners (although rarely living-in), baby-sitters and carers of elderly people (King & Vullnetari 2003). A number of Albanian girls and young women (and also boys) are involved in the sex industry (Psimmenos 2000).

In rural Greece, Albanians work in agriculture, construction, tourism and general labouring. Comparing data from the 2001 Greek census with those collected by the LFS in 2006, Baldwin-Edwards (2009: 23) suggests that employment of Albanians in Greek agriculture decreased by 50 per cent between these two years. Yet, they continue to constitute a considerable – if not a dominant – presence in this sector (Kasimis 2008). Until recently, they used to perform the heaviest and most stigmatised tasks such as harvesting, hoeing, weeding and manuring. In addition, they also do many other ‘smaller’ jobs around the farm, for which they are not always paid. Their overall support for Greek elderly households – who constitute the majority of rural population – is particularly important. Most of them are concentrated in areas of intensive farming such as the plains of Thessaly or the olive groves of Corfu (Fakiolas 2003; Kasimis et al. 2003). According to Cavounidis (2006), immigrant – especially Albanian – labour has replaced virtually all wage labour as well as a large part of ‘family’ labour

in Greek agriculture, thus contributing to an important structural shift in the Greek rural economy. Demand for labour in agriculture is especially high during summer peaks of activity with fruit-picking and other labour-intensive tasks. During this period, additional labour is recruited from Albania through the seasonal work visa programme introduced in 1997 as a result of a bilateral agreement. Recently released data from the Greek Ministry of Interior show that more than 40,000 permits for seasonal and temporary employment were granted to Albanians during 2007-2009, namely 13,416 in 2007, 13,732 in 2008 and 13,697 in 2009. These represented more than 90 per cent of all such permits granted by Greece in these years (Gemi et al. 2010: 27-28).

The seasonal tourist industry is another key sector where many Albanians are employed. Both men and women work in tourist complexes, hotels and restaurants located on the coasts and especially the islands. They do a variety of jobs – as cleaners, kitchen staff, waiters, porters, gardeners, maintenance workers, etc.

It is thus clear that the vast majority of these jobs are low skilled and insecure, which reflects, on the one hand, push factors behind Albanian emigration of the 1990s – any job would do – and the characteristics of the informalised labour market in Greece. The ‘primary’ labour market segment offers secure and ‘legal’ jobs, but is mostly taken up by Greeks and a minority of legal migrants. Most Albanian migrants, particularly those who are irregular, are employed in the ‘secondary’ or ‘peripheral’ labour sector, which involves low-status jobs (Barjaba & King 2005). These are also jobs often stigmatised by the Greeks themselves, who increasingly aspire to do only better-status work. Furthermore, the Greek labour market displays a highly gendered character, a pattern observed throughout Southern Europe, where domestic work is a key sector of employment for migrant women, especially Albanians (King 2000: 18; King & Zontini 2000). Campani (2000) argues that behind the demand in this specific sector of the economy stands the combination of, on the one hand, increased levels of professional mobility among local (in our case, Greek) women and, on the other, the withdrawal of the welfare state from providing support to these women, especially for the care of the elderly and the children. Cavounidis (2004: 50-51) emphasises that the effect of the second factor in the case of Greece is much weaker, since the Greek state has traditionally had a feeble presence in the provision of these services. These were overwhelmingly carried out by women in the context of the family.

A major concern in this context is that not all the immigrants who are employed in these low-skilled jobs are unskilled. Many Albanians have undergone de-skilling, as they have been unable to find employment in their profession (Barjaba & King 2005; Lianos 2007). The various rounds of regularisations have improved this situation somewhat.

– Political and civic participation

Until recently the longstanding undocumented or insecure status of Albanians in Greece had hampered their participation in civic life (Gropas & Triandafyllidou 2005). They have, however, been able to create, and participate in, migrant associations (see Hatziprokopiou 2006; Maroukis 2005; for Italy, see Chiodi & Devole 2005). The organisational life of Albanians in this context shows two features. On the one hand, there is a proliferation of Albanian immigrant organisations in Greece – although the majority of them remain small and insignificant – with the largest concentration in Athens and less so in Thessaloniki and other urban areas. Most of these organisations were created after the first regularisation programme of 1998, which indicates the role of the institutional and legislative framework in participation in public life. However, most of these organisations are elite groupings and participation of broader groups of Albanian men and women remains very limited. This is partly explained by the (rejected) communist past of coerced collectivisation, migrants' undocumented status, their work patterns since the majority work long hours and in physically demanding jobs, but also by their marginalisation in Greek socio-political agendas (Gropas & Triandafyllidou 2005). Greek civil society itself is very weak compared to Northern but also to other Southern European countries (Meintanis 2005). This has been largely the result of what Meintanis (2005) calls 'latent democracy', where institution-building has been a recent and painful process from a long tradition of authoritative statism to democracy.

– Greek reception

The Greek reaction to the immigration of more than half a million Albanians since 1990 has been significantly affected by constructions and images presented by the media, exploited in turn by politicians for their own political ends (Baldwin-Edwards & Apostolatu 2009; Barjaba & King 2005; for the parallel process in Italy, see King & Mai 2004, 2008). Initially welcomed, Albanians quickly became denigrated with a series of highly negative stereotypes. The standard image was (and largely still is) one of 'cunning, primitive, untrustworthy', 'dangerous' and 'criminal' people (Lazaridis & Wickens 1999). The topic of Albanian criminality has been obsessively pored over by the Greek media, with the result that public opinion has fundamentally changed. Albanians have also been disproportionately targeted by the police, leading to high numbers of reported arrests and prison inmates. Droukas (1998), who has made a special study of Albanian criminality, advises great caution when examining Greek crime statistics, stressing their unreliable and distorted nature (for similar findings in Italy, see Bonifazi & Sabatino 2003). In her analysis of perceptions of burglaries and thefts in Greater Thessaloniki, Bakalaki (2003) also concludes that holding immigrants, especially Albanians, responsible for a

perceived rise in these crimes is a particularly subjective construct much spurred by the media.

Certainly Albanian migrants' 'visibility' in Greece, in terms of numbers and their large-scale arrival over a short period of time, has played a role. Moreover, other prominent immigrant nationalities continue to be lacking – Bulgarians, who come next, constitute only between 5 and 8 per cent of the immigrant population in Greece (Baldwin-Edwards & Apostolatos 2009). However, the harsh stigmatisation and marginalisation of Albanians have been shaped, above all, by Greece's perception of its past, its evolving role in the Europe of the present and, particularly, antagonistic Greek-Albanian relations.

For Psimmenos and Georgoulas (2001: 61), the hegemonic power of Greek nationalism and *ethnos*, strongly based on common ancestry, cultural tradition and religion, forms a 'social landscape... that emphasises national identity as a framework for civil existence'. This, in turn, creates an 'exclusionary straightjacket' for minority, refugee and immigrant workers. This *ethnos* frames immigration policy with the result that a 'hierarchy of Greekness' is created (Triandafyllidou & Veikou 2002). The Greek resident nationals form the core of this Greekness, followed by the Pontian (or Pontic) Greeks who are 'repatriates' from the former Soviet Union, where they migrated in the early twentieth century from their historic Greek homeland of Pontos in Asia Minor. As members of the Greek diaspora, Pontian Greeks are given full citizenship status and other benefits that facilitate their integration into Greek society. Ethnic-Greek Albanians come next in the hierarchy: their 'Greek nationality' is recognised, but they are not given full citizenship rights and are not officially encouraged to settle permanently in Greece.<sup>30</sup> They are, however, treated more favourably, especially by being issued the *homogeneis* documents. Finally, come the 'true' Albanians who are seen both as Muslims and manifestations of communism – both Greece's archenemies.

Indeed, the ethnic-Greek minority in Albania has been heavily instrumentalised by Greek politicians as a tool of foreign policymaking towards Albania, as Konidaris (2005) notes in his in-depth analysis of Greek-Albanian relations and immigration policy. Thus, each time relations between the two countries worsened, Albanian emigrants in Greece were apprehended and expelled en masse through the *skoupa* operations.<sup>31</sup>

Analysing the cultural construction of Albanians in Greece, Kapllani and Mai (2005) argue that the way Albanian migrants are perceived by Greek society and the media is closely linked to three things. First, there is the link with the construction of a Greek *ethnos* as explained earlier (2005: 165-166). Second, antagonistic Greek-Albanian relations date back centuries. The main elements include: the association of the Albanians with the occupying Ottoman Turks, as well as their religious 'otherness' as Muslims; the territorial claims both countries have had for what is



considered North Epirus/South Albania by the Greeks and Albanians respectively; consequentially the treatment of the ethnic-Greek minority living within Albania and the treatment of the Albanian-origin Cham population living in Greece (see Konidaris 2005; Vickers 2002). But – according to Kapllani and Mai (2005) – more than differences, it is the similarities of poverty, authoritarianism and large-scale migration and exploitation displayed by Albanians in the 1990s, and experienced by Greeks in their near-past, which stand at the root of this ‘otherness’ of Albanians in Greece. This third element exemplifies Greece’s struggle to ‘escape’ its ‘Balkan’ past and join what it perceives to be a culturally developed Western Europe (again, an analogous analysis exists for Italy: Mai 2002).

Considering this position from a gender perspective, Albanian migrant women seem to be more disadvantaged than their male counterparts. The ‘double layers’ of discrimination and marginalisation (see Lazaridis 2000) consist of the deep-seated Greek xenophobia towards Albanians, on the one hand, and the sexist and patriarchal gender relations that exist in Greece, on the other.<sup>32</sup> These patriarchal attitudes may also explain the pattern of mixed marriages between Albanians and Greeks as revealed by the data on residence permits for 2003-2004. According to these, only 633 Albanian men held a residence permit as spouses of EU nationals (presumably Greeks), compared to 2,510 Albanian women (Baldwin-Edwards 2004a: 11). This contradicts the general gender composition of Albanian migrants in Greece, as we saw earlier. Perhaps the marriage of a Greek man to an Albanian woman is considered less threatening for the Greek family and the nation. The figure may also reveal the similar, deep-seated patriarchal perceptions in Albanian society. For instance, in his study on Albanian migrants in Italy, Dervishi (2003) found that marrying an Italian partner was seen as emancipatory for women, but as ‘threatening the authority’ of Albanian men.

#### – Integrated or excluded?

In spite of the difficulties, Albanian migrants in Greece have generally achieved a remarkable and dynamic socio-economic integration (for similar conclusions for Albanians in Italy, see Kelly 2005; King & Mai 2004, 2008). Qualitative research carried out among Albanian migrants in Greece reveals the various mechanisms and strategies Albanians have used in the process (Gogonas 2007; Hatziprokopiou 2003, 2006; Kokkali 2008; Labrianidis & Hatziprokopiou 2005; Labrianidis, Lyberaki, Tinios & Hatziprokopiou 2004; Pratsinakis 2005). First, most of them are fast to learn the language through interaction with their Greek employers, colleagues and neighbours. Second, they play on their shared Balkan identity, often changing their names or having their children baptised in Greek churches. Third, they often conceal their identity so as to become

'invisible' among Greeks and thus escape stigmatisation. Finally, they display a high degree of geographical 'invisibility' by their balanced spatial diffusion throughout the country as well as non-concentration in particular areas of the towns they live in. This pattern of integration has had profound effects for migrants especially in (not) retaining cultural and 'language vitality', leading to assimilation of at least the second generation, as Gogonas (2007) found in his study of Albanian pupils in Athens (for a recent study of the second generation in Thessaloniki, see Vathi 2010, 2011).

During the 1990s, much migration to Greece was temporary and short-term. In addition, Greece was used as a stepping stone for acquiring short-term financial capital and experience for a more ambitious and longer-term move to another Western country, often via onward journeys to Italy; hence Greece was referred to as the 'key' and Italy as the 'door' (King et al. 2003). However, in recent years, as Albanian migration to Greece is maturing, upward socio-economic mobility is being accompanied by a process of settlement and stabilisation (King et al. 2011; Nikas & Aspasio 2011).

### 3.4 Trends and patterns of internal migration

In contrast to the fast-growing knowledge on Albanian international migration, the significant transformations resulting from internal migration over the last two decades within Albania have yet to be analysed to their full potential. Since post-1990 internal movements were framed by the same political and socio-economic factors as contemporary international migration, in this section I will only highlight those elements that are specific to the internal flows (although separation is not easy, as we shall see later). I start with an overview of figures, followed by a typology of the patterns of movement observed, and conclude with a discussion of some features of internal migrants.

#### 3.4.1 Figures

Data on internal migration in Albania derive from three main sources: population censuses; population registers held at the local commune or municipality within the institutional framework of the Ministry of Interior; and the set of ALSMS.<sup>33</sup>

Before analysing the data available, a few words need to be said about these sources of information. First, the census data. The two most relevant censuses for deriving information on contemporary Albanian migration were those of 1989 and 2001, which recorded population *present* at the time of enumeration by *usual* place of residence (Lerch & Wanner 2008). However, as with all censuses, they only give a snapshot of the demographic situation at a particular point in time. Moreover, matters were

complicated by changes in the territorial administrative organisation of the country in 1992 and 1996 as well as in the institutional re-organisation of the agencies responsible for collecting and analysing national statistics (Agorastakis & Sidiropoulos 2007).<sup>34</sup>

The second source, the population registers, records *resident* population at the commune and municipality level, by place of *legal* residence (Lerch & Wanner 2008). The data are reported monthly to INSTAT. However, their accuracy and reliability have been questioned by various analysts. First, the systems are largely manual and thus very slow to respond to rapid population changes, especially due to migration. In a report of the Korçë Regional Council (2005: 15), for instance, the authors emphasise that: '[D]ue to its high rate of internal and foreign migrations, it has been difficult to keep accurate official data on the present-day population in the communes and municipalities.' Moreover, it is in the individual commune or municipality's interest not to quantify the extent of the population loss, for fear of losing resources and being downgraded (Arrehag, Sjöberg & Sjöblom 2005). Finally, as the registration is family-based, individuals who are not officially separated from their family – students and labour migrants – are not recorded in their place of new residence.<sup>35</sup>

The third source of information on internal migrants has been a set of the ALSMS from 2002, 2005 and 2008 and the follow-up wave panels of 2003 and 2004.<sup>36</sup> Using a sophisticated module on migration, these results have generated a number of studies, some of which are discussed in the analysis of migration and development in this book as well.

Figure 3.3 is a key map of the 36 districts, the most common statistical unit used for population and migration mapping. Subsequent descriptive analysis will refer to these districts from time to time.

The significance of internal movements is apparent from several angles, not least numbers. However, figures differ depending on the sources used (as discussed above), the geographical units they apply to, as well as whether they represent flows or stocks. Thus, inter-prefecture migration will be less than inter-district migration, which, in turn, will be less than inter-commune or inter-municipality moves. A total of 252,735 individuals moved from one prefecture to the other in the intercensal period of 1989–2001 (INSTAT 2004b: 12–13). For inter-district moves during the same period the recorded figure is 355,230 individuals (Carletto et al. 2004: Table 8).<sup>37</sup> No studies that detail census-data moves at the lowest administrative division, i.e. the commune and municipality, have become available to my knowledge, except for Zezza, Carletto and Davis (2005) who do not provide figures for total stocks. When data from the population registers are used, a much higher figure becomes apparent: between 1992 and 2001, a total stock of 1,356,750 internal migrants moved from one commune or municipality to another (Bërxfholi, Doka & Asche 2003: 68). This is almost double the total (net) quantity of international migrants recorded by the

**Figure 3.3** *Albania: Key to 36 districts*

Source: King and Vullnetari (2003: 44)

census for the period 1989-2001. On the other hand, a World Bank estimate (in UNDP 2009: 144) put the stock of 'lifetime' (permanent) internal migrants between 1990 and 2005 at 500,000, representing thus a migration rate of 24 per cent of the working-age population during this period.

The vast majority of these internal migrants have relocated to Tirana – more precisely, peri-urban Tirana. Less than 100,000 settled during the intercensal period within the city itself (Zezza et al. 2005: 189). At an estimated annual net migration gain of 20,000, Tirana's growth was for a time arguably one of the fastest in the world for a city of medium size (Bërxfholi & Doka 2005: 56). According to official records, the population of Tirana district increased from 368,000 in 1989 to 520,000 in 2001 (INSTAT 2002). However, unofficial sources estimated that it contained 800,000 people by 2002 already (De Soto, Gordon, Gedeshi & Sinoimeri 2002: 113), and had approached the one million mark by 2005 (Lulo 2005). The confusion over the extent of the increase is because many recent in-migrants are not registered, so their precise numbers are unknown. Moreover, the unplanned nature of this migration and settlement has left the new peri-urban areas quite detached from Tirana itself. This, in turn, blurs the distinction between 'urban' and 'rural' and makes the delimitation of Tirana and other major urban centres rather difficult.

### 3.4.2 *Typologies of internal movements*

In spite of problems, the existing data make it possible to draw up migration matrices and maps. The analysis of figures, trends and patterns of internal migration that follows is based primarily on these statistics and their quantitative and qualitative interpretation by various authorities (Bërxfholi & Doka 2005; Bërxfholi et al. 2003; Carletto et al. 2004; Dervishi 2001; Fuga & Dervishi 2002: 150-167; Göler 2005; Heller, Doka & Bërxfholi 2005; INSTAT 2004b; King 2005: 146; King & Vullnetari 2003: 62-65; Zezza et al. 2005). Referring back to Figure 3.3 will help my interpretation below.

As with emigration, migrants started moving internally as soon as the communist regime fell. Carletto et al. (2004: 7) recognise two important peaks of intensity very similar to international migration: the 1991-1993 years of immediate post-communist restructuring; and following the pyramids' collapse of 1997. In between and after that, internal movements continued, but at a more steady pace. Of those who moved to urban Tirana and the coastal regions, the majority did so after 1995. Agorastakis and Sidiropoulos (2007: 480) present a linked sequence to international migration in that internal mobility appears to have been on the increase towards the time (the late 1990s) when large-scale international migration flows started to decline. I will come back to this linkage between the two migration types towards the end of this chapter.

In terms of directions of internal mobility, a number of typologies can be distinguished, categorised according to their regional relocation and settlement type (rural versus urban). In the first case, the following typologies are dominant:

- There is a clear shift of population from the north (especially the north-east), the south-central and south-east towards the littoral. Top senders of internal migrants are the districts of Kukës, Dibër, Tropojë and Pukë in the north (Carletto et al. 2004: 8; INSTAT 2004b: 19). These are geographically landlocked mountain areas, with some of the highest unemployment and poverty headcount rates in the country and very few livelihood opportunities available locally (Lundström & Ronnås 2006: 24-25).
- Within the coastal area of in-migration, the majority of migrants relocate in the Tirana-Durrës conurbation, while the other coastal cities receive less important flows. Tirana recorded the highest in-migration increase with 159,000 new residents, followed by Durrës with 46,000 in-migrants during 1989-2001 (Carletto et al. 2004: 9; Zezza et al. 2005: 189). Besides these two, the other districts with the highest population increase in absolute numbers were Lushnjë, Fier and Vlorë – in that order.
- Important shifts are also taking place within the regions themselves, from the remote mountainous hinterland towards the more important cities of the region and their peri-urban areas. The city of Shkodër, for instance, has become a major destination for in-migration from the rural hinterland in the north of the country (Axxhemî 2005: 106; INSTAT 2004b: 17; King 2005: 144). According to a recent survey, slightly more than half of in-migrants in this city originated from the district of Malësia e Madhe (Shkodra Regional Council 2005: 16). A similar pattern can be observed in Gjirokastër in the south, where the majority of the city's population increase is due to in-migration from the district's adjacent mountainous rural areas and from adjoining districts such as Tepelenë and Përmet (Kosta 2005). Intra-regional moves are often part of a step-wise migration towards coastal cities. Particularly interesting in this pattern are smaller towns that act as stepping stones to the final destinations. Becker (2005: 83-87), for instance, shows how the town of Bajram Curri in the north has become an important transit place for many internal migrants from the northern mountainous villages, who aim to ultimately settle in the Tirana-Durrës area.

A more varied picture is revealed when considering data at the commune level. Even within districts that are considered as sources of out-migration, there are small pockets of in-migration, usually centred around the municipality of the district. Such is the case of Sarandë as a major sending

district, versus Sarandë municipality – a clear in-migration zone within the district itself (Zezza et al. 2005: 188).

Looking at settlement type, we can distinguish the following predominant typologies:

– Rural-urban

In the 1989-2001 intercensal period, the country's urban population increased from 35 to 42 per cent of the total (INSTAT 2002).<sup>38</sup> The most serious population loss is observed in the rural north and south, particularly villages high up in the mountainous zones. On the other hand, the biggest increase of 45 per cent was recorded for the urban population of the central region or the Durrës-Tirana-Elbasan triangle (King & Vullnetari 2003: 45).

– Urban-urban

Although less systematically researched, these flows are not negligible. For instance, in 2001, two thirds of in-migrants in the city of Tirana came from other urban centres (Heller et al. 2005: 70).<sup>39</sup> Important senders of these flows were small urban industrial centres such as Bulqizë and Laç, created during the communist era. Heavily affected by the closure in the early 1990s of industries located there, they became major sources of out-migration (UNDP-Albania 2000). Since most of these 'new towns' were located in the mountainous north-east of the country, they are part of the much larger regional movement from that area towards the coast (Rugg 1994; Tirta 1999).

– Rural-rural

According to INSTAT (2004b: 15), around 40 per cent of internal migrants who moved from one prefecture to another in the intercensal period settled in rural areas. Almost half of these rural in-migrants relocated to the rural area of the Tirana prefecture, presumably in the informal peri-urban settlements. High levels of such migration are also noted for Durrës and Fier in terms of absolute numbers. With the exception of Durrës, Elbasan, Gjirokastër and Vlorë, in all other prefectures the share of rural in-migrants is higher than that of urban in-migrants. Presumably, these are movements from the mountainous hinterland towards the river valleys, particularly in the rural areas adjacent to the main urban core of the prefecture.

### 3.4.3 *Characteristics of internal migrants*

Census data<sup>40</sup> reveal that internal migrants are young – almost 46 per cent of inter-prefecture migrants were younger than 30 (INSTAT 2004b: 21). In contrast to emigration, women are more likely to migrate internally, especially those of younger ages – 54 per cent of internal migrants by 2001 were women. This probably reflects the family character of internal migration, much of which is also permanent (Cila 2006: 14). This family nature of internal migration may be an explanatory factor behind the finding from

the analysis of ALSMS data that internal remittances have a negligible effect on household consumption patterns (Castaldo & Reilly 2007).

After a move internally, the young men may emigrate abroad, whereas young women, especially those with lower educational levels, emigrate less frequently on their own abroad. It is in the 40-64 age group that men are more represented in the internal flows than women; this age group is, on the other hand, less represented among international migrants. The higher percentages of women up to age 30 could also be explained by the shares of female students in universities, which are all located in cities. Although the share of female migrants with a tertiary education at age 32 and above is only half that of men, this gap closes rapidly for younger ages (attaining equal shares for those aged 22-31). We may thus infer that internal migration has benefited women generally, and the impacts are more obvious for younger ages. However, the unemployment rate amongst migrant women is 41 per cent, almost double that of men. INSTAT (2004b) also notes an overrepresentation of the 65+ cohort in some internal flows directed towards rural areas, inferring a return migration of older people there.

Overall, it seems that the highly skilled are increasingly concentrating in urban areas: in the 1989-2001 intercensal period, rural areas lost more than 40 per cent of their highly qualified individuals (to internal and international migration), whereas urban areas gained a share of 9 per cent. Unfortunately, the census data tell us very little about the qualitative features behind these numbers and thus more qualitative studies are needed.

### **3.5 Combined developmental effects of internal and international migration**

As has been apparent from my analysis so far, it is very difficult to separate international migration from internal moves. Although it is important to recognise the differences that exist between the two, the linkages are even stronger, especially when considering their developmental impacts. I discuss some of these impacts in the Albanian context in this final section of the chapter, including spatial effects, and especially the age and gender selectivity of migration. I focus more narrowly on the impact of remittances – both financial and non-monetary – to reflect their importance and the links with my own empirical material.

#### *3.5.1 Spatial impact of linked mobility patterns*

The large-scale internal and international migrations have sharply redrawn the population map of Albania, although the major trends are a continuation at a more intense level of what had become visible prior to 1990 (refer back to Figure 3.1). The data from the 1989 and 2001 censuses reveal



significant population shifts between macro-regions and amongst districts as well as abroad, leading us to draw a number of conclusions.

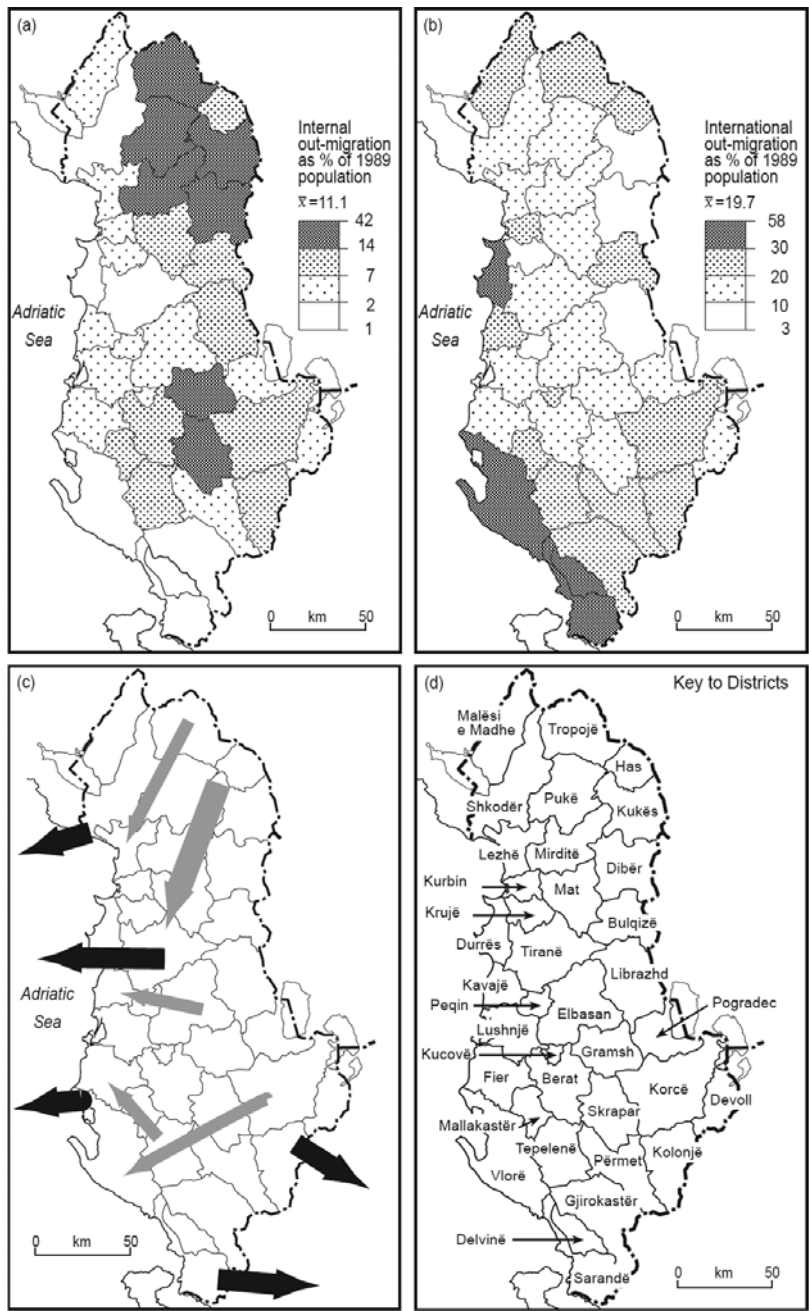
First, there is a stark polarisation of the country, with the centre of gravity being the centre-coastal cluster of districts. This macro-region is the only in the country to have gained population in the intercensal period, reflected in high levels of population density. Standing in contrast to this area are the north and the south macro-regions which have both decreased in population during this time. Some of these districts, like Delvinë, have lost more than half their populations (-55 per cent). When considering the population enumerated in 1989 but no longer living there in 2001, some extreme values are again observed: certain northern and southern districts record population losses of even 60 per cent, overwhelmingly due to migration (see Carletto et al. 2004).

Second, despite regional variations in birth rates (higher in the north) and considering mortality rates are low, most of these population changes resulted from the combined impact of internal and international migration (see King 2004). Third, there is a specialisation of districts in one type of migration, although some overlapping occurs (Figure 3.4). Census data at the district level (see e.g. Bërxfholi et al. 2003: 70, 72; Zezza et al. 2005: 186) suggest that the northern and north-eastern districts specialise in internal migration (Figure 3.4a), while southern and south-eastern areas have higher international flows (Figure 3.4b). A few districts such as Tropojë in the north and Korçë in the south display high scores on both migration types. Finally, the directions of these moves are also highly regionally concentrated: internal migrants from the north relocate towards the coast, but especially in the Tirana-Durrës conurbation, as do most other internal migrants from the south. International migrants from these coastal areas migrate overwhelmingly to Italy, while those from the south and the south-east go to Greece (Figure 3.4c).

Thus, we can distinguish three population macro-regions, as proposed by King (2005):

- Northern Albania is characterised by high population losses, primarily resulting from internal migration accounting for double the loss through emigration. The direction of internal moves is primarily towards the coastal area, especially Tirana, while international migrants have moved to Greece, Italy and the UK.
- Central and coastal Albania, particularly the districts of Tirana and Durrës, have accumulated population through in-migration from other regions, especially from the north. Internal migration towards other regions is negligible, while international migration is directed principally towards Italy. The district of Tirana was after Vlorë the second-largest sender of international migrants with a stock of 60,000 migrants in the intercensal period (Zezza et al. 2005: 189).

**Figure 3.4** *Albania: Migration dynamics, 1989-2001*



Sources: Carletto et al. (2004); Zezza et al. (2005) in King and Mai (2008: 80)

- Southern Albania has lost significant shares of its population, particularly from the mountainous hinterland. Population losses due to emigration are three times higher than due to internal outflows. Principal directions for internal migrants are again the coastal districts, while most emigrants live especially in Greece, but also in Italy and the US.

### 3.5.2 *The demographic factor*

The contrast between population loss for some districts and population accumulation for others is related to a number of political-historical, socio-economic and demographic factors. Generally, population losses are higher in the south, where they are reinforced by significantly lower fertility rates than in the north (King & Vullnetari 2003). In addition, rural depopulation in some southern districts where ethnic-Greek Albanians originate has been intense as this minority group has been more easily able to obtain documents for travelling to Greece. Furthermore, there is the link with the historical migrations to the US which has enabled entire families and kin to emigrate there from southern districts such as Korçë, Kolonjë and Gjirokastër.

What is perhaps a more worrying demographic feature is the age and gender selectivity of the population loss. In terms of age, the main effect of migration has been the depletion of young populations, especially of working age, and the acceleration of the ageing of those left behind: the proportion of the population aged less than fifteen years fell from 33.0 to 29.3 per cent during 1989-2001, while those aged 65 and over rose from 5.3 to 7.5 per cent (King et al. 2003: 97). This selectivity is also observed for internal migration. The ageing of the population is notably higher in the south – as high as 30-36 per cent are aged 65 and over in some areas of Delvinë and Sarandë districts (Vlora Regional Council 2005) – which reflects a combination of population loss from out-migration (internal and external) on the one hand, and historically lower birth rates and greater longevity on the other. The younger population is concentrated in the main cities and the coastal areas of the country.

In terms of gender, the 2001 census data reflect migration effects in the marked loss of males in the 15-35 age group; for females the loss is both less marked and more narrowly confined in age terms (18-32). In recent years, due primarily to family reunification, many more women have emigrated, as was shown by the figures of Albanian immigrants in Greece and Italy.

The combined effects of such age- and gender-selective migration, related much less to internal migration and much more to international flows, bring forth two key social problems: the abandonment of older people and ‘care drain’ (King & Vullnetari 2006; Vullnetari & King 2008). Albanian custom obliges the youngest son (and his wife) to take care of his parents

in their old age – indeed the youngest son is referred to in Albanian parlance as ‘the son of old age’. But profound post-communist transformations and emigration are breaking down this tradition. Abandoned by their emigrant children and with declining social support and pensions in the new neo-liberal Albania, many older people, especially in isolated rural areas, have become ‘orphan pensioners’ (De Soto et al. 2002: 46).

Naturally, the question arises as to the effect of demography on the long-term future of emigration. An indication of this can be found in the annual birth statistics, which show a rapid decline since 1990. Albanian population growth was 2-3 per cent per year throughout the period 1950-1990. Although this had started to decline from around the late 1960s, post-communist emigration accelerated this trend, resulting in a total fertility rate of 2.2 – just above replacement level – by 2001. The population pyramid for 2001 indicates a low birth cohort at 0-5 years old. These ‘missing births’ of 0-5 year-olds are partly explained by declining fertility and partly by the ‘missing parents’ taken away by emigration (King & Vullnetari 2003). They can be ‘found’ on the other side of the border, as my discussion earlier in this chapter on the demographic composition of Albanian migrants in Greece showed. The continuing high number of annual births into the mid-1990s indicates a continuing supply of potential young emigrants for the following ten to twenty years (King et al. 2003; King & Vullnetari 2003). However, beyond that, the emigration potential is bound to dry up. One of the consequences of this would be reduced remittances, to which I now turn.

### 3.5.3 *Remittances: Poverty alleviation or motor of development?*

Accurate figures on remittances have been difficult to calculate, due in part to the fact that a large proportion of them is sent through informal channels, the latter estimated by some to be around 60 per cent of total amounts transferred (Hernández-Coss, De Luna Martínez, Amatuzio, Borowik & Lagi 2006: 3). Reports from the Central Bank of Albania (BoA) on total annual sums, including those sent through informal channels, indicate that between 1992 and 2009, Albanians remitted from \$ 200 million rising to more than \$ 1 billion annually (De Zwager, Gedeshi, Gërmenji & Nikas 2005: 21; Uruçi 2008: 4, updated).<sup>41</sup> Table 3.4 is compiled from data made available by the BoA and provides a visual representation of the economic significance of migrants’ remittances to Albania during the two post-communist decades.

According to these estimates, remittances increased during 1992-1996, fell by half in 1997 and increased again thereafter (with the exception of 1999 marking the Kosovo crisis spill-over), exceeding \$ 1 billion in 2004. Year 2007 marked the end of this ‘golden’ decade of growth: remittances have been on the decline since then. Two key factors are the most likely

**Table 3.4** *Flow of migrants' remittances to Albania and their macroeconomic significance, 1993-2009*

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total remittances sent (US\$ million)</i>	<i>% of GDP</i>	<i>% of exports</i>	<i>% of trade deficit</i>	<i>Remittances per capita (US\$)</i>
1993	275	22.3	224.5	92.1	86.7
1994	378	19.4	267.4	92.8	118.0
1995	385	15.5	190.7	85.8	118.3
1996	500	18.6	237.3	71.5	152.1
1997	267	11.6	188.8	55.7	80.2
1998	452	14.8	219.0	76.8	134.8
1999	368	10.0	133.6	58.9	109.1
2000	530	14.3	205.4	60.0	170.0
2001	615	15.2	203.2	53.0	167.7
2002	632	13.9	191.2	55.0	172.3
2003	778	12.8	172.5	57.7	212.2
2004	1028	13.7	170.4	61.0	280.4
2005	1169	14.0	177.1	64.0	266.1
2006	1171	12.8	148.0	55.4	272.8
2007	1295	12.0	120.4	44.0	276.9
2008	1171	9.2	127.8	33.0	269.4
2009	1111	9.0	110.0	33.0	247.8

*Source:* Bank of Albania in Uruçi (2008: 4); updated

causes behind this trend. First of all, ten to twenty years after its start, Albanian migration has entered its maturity stage, i.e. consolidation of family settlement in host countries followed by a reduction in remittances (King et al. 2011). Second, the effects of the global economic crisis have had negative impacts on migrants, especially in the hard-hit countries of Greece and Italy, which also host the majority of Albanian migrants and are thus major senders of remittances (Gedeshi 2010). A number of researchers have warned of such a situation for some years now, particularly as the Albanian economy has relied heavily on these remittances at both the macro- and micro-levels (see De Zwager et al. 2005; Nikas & King 2005).

Indeed, throughout these two post-communist decades, remittances have generally constituted between 10 and 22 per cent of the country's GDP, placing Albania in the top twenty remittance-receiving countries in the world (World Bank 2011: 14). Only in the last two years has this share fallen below 10 per cent (Table 3.4). In the 1990s and early 2000s, remittances constantly surpassed by several times the amount of FDI flowing into the country as well as the amount of aid received from international institutions, while in 2004 they accounted for more than twice the revenues from exports (De Zwager et al. 2005; Gammeltoft 2002: 189; Ghosh 2006: 19; King 2005: 149; Piperno 2005; Uruçi & Gedeshi 2003). Furthermore, they have been conducive to macroeconomic stability by enabling

management of the huge trade deficit of more than 20 per cent of GDP per year (Lundström & Ronnås 2006: 50) through the foreign exchange they provide. They have consistently covered more than 50 per cent of this deficit on average, although this share has fallen to just over a third in recent years (De Zwager et al. 2005: 45; see also Table 3.4).

At a micro-level, there is no disputing that remittances have been the lifeline of many Albanian households, particularly in alleviating poverty. After meeting the most urgent family needs for food, clothing, basic furniture and traditional rituals, remittances have been mostly used to start up or sustain small and medium enterprises (see Arrehag et al. 2005; Castaldo & Reilly 2007; De Soto et al. 2002; De Zwager et al. 2005; Gedeshi, Mara & Preni 2003; King et al. 2003; Kule, Mançellari, Papapanagos, Qirici & Sanfey 2002; Papapanagos & Sanfey 2001; Nicholson 2004). They have thus addressed the deficiency of the financial sector in the country to supply such capital (Kilic, Carletto, Davis & Zezza 2007; Kule et al. 2002; Léon-Ledesma & Piracha 2004). The overwhelming majority of these businesses are small concerns, focused on trade and services, usually employing only members of the immediate and sometimes extended family (see also Nicholson 2001, 2002). Investments of remittances in the production and manufacturing sector have so far been insignificant (Piperno 2005), although this is changing (Kilic et al. 2007: 10). Some remittances are also invested in farming (Gërmenji & Swinnen 2004; Vullnetari & King 2011).

The impact of international remittances has been important also from another angle, namely, how they are intertwined with internal migration. Remittances from abroad enable an internal move through financing a house or business elsewhere than the origin villages or small towns, often in the peri-urban areas of large cities. The migrant (usually a man) may continue to live abroad and send remittances, while part of his family may move from the village to the city, where he then can join them upon his return (King et al. 2003). The architectural construction of these houses in peri-urban Albania resembles a mosaic testifying to the long and difficult journeys that migrants have made through Greece, Italy, Germany or Britain to come to Tirana (Dervishi 2001: 38; King & Vullnetari 2003).

#### 3.5.4 *Socio-economic polarisation and return*

Tirana as the capital, along with Durrës as the main port city, represent the most developed pole of Albania, a magnet for internal migrants. Here we can distinguish two main sub-areas: the Tirana-Durrës axis, along which most of the industrial and commercial activities are concentrated; and the peri-urban spaces outside these two cities, where tens of thousands of migrants have moved since the first post-communist years. These areas emerged as a result of dubious ownership of abandoned former state-owned land in the power vacuum created at the end of the communist

regime. Some of the squatter settlements have been built on dangerously toxic former industrial land (King et al. 2003). Their rapid proliferation was, in turn, intensified by internal moves financed through remittances sent from abroad. The Tirana-Durrës region is extremely heterogeneous, as it encompasses both the richest and some of the poorest and most socially disadvantaged groups in the country, the latter especially associated with peri-urban squatter settlements (King & Vullnetari 2003; Zezza et al. 2005). The most 'celebrated' case is Bathore in peri-urban Tirana, *the* symbol of today's wild urbanisation process in Albania. Similar settlements have been formed around Durrës (Katundi i Ri, Kënetë), Shkodër (Mark Lule), Vlorë (Kushtrim), Gjirokastër, Korçë, etc.

The chaotic and large-scale rural-urban migration has put services in urban destination areas under great strain: there is a severe lack of (adequate) roads, power, water and sewage systems; insufficient provision of health and education services; not to mention the lack of green spaces (Bërxfholi et al. 2005; Dervishi 2001; Heller et al. 2005; Kosta 2005: 117; Zonzini 2005). Similarly, but for contrasting reasons, rural areas – especially ones in the highlands – suffer from similar problems, this time because of large-scale depopulation and a lack of public and private investment. In large urban areas, two contrasting realities exist side by side. On the one hand, we see the overurbanised cities with a high density of concrete apartment blocks; increasing losses of green spaces and open areas; high air, visual and noise pollution; roads constantly blocked by traffic jams; ever-narrowing pavements crowded with people while construction and destruction go on every day. On the other hand, there are the village-like peri-urban areas surrounding the cities like a 'ring' (Dervishi 2001: 39). Their inhabitants – in-migrants mostly from poorer mountainous districts of Albania – are considered by many as a threat ready to invade the city with the 'cultural backwardness' they have brought along to their new destination.

There are signs that this polarisation might be further exacerbated by return migration. For instance, according to the 2005 wave of the ALSMS, businesses set up by returnees seem to be concentrated in Tirana and the centre-coastal region (Kilic et al. 2007: 10, 22). However, the question of return for Albania is a much-debated issue, partly related to unclear trends, as the phenomenon is quite recent. Most return that took place in the mid-1990s was thwarted by the 1997 crisis, which caused returnees to re-emigrate. Most returnees analysed in various studies have returned after 2000 – for instance, this group constituted three quarters of the sample in the research funded by the European Training Foundation (ETF) (ETF 2007). A closer look at these various studies reveals an interesting picture of returnees, the sustainability of this return and its developmental impact (see Labrianidis & Hatziprokopiou 2005; Labrianidis & Kazazi 2006; Labrianidis & Lyberaki 2004).

First, there are two categories of returnees, not always distinguished as such by all studies: those who are forcibly returned and those whose return results from achieved migratory goals. In the first category, the majority are those who have not been able to regularise their status in the host country and are forcibly removed by the host-country authorities or sometimes decide to use the IOM's so-called voluntary assisted return programmes (VARP). Others may be 'forced' to return for their or their family members' various health-related issues or because they were unable to integrate into the host society's labour market. The most recent ETF (2007) study, for instance, found that almost 90 per cent of their returnee respondents fitted into one of these categories, whereas only around 10 per cent returned after having successfully achieved their migratory goals.

Second, and related to the above, is the country of migration. The majority of returnees lived in Greece: between 60 and 70 per cent of respondents (ETF 2007; Labrianidis & Kazazi 2006). Return from Italy and other countries appears to be less common (King et al. 2003; King & Vullnetari 2003; Piperno 2005). This tendency might be partly explained by migrants' insecure status in Greece, discussed in detail throughout this chapter, which further undermines their ability to settle there. This has resulted in much temporary and circular migration between the two countries. The dominance of returnees from Greece may also be explained by the character of much migration to this country, where emigrants are target earners, going for short periods of time to 'top up their cash requirements' (King 2005: 152).

The two last factors are closely linked to the third aspect – that of the sustainability of return. The fact that migrants continue to need to top up their cash in Greece, or largely aspire to re-emigrate as soon as they return – around half of respondents for some studies (ETF 2007; Labrianidis & Kazazi 2006) – is a very serious indictment of the supposedly improved situation in Albania. Of course, this cannot be compared to the immediate post-1990 years of dire poverty and hopelessness. But the country's relative political stability and increased security over the last ten years have not been accompanied by a significant improvement in the infrastructure, affecting businesses that have a higher rate of bankruptcy than other Balkan countries (Kilic et al. 2007).

It is evident that decisions to migrate, stay, return or indeed lead transnational lives are not static. Most emigrants left the country to work abroad for some years, but the majority seem to continue to live there. Besides Albania's continuing social and economic problems, large-scale family-based return migration seems unlikely because migrants, and especially their children, have successfully settled in their host countries. This is particularly the case for migration to Italy, the UK and the US, but also for Greece. The second generation of emigrants, those born abroad or who went there as very young children, are integrating into the education



system and society more widely (King & Mai 2004, 2008). The lack of this type of family-based return can be presumed to be behind most return-oriented studies in Albania, which seem to be unable to find female returnee respondents – only 10 per cent of the 1,000-strong sample in one study (ETF 2007) or only 24 women compared to 300 men in a 2002 survey (Labrianidis & Kazazi 2006). Following the recent economic crisis and likely higher return rates, especially from Greece, studies in this area are becoming increasingly necessary for a better understanding of the process of Albanian migration and its link to development.

### 3.6 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to provide the background to Albanian migration and development, against which to understand the analysis of my own empirical data in the following results section (Chapters 4-7) and conclusion (Chapter 8). Based on a much longer state-of-the-art report that I prepared for IMISCOE (Vullnetari 2007) and building on an earlier study I co-authored with my DPhil supervisor (King & Vullnetari 2003), the account in this chapter provides a comprehensive and integrated survey of Albanian migration trends, both historical and contemporary, internal and international, as well as being embedded within the Albanian spatial development process. Although the core of the chapter remains that which was submitted in my DPhil thesis, I have updated the statistics on migrants and remittances to cover the period until 2009-2010. While a stock-taking exercise at the end of these two post-communist decades of Albanian migration would be timely, this is beyond the remit of my book. However, a few concluding remarks against this background are in order.

This chapter clearly demonstrated that Albania has indeed been a country on the move – the intensity and the rate of both internal and international flows over a twenty-year period have been astounding. Equally remarkable has been the ability of Albanian migrants to integrate into the host societies and communities through hard work, learning the language and adapting to the local culture, including religion. It has been a difficult process requiring many sacrifices from migrants, but they have managed to achieve a certain degree of upward socio-economic progress, especially for the second generation. At the same time, migrants have generally kept their links with their families and areas of origin, not least through the sending of remittances, which have for years been the lifeline of many households in Albania and have shored up the country's economy in many aspects. Some of these features apply to internal migrants as well, although research in this area is still very limited.

The review in this chapter has addressed a number of issues such as the role of international remittances in development, the demographic and

economic polarisation of the country, return and, not least, policy concerns; yet, many more remain unanswered. Indeed, the discussion has produced more questions to consider. One thing, however, is for sure: both internal and international migration are interrelated and studying them together is imperative for understanding development processes in migrants' countries and areas of origin. I unravel these complex strategies and dynamics by situating migrants in the intra-national and transnational social fields, starting from the villages of origin in Devoll, where we move to next.



## 4 Leaving home: Migration patterns and dynamics

This is the first in a sequence of four results chapters, which discuss internal and international migration in the Albanian context, the relationship between the two and their combined impact on development in Albania. The chapters are based on empirical material collected in the course of my DPhil fieldwork. The aim of the present chapter is to map the patterns of international and internal migration emanating from the migrants' area of origin in rural south-east Albania, including their various features and interlinked sequencing. The differences between these two migration types are analysed in terms of migrants' profiles, migration regimes, geographical and socio-cultural distance, cost-opportunity structure and legal status linked to migration policy. The sequencing, on the other hand, is chartered using King's (in King & Skeldon 2010) 'Migration pathways' diagram. These post-1990 migratory flows from the study villages are discussed against the background of the communist years and the 'transition' to the capitalist market society, both of which frame the reasons and motivations for these moves, as explained in the previous chapter.

### 4.1 General patterns and destinations

#### 4.1.1 *International migration*

Migration from my study area has been part of life for centuries (Tirta 1999). Migration throughout the Ottoman Empire, especially to Greece, Egypt and Romania, was later followed by overseas emigration, primarily to the US and Australia. This continued until the closing of Albania's borders in the late 1940s. During the communist years, geographical proximity to the 'outside world' made it possible for a small number of individuals, mostly men, to defect to the West via Greece and Macedonia. Their families suffered the serious consequences of internal exile and imprisonment. Most of these defectors finally settled in North America and Australia. In an ironic twist of fate, others who were keen to leave Albania then, decided to remain in the country when the borders opened and they were free to leave. Bilbil, 55, and his family suffered time in prison and

years of exile to remote mountainous areas because of their failed attempt to defect to Greece in the late 1960s. Once they were able to move freely after 1990, they worked in Greece for a while and decided instead on settling in Tirana, where they now live. They do not intend to move abroad. Sitting on the balcony of his newly built villa in peri-urban Tirana surrounded by many relatives and kin of various ages, Bilbil reminisces on those years as he sips his *raki*.<sup>1</sup>

I was imprisoned at the age of sixteen for six years as a political prisoner... My father was also put in prison after I was and later we were all, as a family, exiled... to a mountainous village in Skrapar. In 1985 we were released [from exile] but they [authorities] didn't take us to our village because it was a *zonë kufitare* [border zone] and they were worried that we would try to defect again. They took us to a neighbouring village instead and we stayed there until 1995.

As the events of the early 1990s were unfolding, emigration from my study villages was large-scale. By 2007, migrants were spread over fourteen different destination countries around the world, though the most important concentrations broadly mirror the typologies observed throughout Albania. However, particularities do exist. For instance, migrants in one of the villages are spread over twelve destinations, whereas emigration from the other three villages is concentrated in four or five destinations. Overall, the major destination remains Greece. There are very few families that have not had at least one member emigrating to this country at one time or another between 1990 and 2006. The second most important destination in aggregate numbers is the US, followed by Italy, France, the UK, Canada and Australia. However, for individual villages the second place is taken by France in one case and by Italy in another. It is important to note at this point that because of the conditions I discussed earlier, those who first left Albania between 1990 and 1991 – whether through the embassies, by boat or by cutting the wire fence – took enormous risks. The following quotes show this.

*JV: Did you try to enter the embassies?*

We went there, but we were just watching from outside... We were waiting to see what was happening... we didn't dare, because we didn't know what was going to happen... only later did we learn what democracy was. We had been isolated for 50 years... [Vangjo, 59 M, living in Tirana at the time]

The port [of Durrës] was opened on the 7th of March 1991... I was a conscript in the army in Durrës and we would also do loading and

unloading of ship containers in the port... I boarded... the boat that was getting ready to leave, it was the *Panama* boat... I stayed there for two hours and got bored. Also, the friend I was with said to me: 'What if they send us back? We might be put in prison. Let's get off'... It was the communist mentality that we would be considered as deserters, defectors... [Genti, 32 M, returnee from Italy and then Greece living in Tirana]

Let us now look at some of the factors that triggered migration, starting with Greece. Although geographical proximity is mentioned as the most significant factor, this must be understood within the geopolitical and economic sphere the two countries belong to. Macedonia is equally close. Yet, it is only used as an indirect route for migration to Greece, rather than for labour migration or settlement itself, except for the ethnic-Macedonian minority living in the Lake Prespa area. First, Greece is an EU country, while Macedonia is not. Second, the economic development of the former is much higher than in Macedonia, so wages, too, are higher and work opportunities greater.

For a few others, historical kinship ties were an important aspect that took precedence. This factor influenced the decision on first destinations for some early migrants, as they sought to re-establish pre-existing links and find long-lost relatives (see also Sintès 2003). The case of the Petri family illustrates this very well. In the 1920s, the father of this family worked in Greece where he fell in love with a Greek woman. They married and settled in Albania, but during the Cold War no contact was allowed between the families on both sides of the border and the wife was never to see her parents and siblings again. As soon as the regime fell, her daughter and a nephew, who was only fourteen at the time, walked over the mountains to Greece in search of their remaining relatives. Their subsequent emigration to and settlement in Thessaloniki was influenced by the presence of these relatives, who became their first point of support for their integration in the city.

For the majority, besides the subversive and political aspect, the very first border crossings to Greece in 1991-1992 were aimed at addressing the dire poverty of those years, first through scavenging and begging for clothes and then later on searching for work (see also De Rapper 2002a). Some also travelled simply out of curiosity.

I used to be a *brigadier* [team supervisor] in the cooperative and I remember we were working in the fields when we heard that Guri and two or three friends who had gone to Greece had come back with a huge amount of clothes. It was a problem for clothes at the time... It was May 1991, the border was not opened completely and when we left the wire was still in place. Our soldiers [Albanian

border guards] ran after us but we managed to cross to the other side. It was raining... we arrived in Neapoli [Greek town], after walking for almost twelve hours non-stop. Then we felt hungry and once we arrived there we started begging for food. We had learnt one word: *psomi* [ψομί, Greek for 'bread']. The people there were surprised when they saw how we were eating. I ate tomatoes in May for the first time. Here [in Albania] we had to wait until July... After we were fed, we then spoke the next word we knew: *ruka* [ρούχα, Greek for 'clothes']. I was with three other men from the village. We were given two sacks of clothes each and started our journey back. But, it was raining again all the way back from Neapoli... we had to sleep on and off along the way as we were very tired... My feet were bleeding... When I came back to the village I brought so many clothes, the entire village came to my house to see them. That's how it was then... So, this was my first visit to Greece. [Mondi, 44, returnee from Greece and living in Korçë]

Migration to Greece continued, with stays that began to last longer as migrants found work in nearby villages and then moved on further into the country. Later it took on large-scale proportions, maturing with family reunification, especially after the two regularisations of 1998 and 2001. While some return took place, especially in the mid-1990s, for others Greece became a springboard for clandestine onward migrations to Italy, France, the UK as well as North America and Australia (King et al. 2003). A considerable number, however, settled and built their lives in Greece.

The US is the second most important destination from my study villages in aggregate numbers of emigrants, which does not reflect the trend throughout Albania – Italy being second in importance. Several parallels can be observed in this migration. First, the pre-existing links from the early twentieth-century migrants to the US and those who defected during the communist rule were revitalised as soon as the US consulate re-opened in Tirana in the early 1990s. Those whose older relatives had obtained US citizenship were able to benefit from this and travelled there quite early on. Second, a considerable number of entire families have emigrated through the Green Card lottery. We saw earlier in Chapter 3 how this was one of the key routes for Albanian emigrants to enter the US. The 'American lottery fever' is also visible in the banners that internet cafés display each year around the time of applications (Photo 4). From one village alone, around 80 individuals left for the US between 1990 and 2006, the majority of them having used this channel.

The third parallel is seen in emigrants who wanted to reach America at all costs and who were aided in this by chains of smugglers, who sometimes left people stranded in places such as Cuba or Mexico (see also Fischer 2005). As I sat listening to the perils and suffering of these

**Photo 4** *'American lottery fever' in Korçë*

Banner announcing applications for the US Diversity Visa programme at an internet café

migrants in the stories told by their relatives, I could not help but admire their courage and determination in the face of adversities caused by inhumane immigration policies. Some of these migrants were financially supported during the trip and then provided bail by relatives, who had settled in the US before 1990. Fourth, marriages (most of which are arranged) have become increasingly important channels of emigration, especially for young women. The majority of these marry other Albanian migrants living in the US, but cases of marriages to US and other foreign nationals also exist. And finally, family reunification has boosted the migration of the older generation, who have emigrated to live with their children.

Our daughter is married and lived with her family in Korçë... they emigrated to America through the lottery about two years ago... now she wants to apply for family reunification for us, but she has to be there at least five years so she can gain the [US] citizenship... her husband's parents have died [they would take priority normally, according to Albanian customs]... but five years seem such a long time, we are so old. [Flutur, 65, living with her husband, 72, in the village]



My two brothers are in America... they went there clandestinely... through the Dominican Republic and Mexico... my first brother had a very difficult journey... he was stranded for six months [in Latin America]... and the journey cost him \$ 10,000... we had relatives in America who helped... He would telephone to Korçë, because there were no mobile phones at the time [in the village]. He had the telephone number of a post office in Korçë and he would leave a message there: 'We are in such and such a place. Please call... the relatives in America to send us some dollars' [through Western Union]... [this went on] until they got there. [Berti, 45, returnee from Greece and brother of two migrants in the US]

Although not in second place, Italy is still an important destination. Some of the first contemporary migrations there involved those villagers who were working or happened to be living by the coast, for instance, as army conscripts. The influence of watching Italian television, investigated in-depth by Mai (2002), was limited in south-east Albania. This can be explained by its geographical position, far inland and thus beyond the area where Italian broadcasting could be accessed (for a map showing the reach of Italian television broadcasting in Albania, see Mai 2002: 162).<sup>2</sup> News of the March 1991 exodus to Italy spread quickly and many young men travelled to Durrës and Vlorë hoping to get onto one of the boats. The geographical distance meant that they were probably a little too late. Edi, 43, now living and working with his family in Italy after having spent several years in Greece, reflects on those early post-1990 days during our interview on a return visit to the village.

I was one of the first from the village to leave... After the embassy exodus, I was on the boat *Partizani* that was to leave in March 1991 to Italy... We heard on the television that the boats were leaving for Italy and we went there. We were around five or six friends from our village. But, our boat was returned [before leaving the coast] and they didn't let us go. We then left for Greece.

Others got a second chance in the August exodus and managed to reach Bari after much suffering and horror on the overcrowded boats. What awaited them there in those first days was not much better. Genti, who had missed the first exodus to Italy because he was anxious about what would happen if the boat they had boarded was sent back by the Italian authorities, was not going to let it happen again. August 1991 found him again in the Port of Durrës as an army conscript. This time he managed to get on one of the boats that reached the port of Bari after it had been pushed back by the Italian authorities when it navigated towards Brindisi.

On 7 August, the port [in Durrës] opened again... I went there... I climbed on board hanging onto the chains of the boat and got on the deck... my eyes saw horror there. Some climbed the masts, which would break and they [migrants] would fall in the sea. A mast fell on the leg of some guy and broke it at the knee; his leg was hanging loose from his knee down... Many others were killed by gangs... Horror... I boarded at ten in the morning and we left at seven in the evening... The captain didn't want to start, but some [gang criminals] put a gun to his head and ordered him to... there were around fifteen to sixteen thousand people on that boat... men, women, children... When we landed in Italy... in Bari... we had not eaten or drunk anything for 48 hours... we were hungry, thirsty; there was only saltwater on the boat.

Most were repatriated to Albania after having spent days in the overcrowded stadium of Bari where the Italian authorities had put them. Upon returning to their villages, they joined the increasing groups of migrants walking over the mountains to Greece. However, disillusioned with what Greece could offer, some tried Italy again, travelling either by *gommoni* (Italian for 'rubber dinghy') from the ports of Albania, or on a Schengen visa via Greece by ferry or plane. For a number of Albanian men (less so for women) who emigrated to Italy, Greece had been their first destination, as Mai (2002: 84) also found in his research. A number of small communities composed of migrants from my study area have thus been formed in some rural areas in Apulia in the south and in Turin and Milan in the north.

The roots of migration to France can be found in the 'embassy occupations' of July 1990. A man from one of the study villages had been working in a mine near Tirana since the late 1980s, whereas his wife and children lived in the village. He entered the French embassy and was later transported to France, where he was granted refugee status. He settled in the north of the country where his wife and children joined him two years later. This became the nucleus of an important chain migration flow from this area, numbering around 50 individuals by 2007. During my fieldwork in Albania I visited the village neighbourhood of origin – known locally as the French quarter – on several occasions. Empty houses were faithfully guarded by older people dotted here and there, who sat outside the gate, remembering the days when their children and grandchildren ran around filling the place with joy.

Most follow-up migration to France was clandestine or involved large payments for obtaining Schengen visas. Several migrants travelled there via Greece, often after having spent some years working there. As the community matures, family creation and thus migration through marriage have been on the increase. While on fieldwork I sensed a 'French fever',

too: I heard of those who had ‘just left two days ago’ and others who were preparing their migration in the coming weeks and months.

The link to the UK was established in three separate ways. The most important was by being smuggled from Greece, hidden in lorries, directly to the UK or after stops in other EU countries (for similar accounts, see King et al. 2003). These were often migrants who worked in rural Greece in or near food-processing factories, which exported their goods by lorry to other EU countries or the UK. A second, less important pattern was through mingling with Kosovar refugees, some of who stayed in my study villages when they were displaced during the conflict in Kosovo in 1999–2000. Although chain migration patterns are observed in this destination as well, especially since the majority of migrants originate from one village, these chains have so far not developed beyond a limited number of immediate family members. Some family reunification through marriage has also taken place. The most recent migration has involved recruitment companies who have placed trained nurses with companies in the UK to work in elderly people’s homes. These young women have been joined by their husbands and, although the process has been expensive (€ 7,000), the five-year visa to work in the UK is highly desirable. This trajectory occurred after internal migration to the capital.

Migration to Australia, initiated in the late 1990s and ongoing, is very peculiar to the area and is observed only in one of the study villages (although it is widespread in the Devoll region). It was initiated through pre-existing kin links with the early migrants, some of whom had even returned to Albania in the 1960s. In addition, others have migrated through marriage either with recently settled single migrants or with Australians mediated through these networks. The numbers, however, remain rather small.

I emigrated [to Australia] through my father-in-law, who had lived there many years ago and had gained the citizenship. So, his children benefited from this and amongst them my wife as well. And so we also emigrated with her... We live in a town near Melbourne... [Gurazi, 62 M, migrant living in Australia, interviewed on a return visit]

Migration to Canada is also limited to a handful of families and was initiated in three ways: pre-existing links of defectors of the regime who settled there; a skilled migrants scheme (also known as the ‘Canada phenomenon’, see UNDP-Albania 2000); and family creation through marriage. These are also very recent migrations and the effects for follow-up trajectories are not yet certain.

Other less important destinations in terms of numbers of emigrants have been Belgium, the Netherlands and Spain (via Greece) and Sweden. A

small stream of students have emigrated to follow tertiary education in Italy, Poland, Romania and Macedonia, sometimes moving subsequently to the US as skilled emigrants.

#### 4.1.2 *Internal migration*

Internal movements started simultaneously with international migration. However, the major boost was in the mid-1990s, particularly after migrants had accumulated enough capital from work in Greece to be able to afford a house or an apartment in the city. I counted a total of eleven destinations for internal migrants from the villages, with Tirana being by far the most important, accounting for half of internal migrants from all four villages. This is in line with the general trend countrywide (Carletto et al. 2004; Zezza et al. 2005). Second is Korçë as the major regional city, followed by Durrës, Vlorë, Elbasan and Pogradec. Kavajë, Fier, Berat and Bilisht are other destinations, but have insignificant numbers, primarily triggered by pre-existing family links. Inter-village moves and in-migration are very limited, if marriage migration is excluded.

I must note here that migration and settlement in Tirana have been an erstwhile dream for a large majority of the respondents, including those who have migrated to the less important regional towns or who are still living in the villages. This desire was influenced by the image of Tirana throughout the communist years as the most symbolic achievement of the socialist 'paradise'. Some of my interviewees also mentioned that class warfare was less harsh in the capital, and its anonymity provided more protection for those considered to be the 'declassed'.<sup>3</sup> They had seen the difference in treatment and life chances between themselves and their relatives who lived in Tirana during visits there. Others had 'touched' this reality briefly while studying at the university or as migrant labourers during the industrialisation projects. The influence of national television in spreading these images was also important. Yet, after the 1960s the capital became the 'forbidden apple' for most rural dwellers, through the intricate system of restrictions and regulations I discussed earlier. Here are two quotes for illustration.

The desire was to come to Tirana, no other town. Even if someone was to offer me a house for free in another town, I wouldn't go there. Tirana ticked all the boxes on our checklist. ... art is made here, other activities, the modern life as we saw it in films or read it in books. So, Tirana was closest to Europe... This opinion was created before the 1990s, before the changes took place and we thought it was the only opportunity, without having to move abroad. [Petrit, 37 M, migrant in Tirana]

We lived in Tirana for four or five years as students, during which time... we developed a soft spot for the capital; of course, it had much better living conditions... Since then we intended to come to Tirana. [Arti, 41 M, migrant in Tirana]

The very early arrivals in Tirana were families of migrants who had already worked there during the 1980s. Labourers, masons and carpenters (all men) from Devoll villages were recruited throughout the second half of the 1980s to work in construction in the capital. Their families remained in the villages which the migrants would visit once every two months or so. It was only in 1990 that they were given permission to settle in the city [*pasaportizim*], but there was no housing for them – ironically, considering they built housing for years for so many others. As the communist system disintegrated and the privatisation process was underway, some of the workers managed to secure ownership of a few semi-finished apartment blocks, which they then completed themselves. Many went to Greece to get ‘cash’ in order to finalise the work.

In 1987 I applied to the village authorities to come and work in Tirana for the state enterprise called the Elbasan Construction Site. I was a mason and they needed people like me. My request was approved and I went to Tirana... I left together with another friend from the village... We... worked there for five years. My family was in the village... In 1990 I got permission to settle here... our enterprise then gave us this house [apartment]... where we live now... My family came here in 1992 and we lived in some make-shift housing for two years until these apartments were finished... I then made one room ready and we came to live here in 1994... After our enterprise was dissolved in 1992, I went to Greece... [Demir, 59 M, migrant in Tirana]

A similar trajectory of settlement in Tirana was followed by a number of students, especially women, who were studying at the University of Tirana in the early 1990s as well as later on. While at university, they were also working part-time, which ensured their being able to make a living upon finishing their studies and having enough financial and social capital to contemplate settling in Tirana. Not only migrants’ profiles, but also timing were important in the success or failure of this effort, as the following case shows. This is the story of two sisters, both students at the University of Tirana. The elder finished her studies and went back to her village, where she found a job in public administration. The younger, however, completed her degree a couple of years later and stayed in Tirana after having secured a job for herself. While she was working, she also found a job for her

sister and they both settled in Tirana. Here is an excerpt from the interview with the elder sister, Laura, 34.

I finished university in 1994 and I wanted to stay in Tirana. I had many job interviews, but wasn't successful. Employment opportunities at the time were not what they are now, because foreign investments were very few. In addition, my agrarian [professional] profile did not allow me to get any job I wanted. I also didn't have any experience and all the job applications I filed required some experience. So, I went back to the village and I found a job in the local municipality... as a supervisor... I worked there for five months... Meanwhile, I had my sister here [in Tirana] and she was my best chance. I asked her to be on the lookout for jobs for me. I decided to do any job even if it wasn't in my line of profession, because I wanted to get away from life in the village... my sister had just started working as a receptionist [part-time work while pursuing her Bachelor's degree in English]. It was a new hotel and there were available workplaces... after the interview I was hired and started work as a cashier. When I saw that I was earning more than double here, I stayed, in spite of the fact that I had a lower professional position here... the city of Tirana and the wages enticed me to stay.

A third group moving to Tirana in the mid-1990s primarily comprised masons, carpenters and other semi-skilled workers who seized the opportunities presented by the growing construction industry. An overwhelming number had seasonally migrated to Greece in the very early 1990s to accumulate start-up capital for their trades and businesses, which enabled the move to Tirana upon their return in the mid-1990s. In the capital, they made a small fortune through work in the booming construction industry. A fourth group comprised highly skilled individuals who were already employed in professional positions in the Devoll district, such as accountants and bank managers, but who realised that Tirana presented better life opportunities for them. Some had never emigrated abroad before this move.

... he [his brother] was the director of the bank in the nearest town. A friend of his offered him a job at the National Social Security Institute [in Tirana] and he was employed there. Of course, he would go where his work was. At the same time, he had an opportunity to improve the life and the prospects of his children. [Xhemil, 69, brother of a migrant to Tirana, interviewed in the village]

An interesting point in time is the year 1997, when law and order broke down in the country as arms depots were looted and armed gangs ruled the

streets of almost the entire country. Tirana was the only safe place: since it was the government seat, the state's armed forces protected it, including through a dusk-to-dawn curfew. This influenced the decision of a number of individuals and families from my study area to either stay in Tirana if already there or move there from the villages. Klodi's family was one such case. Her father was a leading figure of the opposition party in the local area and pressure had been building up over the years culminating in early 1997. The family feared that she could be harmed by her father's opponents in the area who wanted to settle political scores and, combined with the inability for her to continue her education under such circumstances, the family decided to make the move to the capital.

It was 1997... politically it was a different time... the abuses. Forget what you see today... there is just no comparison... today there is a different type of freedom of thought and freedom of movement... and there was a different type then... imagine what a time it was: we feared that if I went somewhere, even just travelling to Korçë, someone who wanted to hurt my father or put pressure on him – or simply say: 'Look, I am in power now, your time is gone' – could kidnap me or harm me in other ways... you understand... A few years later things calmed down... but this was how it was at the time... It's difficult for me to remember those times... the stress, the anxiety. If you can imagine that I feared even walking to our gate. Even my brother received threats. [Klodi, 25, migrant in Tirana]

Others had planned to move to Tirana earlier, but the events of 1997 triggered the decision to be taken there and then.

We came here in March or April 1997 at the time of the disturbances... we had put an order in for our apartment to be built and by this time it was almost ready... when the disturbances exploded we thought that it was time for us to move here because we couldn't continue the business we had in our local town... You could go on the streets and you could be robbed or kidnapped... There were many groups [armed gangs] that moved throughout Korçë and Devoll at the time. Even the villages were being protected by local [vigilante] groups. In some places they [vigilante groups] even broke up the asphalt of the roads and made trenches to stop the cars from outside, they guarded the roads and the schools with guns, etcetera... Tirana was safer because it was protected by the police... here it was very calm, here the police had a grip on the situation. Then the curfew was imposed, stopping movements after 6 pm. So one felt more secure and safe... So we

decided to come here. We then restarted our business here after seven or eight months... when the situation calmed down completely. [Arti, 41 M, migrant in Tirana]

Most of these moves were supported, at least partially, by remittances and savings earned during work in Greece either for a few months in the early 1990s or over the years later on; more on this will come later in the chapter.

Since most development in the last two decades has been around the Tirana-Durrës conurbation, Korçë has remained a provincial town with a smaller market and less dynamism. However, it is the second most important destination for migrants from my study villages. A move to Korçë was largely influenced by its lower costs for families on a tight budget. In addition, the presence of older parents who did not want to move away from their villages was important, too; living in close geographical proximity meant that care for them was quicker in case of emergencies. Furthermore, being in the same cultural environment of tradition and dialect, a number of those choosing Korçë found that it was much closer in socio-cultural terms.

*JV: Why did you choose Korçë and not another big city?*

I was conditioned by my economic circumstances and because my parents live in the village. I look after three elderly people: my mother, my father and my maternal uncle. So I wanted to be as close to them as possible. Of course, I also have the land there. You never know what the future might bring. [Besim, 45 M, migrant in Korçë]

Migration to the other destinations was either as a result of reclaimed property that had been confiscated during communism, family links or being close to a place with better income-generating opportunities such as tourism, but with a lower living cost than Tirana (in the case of relocations to Durrës and Vlorë). Marriage migration between people in the villages and partners from the city did occur in the late 1980s as a way of circumventing regulations that obstructed settlement in the city. In a few cases this resulted in the follow-up migration of the residual family to the city after the regime change.

## 4.2 Differences between the two types of migration

As has been apparent from the discussion thus far, international and internal migration trajectories differ in several aspects. I discuss the differences



in this section by referring to migrants' profile traits such as gender, age, education, class and ethnic belonging; to the differing temporalities of migration regimes; to the geographical and socio-cultural context and proximity; cost-opportunity structures; and, finally, legality issues.

#### 4.2.1 *Differing migrants' profiles*

As the cooperative system was disintegrating – perhaps the strongest sign of the fall of the communist regime in rural areas – emigration increased from a trickle of individuals to a large-scale movement that encompassed literally almost every household in my study area. Those who left were overwhelmingly men 'from thirteen years up to 50 years of age' as one of my respondents, Namik, puts it, but the most dominant group were those in their 20s and 30s. Namik, now 30, was only sixteen at the time of his first journey to Greece; here he recalls one of his many difficult crossings over the mountains in the 1990s.

So we left for Greece, there were 27 of us [all men]. It was March, the tenth of March. The snow came up to our waist... we started walking [single file] and four or five people who were the toughest and knew the way would go in front of the group to open the path for the others, and we would follow. After three hours of walking like this within Greece the alarm sign was given. What happened? Then we heard shooting and the entire line [of migrants] was broken up. Those four or five people who were right at the head of the line were caught by the [Greek] army. The rest scattered running in all directions, everyone to save their own skin. We thought some war had started. They [the army] would only shoot. Perhaps they were shooting in the air, perhaps aiming at us... but at that time [the 1990s] they would shoot at migrants, too... four or five of us ran towards an unknown destination. We walked all night long through the snow and we didn't know where we were... we thought we were in Greece, but we had walked back to an Albanian [border] village... the snow was up to our waist... We came back to our village and after five days left again for Greece... Those who had been at the front were mainly from my village... they [the Greek soldiers] had beaten them so badly they couldn't walk for days... they had been ordered to carry the army gear of the soldiers on their backs... before this, they had been pushed lying face down on the ground one after another and the soldiers would walk over them... only they and God know what they have been through.

Although women did not participate much in these early journeys (to the extent that they did, their presence is quite under-researched and under-

documented), they increasingly migrated to join their relatives abroad, especially after the Greek regularisations of 1998 and 2001. Some of them took the physically challenging journey over the mountains like their male counterparts, with whom they usually travelled. The following excerpt brings this to life (see also Photo 3).

... that time I came here in July 1998. My husband left before me, by paying money. Then he worked so we could have enough money for me to go... I was told we had to walk for two hours... we started our journey... I was shivering. I knew what that meant, *I had done it before*. But now I had two children with me. My son was nine months and my daughter, two years old. I started breast-feeding my son so that he wouldn't cry and he was like an angel... my brother-in-law [who was only accompanying them along the mountain crossing] was carrying my daughter. The young guide, who had our bags, was walking in front, me and my son after him, and my brother-in-law with my daughter at the back... We were told [to walk] two hours perhaps to give us courage, but we must have walked at least four hours... I walked fast as lightning. I didn't feel my feet at all, over stones and cliffs... but I am sure that there are angels up there who protected us... my son slept all the way and didn't make a noise... when I entered the house [in a border village in Greece where she and her children were being sheltered that night], when the Greek woman opened the door, that's when he woke up and started crying... she and her husband then took us to meet Genci [her smuggler], who drove us all the way to Athens. [Mira, 36, migrant in Thessaloniki]

Negatively affected by the inhumane and bureaucratic migration regime in Greece, some continued to emigrate in this way even in later years. Dorina, 28, living in Thessaloniki, told me the story of her sister Zana, 25, who travelled to Greece over the mountains in June 2006 when she was nine months pregnant. She had been married for almost two years, but had not been successful in joining her husband – a migrant in the city of Volos – through the reunification process. The only option left for her was to pay € 1,000 to smugglers, who, after having coaxed her with promises for months, finally agreed to smuggle her across the border.<sup>4</sup> Although accompanied by male 'protectors' every step of the way – first her father for the night walk over the mountains to Florina, where her smugglers then met her to give her documents and put her on the bus, and finally her husband whom she travelled with to Volos – Zana showed great courage, determination and agency to make things work for her young family.

Emigration to the other destinations and through the other avenues that I discussed earlier included a mixture of men and women, although young

single women who emigrated for work on their own were only few. Some single women left to pursue studies abroad, whereas the vast majority were married at the time of migration. On the other hand, children emigrated as part of family reunification – typical for Greece and Italy – or through family migration – typical for emigration to North America. Some older people also emigrated, while others preferred to move between destination and origin countries, when documents permitted.

In terms of education, those in Greece had the lowest levels among international migrants, but those in Italy did not differ much from their counterparts in Greece. By contrast, emigrants to North America who availed themselves of the schemes I discussed earlier had secondary and tertiary education levels, respectively. These differential levels of education are also related to timing of emigration and age at emigration. Early migration in the 1990s to Greece affected a good number of young migrants adversely in this context. Many teenagers at the time simply abandoned school to emigrate – they had either primary education (lasting eight years) or had already started secondary school. Driving this phenomenon were dire poverty, curiosity, a desire to access the long-denied material dreams as well as, at times, young people's rebellion against patriarchal authority.

I was very young when I left [for Greece]... I abandoned school... I completed eight years and then didn't get to attend secondary education... [Agim, 32 M, migrant in Thessaloniki]

In those first years there was a decline in the interest of young people to continue their studies or go to school. We were a little confused at the time. We were all trying to find our own ways and we took decisions that were good for the moment [short term], in the sense that we need money today, without thinking about tomorrow... I left school and I still suffer the consequences to a certain extent even today. [Zamir, 32 M, migrant in Italy, interviewed on a return visit]

By contrast, those who emigrated to Greece at an older age had, in the majority of cases, some years of secondary schooling. Some even had professional backgrounds as masons and electricians. A number of individuals moved on from Greece to Italy, France, the UK or the US, where they found better opportunities for further adult education and professional training than those who stayed in Greece. Various studies based on the 2001 census and ALSMS data on Albanian migration have confirmed the broad trends of these variations in educational levels by country of emigration (see e.g. Carletto et al. 2004). However, my material provides a more qualitative understanding of the situation.

The employment sectors in destination areas generally reflected migrants' profiles, on the one hand, and the peculiarities of the national

labour market, on the other. In Greece, men were overwhelmingly employed in construction, small-scale manufacturing, services and trade and agriculture-related occupations. Among them were those who had gained skills and others who were self-employed or had even created their own small firm, usually in construction-related activities. Women, on the other hand, worked in domestic services, although some had found jobs in cafeterias, bakeries, garment factories and wood workshops. These findings match the overall picture described earlier (see Chapter 3) based on Greek survey data and primary research by Hatziprokopiou (2006).

Most migrants from my study area who had settled in Italy had done so in rural areas, working in agriculture in the south and in the wine industry in the north. Men and women in Italian urban areas worked in construction and domestic work, respectively. Agriculture – fruit-picking – and its related food-processing industry were also the main employment sectors for migrants in Australia, although the younger generation worked in urban industries. By contrast, migrants in France, the UK and North America were in all cases settled in urban areas and worked in construction, supermarkets, factories, services, catering and hotel cleaning (the latter of these for women). Besides language classes, some had attended training and education in engineering, accounting and business. The latter was especially the case amongst the young generation in their early 20s who had emigrated there quite early on with their parents – which was the case for the US – or who had received support because of their refugee status – which was the case for the UK and France.

Turning now to profiles of migrants who moved internally from the villages to Tirana and Korçë, we observe a different picture. First of all, although a number of young single women and men have migrated to study, find work and settle in Tirana and Korçë, the majority of internal migrants consists of entire families (for internal migration from northern Albania, see Cila 2006). In contrast to emigration to Greece or Italy, internal movements were far more marked by family migration rather than just reunification. Ages varied from older grandparents in their 80s to new-born babies. In addition, a mixture of family types was present: from young parents with small children to families whose three generations lived under the same roof. More university graduates could be found among migrants in Tirana than those in Thessaloniki or Korçë. Indeed, university degrees and, later on, professional goals were the main motivators for those who saw Tirana as the only place within Albania where career advancement was possible. This resonates quite closely with research in the context of Mexico, where Stark and Taylor (1991) found that returns to human capital were higher for those migrating to urban areas within the country than for undocumented migrants going to the US. Certainly, highly educated women were strongly present amongst migrants in Tirana; most had emigrated there when they were single, as

mentioned earlier. In some cases this resulted in subsequent migration of their siblings and, later on, their parents. Equipped with higher educational levels, many migrants were employed in highly regarded professional jobs, including positions in central government institutions, banks and university, at managerial levels of private firms and as teachers and journalists.

I have been working for a bank here in Tirana for six years. I applied and was selected through a competition-like procedure... Before that I was unemployed for two years, as my son was young and I didn't look for a job. My mother-in-law suffers from various illnesses so she couldn't look after him... Now I earn 70,000 lek [€ 650] per month before taxes. [Teuta, 39 F, migrant in Tirana]

Some internal migrants had become quite successful entrepreneurs and ran businesses, from small shops to large firms, primarily linked to the food and construction industries. However, a number of others who had less education and lower skill levels continued to work as manual labourers, mainly in construction and garment factories – men and women, respectively. Some of them could hardly make ends meet and saw work in Greece – often seasonally – as the only available alternative to survival.

It is very, very, very difficult. And we think that, [based on] the way things have gone so far, it will continue to be difficult. We are not able to cope with it [life in Tirana]. It's been three years and we still haven't been able to complete our kitchen. In other words, I work all day long preparing concrete [in construction] and we still can't make the kitchen... This summer I managed to get a visa to go [to Greece], but I changed my mind again. I thought very long and hard about it and wanted to go and work for some time... Finally I didn't, because I found a job here which paid well. But it is very, very difficult. [Besnik, 31 M, returnee from Greece living in Tirana]

In this context, the well-known Partizani Square in Tirana is a smaller-scale replica of the famous Omonia Square in Athens, Greece.<sup>5</sup> Many unskilled and semi-skilled rural-origin migrant men who live in Tirana come to Partizani Square – their lunch in a plastic bag and their box of tools in hand – hoping they will be the ones to be picked up for jobs that day (Photo 5).

**Photo 5** *Partizani Square, Tirana*

#### 4.2.2 *Migration regimes: Temporary versus permanent*

The to-and-fro nature of Albanian migration in the early 1990s has been well documented by various studies, especially for Greece. My findings confirm this. Almost all of those who had emigrated to Greece in the early 1990s worked there for several weeks or months, returned home for a time and then re-emigrated. The to and fro was fuelled by the *skoupa* policy of the Greek authorities in those years (see Chapter 3). This interrupted the migratory projects sometimes only days after migrants had entered Greece. Having walked hundreds of kilometres day and night in harsh terrain and weather conditions and being caught just before reaching the final destination was totally devastating, as the interviewees recalled. Even if they worked for a while, many had not been able to earn back what they had paid to be smuggled. Others might have lost all their earnings because they were not given time to collect their wages from the employer before being snatched by the police and deported. In fact, migrants experienced abuse from employers who, after having benefited from their work for several weeks and even months, would call the police to pick up and deport them, thus avoiding having to pay due wages.

Other important factors for the to and fro were that many migrants were target earners, most jobs were seasonal and insecure and thus conducive to a life on the move. And after all, following some months of work in

Greece, migrants simply missed their families and returned to see them from time to time.

I migrated until April 1997, fourteen times to Greece, walking... I would go there, the police would catch me. They would bring me back. I would go again. [Ramiz, 54 M, living in the village]

However, the first Greek regularisation interrupted this type of movement. Some returned to Albania, while for others this signified the beginning of their settlement process in Greece. In addition, an increase in family reunification could be observed. At the same time, smuggling became more difficult and costly. For those who have been able to acquire steady jobs and income and have managed to arrange their papers, transnational activities such as visits and business activities have been on the rise. Some seasonal migration still takes place, arranged through temporary work visas to supply labour to Greek agriculture.

Among my interviewees, the majority, especially men, had lived in Greece for around ten years, though many for more than that. Almost all intended – or rather, wanted – to return to Albania some day, but as the years went by this dream was becoming less and less tangible for a number of reasons. A combination of their children's education and the unpromising nature of economic development in Albania were the most important factors. So, while migration had started off as temporary and continued to be imagined as such, the reality was that it had already turned into permanent settlement.

To be honest with you, we don't have any plans for the coming years. We want to go to Albania because we have built our house there and our parents are there. But we need to stay at least two years here so that we can feel we can manage life there when we return. We came here thinking we would stay here one or two years, work and then return. It's been two and a half years now and we are not contemplating return at all. We are now thinking to stay for another two to five years, but it's not for sure. We don't know how long we'll stay here, what with the children and everything. [Adelina, 28 F, migrant in Thessaloniki]

Very different is the situation with internal moves, which in virtually all cases were intended as – and are – permanent. Internal migrants did not even once contemplate a return to their village of origin, besides a few who thought they might retire to the village and one or two unskilled migrants who were finding it a constant struggle to make ends meet. In fact, when I asked internal migrants about the question of return, they thought I was either joking or had lost my mind, as the situation was so obvious:

there is simply no comparison between life in the village and that in the city, they said. Indeed, some migrants had left when they were young and had neither any idea of nor interest in what happened in their village. On the other hand, there were also those who had a romantic image of life there, but they were realistic that this was only to be enjoyed during holiday visits.

No one from my village who has come here [Tirana] has gone back. No one from our district either... Devoll people would rather eat grass than lose face [a return to the village would be translated as a failure]... There might be difficulties. For instance, I had difficulties in the beginning because I didn't have work, I couldn't make the car documents, I didn't know where to go, etcetera. But I never thought to return, never. [Renato, 35 M, migrant in Tirana]

No, I will not return to the village... In my plans... the word 'return' does not exist... I can go and visit them [parents] and come back. The funny thing is, it feels as if I have never been there. [Edlira, 27 F, migrant in Tirana]

However, these categories of temporary and permanent migration should not be considered as either finite or static. First, the permanency of migration for international moves depended largely on the country one had emigrated to. Thus, movements to the UK, France, North America and Australia were perceived as permanent, whereas those to Greece and, to a lesser extent, Italy were regarded as temporary. Second, migrants' plans could change over time, influenced by personal circumstances and the stage of development in both the origin and destination countries. Third, migrants continued to have constant contacts with their villages of origin either through 'residual' families or their property there, such as land or a house. This was notably the case among internal migrants in Korçë and, to a lesser extent, in Tirana. Although they regarded their migration as permanent, they continued to spend summers in their home in the village or visit their relatives there. Indeed, some even worked the land in the village and harvested the fruits and vegetables, which they then sold in the urban markets, thus supplementing their income with other activities. The following quote describes this.

My family is in Korçë... my wife works in a garment factory there... I come and work here [in the village in farming]. I have my house here and I will do some repairs in the future, but I want to sort out my children's education first... I feel satisfaction from the work I do here with the bees, I have 250 beehives. I also have more than 1,000 apple trees... we feel [that we are] neither here nor there,



neither in Korçë, nor in the village. [Mondi, 44 M, migrant in Korçë, interviewed during a visit in the village]

To a lesser degree, such patterns could be observed among migrants in Thessaloniki as well (for more on emerging transnational patterns between Korçë and Thessaloniki, see Hatziprokopiou 2006). A transnational sphere was emerging, especially for those whose category of documentation allowed them easy passage between the two places.

I have gone there [to the village] often. I am now renewing my papers and I will go again in about ten days. I don't know how long I will stay, perhaps a month... I was there only two weeks ago. I consider it as a local trip... well, it's just two and a half hours away... I have been to Albania and back here many times. [Endri, 26 M, migrant in Thessaloniki]

#### 4.2.3 *Geographical and socio-cultural distance*

Often argued as one of the features that distinguishes between types of migrations, geographical distance needs to be nuanced in the context of my study area. Geographically, the villages in my study area sit almost equidistant from Thessaloniki and Tirana – 280 and 200 kilometres from the villages, respectively. This distance is further compressed towards Thessaloniki by the advanced road infrastructure on the Greek side and elongated by the inadequate quality of roads on the Albanian side. Thus, in real terms, a journey to Tirana may take longer than one to Thessaloniki, depending on delays at the border. For some migrants, the transnational (but really, translocal) social field created between Greece and Albania involved only the village and Thessaloniki as the two main points around which migrants' lives were anchored. Some had not been to Tirana for many years, as they had neither links nor an interest to visit, as the following excerpts show.

I was there [in the village] three months ago. I went with my cousin, we stayed 24 hours and came back. I just went to see my mum and dad... I haven't been in Tirana for eight years, since the time we would go to get the [Greek] visas there, before we arranged the [*homogeneis*] papers. [Kristina 33 F, migrant in Thessaloniki]

If the border didn't exit, it would be as though I were living closer than Tirana. To go to Tirana [from the village] it takes five or six hours, whereas from Thessaloniki to my village it takes two and a half hours. It's half the time. What separates people are borders. [Drini, 30 M, migrant in Thessaloniki]<sup>6</sup>

Socio-cultural distance or affinity was not always related to international migration either. Korçë was the destination closest to these migrants' socio-cultural background, given that it is in the same ethnic and socio-cultural area as their villages of origin. On the other hand, although Tirana was the preferred destination for most, some considered certain aspects of its post-communist transformation as negative. Because of Tirana's unique position in Albania, including its in-migratory profile, the capital is the place where cultures from various parts of the country meet and interact. The two most distant cultures within Albania – that of the far north and the south – mingle here. The dialects are at times so different from one another as to render communication between them impossible.

Language was a big problem for me at the beginning. Especially in Tirana, there are many in-migrants from the north. Where I used to work, many of them would come to service their cars. In the beginning... I didn't understand anything they were saying... I needed a translator. I still find it difficult... [Keli, 25 M, migrant in Tirana]

The language factor was very important in the case of migration to Greece. However, many migrants found that socio-cultural traits were not very different between the two ethnic groups.<sup>7</sup> It was ironic how some of my interviewees charged the Greeks for abandoning their elderly parents in rural areas for a good life in the city, pointing out how this made family-oriented Albanians different from their individualistic hosts. However, in so doing, they 'forgot' – or at times even explicitly denied – that this phenomenon is also largely taking place in the Albanian context, as I discuss in the following two chapters.

#### 4.2.4 *Cost-opportunity structure*

Within both migrations there is a very important temporal as well as spatial (i.e. specific destination) aspect that affects the cost-opportunity structure. Geographical proximity, combined with low financial cost (albeit at high risks) made migration to Greece a viable opportunity for many in the 1990s. Migration to Italy was more costly, as it also meant securing contacts in the coastal ports of Vlorë and Durrës. The even higher financial costs to reach other European countries and North America were related to the level of desirability and difficulty of reaching these destinations.

*JV: Why did you choose to go to Greece and not Italy [the interviewee was already in Tirana in 1990]?*

The way [to Greece] was more free. We passed over the mountains... Migrants [to Greece] would walk over the mountains, day

and night. On this side [Italy] one needed a visa or a lot of money.  
[Demir, 59 M, migrant in Tirana]

In those years [1998-1999]... we would walk for three to four hours through where the barbed wire used to be to cross into Greece, over the mountain... *together with women and children*... the smuggler would wait for us in one of the border villages. He was connected to the guy who had the car... and they sorted between themselves the money we paid them... we paid 80,000 drachmas [€ 250] per person to include all these things and they would bring us to Thessaloniki. [Namik, 30 M, migrant in Thessaloniki]

I have a relative from a nearby village who is now in America... About three or four years ago he went from here to Turkey, from there to Spain, from Spain to Cuba. He stayed two months in Cuba and they couldn't find a way to be smuggled to America. They came very close to being put in prison... So he came back... After two years, he left again [and was eventually successful]. But, it cost him a lot of money, about \$ 30,000 in total. [Berti, 45 M, living in the village]

Besides the cost of entering Greece or another country, a migrant has to cover the cost of the paperwork for residing there. This has been a painful and very costly process for migrants in Greece, as I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter.

The cost of an internal move, on the other hand, was perceived as the cost of buying land and building a house or buying an apartment. More people preferred the former option since they could hire builders from the village to construct the house for lower wages or do some of the work themselves. In addition, for a reasonable extra cost, the house could accommodate two to three families within its two to three stories, often shared among brothers and parents. As a result, the overall cost was much lower. Tirana has always been more expensive in this respect than Korçë or other provincial cities. In recent years this cost has increased, fuelled by migrants' investment in buying a home for themselves in the capital for whenever they might return in the future, or simply as a security replacing old-age pensions. Cost has been a major factor in choosing to settle in a regional town such as Korçë rather than Tirana, as I mentioned earlier. In Korçë, migrants can pull together resources from a combination of income-generating activities such as farming in their origin village, trading, employment in local factories and seasonal migration.

*JV: When you decided to move to Korçë, did you consider Tirana or Durrës as options?*

No. I had made up my mind [for Korçë]. It was the cost, because Tirana is much more expensive. My economic situation favoured a move to Korçë, also considering that I had land in my village. If I were to go to Tirana I would not have this possibility [of using the land]. It's only the last two or three years that I am letting my land. Before that, I would use it for my family needs: I was growing peppers, tomatoes, potatoes. I didn't need to buy anything in the market because I was producing all of these things myself. So, I thought about this when I moved to the city: I will come here and I will use my land [in the village] to be able to manage living costs in the city. [Pëllumb, 58 M, migrant in Korçë]

Thus, those who migrated internally had usually put a certain sum of capital together to be able to have their own accommodation and a small business, or were professionals who could find jobs in the growing economy of Tirana. Those who emigrated to Greece were often poorer people who had neither of the two. Their income return to manual labour was higher in Greece than it was in Korçë or Tirana.<sup>8</sup> Although a migrant heading for the US could incur significant costs, as we saw above, the capital return for labour, but also better future opportunities, made it a cost-effective decision.

#### 4.2.5 *Legality issues*

Crossing a national border is probably the biggest difference between the two types of migration, from the migrants' point of view. For the interviewees who had emigrated to Greece from the early 1990s and continued to live and work there, life as a migrant was divided into two very different 'epochs': 1990-1997 and 1998 to the present. I use the word 'epoch' because the difference in the quality of life between these two periods – when migrants were without documents versus when they were afforded the chance to obtain regular residence permits – is so great that it defined every aspect of their life. Although problems with documentation continue to exist, migrants acknowledge that they are now able to live as human beings and with some dignity (see also Hatziprokopiou 2006). The first period was the most difficult, as the lack of documentation and regular permits to enter, stay or work in Greece meant that migrants could not access their rights. This resulted in discrimination, exploitation, outright abuse, very difficult living conditions and a life of fear, as the following account shows.

... the biggest difficulty for us as a family was that we were illegal, without documents. In other words, we were oppressed, we didn't know if we were coming home [after work] or not... If the police

would catch us, they didn't care whether we had a family or not, they would return us home [to Albania]. And then my wife and children would be in Greece. Then more money would be needed to get back to Greece. It was difficult... [during this time] we would never go out to walk in the city for fear that the police might catch us. The only place the police might catch us was either at work or walking to and from work. If the police would stop us, they would ask us for the documents. We had nothing to give to them, as we had no documents... We were always very stressed and looking over our shoulder all the time... Everyone would look like a policeman to us... We all locked ourselves indoors, we didn't speak Albanian, neither on the street nor in the buses, all were scared. We were tucked away like mice, watching one another, but not being able to speak. We would see someone who was our relative [in the bus], but didn't speak to him, because of the fear of plain-clothes police who might be next to us... When we would go up the stairs [in our flat] we would not speak Albanian, in the house we would speak in low voices, we would keep the radio on low volume. Because they [the neighbours] might alert the police that there are some Albanians in our flat who are troubling us, because they have supposedly turned their TV or radio up loud. Then the police would come and kick us out... This went on until 1997. After December 1997, the Greek government decided to give all migrants, Albanians and others, the white papers [White Card]... At this time there was big freedom for all the Albanians... Once the white papers were given out, where did all those migrants appear [in public places] from? All those Albanians... That's when we got to know one another that we were Albanians and where we were living... We were then happy, joyful, we were able to speak in public places, to speak in our own language, in the house or in the bus, we would get together with other Albanians, we were free to go to work... we were free... [Blerim, 53 M, migrant in Thessaloniki]<sup>9</sup>

Those migrating internally were not confronted by such issues of legality, since the rules and regulations that existed during the communist regime were officially lifted in 1993 (see also Chapter 3). There is, however, one issue of legality regarding dwellings and land titles that is yet to be resolved. In the power vacuum created by the collapse of the state in the 1990s, land belonging to the state that was not subject to the 1991 legislation on land distribution was simply usurped by in-migrants desperate to flee the deteriorating conditions of village life. Some of them went on to sell (part of) the land to new arrivals. I have discussed the subsequent creation and functioning of 'squatter settlements' in more detail in Chapters 1 and 3 and therefore will not go into detail here. The majority of my

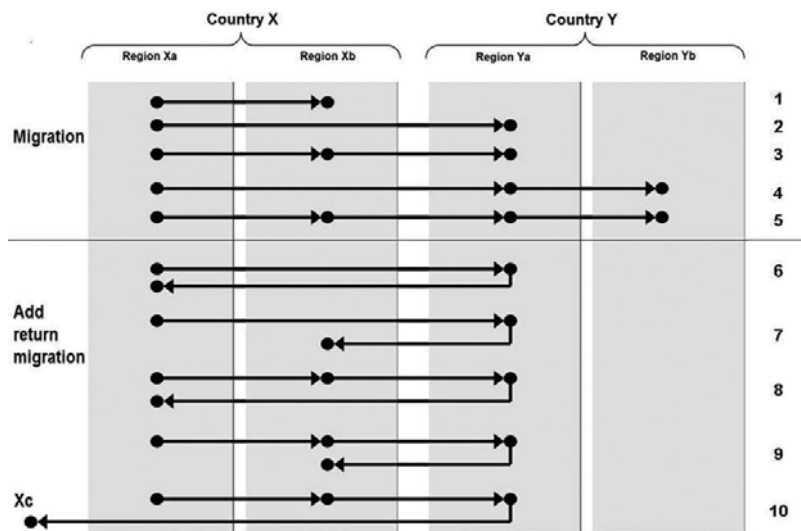
interviewees had bought land in this way and built their own houses, while others had bought an apartment in blocks of buildings built in similar ways. Recent efforts to legalise these settlements and bring them into the formal property market have raised moral and social questions. On the one hand, it legitimises abuses of public property, especially since those who abided by the rules are now sharing part of the real financial cost of these settlements. On the other hand, in-migrants have invested a great deal financially and emotionally in what have now become their homes. The hope is that a regularisation can enable them to live in security and build a future for themselves and their children in which they can access their rights.

We bought this place here. It is not part of any urban study, there are no urban studies on it, but we bought it from the real owner of the land... Now we have put in the application for legalisation. We are waiting for it to be legalised. We don't know what will happen... besides the financial cost, we have worked here very hard, both husband and wife. We would come here every day from the village in the morning and would leave in the evening. We also had to look after the livestock we had in the village, plus we had the land and the produce as well. I don't know how to explain it to you the sacrifices we have made. [Nesti, 58 M, migrant in Korçë]

Our problem here is that they are not making legalisations [of the informal settlements] so that we can get a loan and start a business... it is our property, but not yet legalised by the state... now they have started this process... the banks then may give us a loan against the house. The house is ours, but it's not registered. Whereas we are registered as living here... this is a big problem... The area here used to be a hill, there were only vines. No one was here when we came... now, as you see, there are all these people here... probably 100 families on this hill, alone... [Bilbil, 55 M, migrant in Tirana]

### 4.3 Sequencing internal and international migration

It is now time to examine how internal and international migration are linked in their sequencing. The various studies that have examined both migration types in the Albanian context do not explicitly provide a sequencing typology, albeit with some exceptions (King 2004; King et al. 2003: 62-71; King & Vullnetari 2003: 42-46; Labrianidis & Kazazi 2006). In this section I build such a typology for my study area based on my fieldwork. For this, I use the diagram in Figure 4.1 designed by King (in King &

Figure 4.1 *Migration pathways*

Source: King (in King & Skeldon 2010: 1622)

Skeldon 2010: 1622). I emphasise that the various pathways are not static, but can transform from one type to another over time, affected by various personal and structural factors.

#### 4.3.1 *Direct migrations*

Pathways 1 and 2 in the diagram refer to direct internal or international moves, respectively. The first was typically the case for two categories of people in my research: young single (especially female) students who moved from the village to Tirana to study and then stayed on; and highly skilled professionals who moved from the village to Tirana (and sometimes Korçë) to find better jobs or ensure better futures for their families and then stayed on. In the second pathway, migrants moved directly from the village abroad, for instance, to Greece, France or the US, and continued to live there. I discussed the emergence of these direct links in the first section of this chapter. The individuals and families in this pathway had not migrated internally, neither within Albania prior to the international migration, nor within their destination countries after this migration took place. Although some of these male migrants may have emigrated on their own and relatively briefly to Greece in the early 1990s, their spouses and children moved directly from the village to Athens, Milan, Paris, London, Detroit, Toronto or Melbourne. Direct migration was also the case for

students who went to study for a degree abroad, either supported by scholarships or affluent parents.

#### 4.3.2 *Internal migration leading to international migration*

Pathway 3 in the diagram shows a step-wise migration consisting of first a move from the village to a city – Tirana or Korçë in the case of my research – and then abroad. Most migration literature identifies this sequence as the most frequent amongst developing countries, and evidence on such moves has come forth especially from Latin America and Asia (see Chapter 2). In the Albanian context this is an important pattern for migration from northern Albania, as other studies have shown (see e.g. King et al. 2003). However, for my study area it is less important than the sequence of the international leading to the internal, which I discuss next. That most individuals and families were able to bypass the internal step before emigrating abroad can be explained primarily by the availability of direct links to international destinations – above all, the geographical proximity to Greece.

Thus, those who migrated first internally and then abroad were primarily highly skilled individuals who had moved to Tirana either to study or work there. Destinations involved those other than Greece. A typical example would be that of young highly skilled women who moved from the village to Tirana. While working there they married a foreign partner, often an employee of one of the international organisations, and then moved with him abroad to the US, Italy, Turkey, etc. Another example is that of students who first went to Tirana to study and, while there, benefited from scholarships to either continue their study or access training abroad – which then became their ticket out of Albania. The following excerpt comes from my interview with the father of one such student.

My son... finished his secondary education locally. Then he went to the University in Tirana... to study IT and economics... after he won the competition for maths and physics... he studied for three years there. After three years he told me: 'Dad, there is no future in this country.'... He worked here [in Tirana] with an American NGO. He knew a lot about America because he had translated a lot for the Americans who would come here... and so he went to America... He has been there four years... he is at university, studying nuclear physics... When he finished one degree and went on to do this one, which is higher, some company for atomic energy offered him a job. [Ramiz, 54, living in the village]



### 4.3.3 *International migration leading to internal migration*

This reflects pathway 4 and a range of other pathways when return migration is added. Let us start with the first. My findings reveal that the majority of migrants did not continue to live and work in the first place they initially arrived. This was overwhelmingly the case with migrants in Greece, many of whom had first lived in rural areas upon arrival there. Assisted by either relatives and friends or Greek people, they had then moved to urban areas where wages and living standards were higher. High mobility was particularly the case for young single men who arrived in Greece in the 1990s, many of whom simply trekked all over the country until they finally settled in one place.

In the early 1990s I worked near the border area, Kozani, Thessaloniki, Halkidiki. Five years ago I moved to Athens. [Lavdërim, 32 M, interviewed on a return visit]

We have changed homes many times. We were first in Veria, then in Alexandria, from there to Stavros and then finally ended up here. [Dorina, 28 F, migrant in Thessaloniki]

Besides the rural-urban migration path in Greece, many migrants had also moved from one urban area to another. The move was not only from small peripheral border towns like Florina or Kozani that offered few employment opportunities, but also between larger cities such as Athens and Thessaloniki. The move from Thessaloniki to Athens had taken place to access better employment opportunities as well as living standards. The reverse move, however, was closely linked to geographical proximity to Albania where some of the residual household members were living. As Thessaloniki is much closer to Albania than is Athens, it is easier to visit these relatives – often older parents – back in the village. For both moves, however, the concentration of kin in one particular area was very important, since this served as a safety net for many things, including child-care.

I came to Thessaloniki six years ago [from Athens]. Thessaloniki is better than Athens for me, it's quieter. And the other factor that interested me most was that I am closer to Albania here. At the time [when living in Athens], it took me seven hours to get home. Now, I can be home in two and a half hours. [Drini, 30 M, migrant in Thessaloniki]

I lived in Athens for a while, but I have been in Thessaloniki most of the time... It is closer to home... and my sister lives here... these were the reasons. I didn't have relatives in Athens... Here [in

Thessaloniki] there are around 70 people [who are] either my own relatives or my brother-in-law's relatives. [Nanti, 34 M, migrant in Thessaloniki]

Coming back to our sequencing but now including return migration in our analysis, we see a number of variations. The first one corresponds to pathway 6. This is international migration followed by return to the village of origin, as illustrated by the case of one young man in particular. The man had returned from Italy where he was working in agriculture, but felt dissatisfied because he had some higher education. He wanted to complete the economics degree that he had abandoned when he emigrated to Greece in the mid-1990s. He thus returned to the village, got married, enrolled part-time in the University of Korçë and found a job in the state administration, thanks to links he had with the local members of the party in power. A few young men were forcibly returned from the UK, France, Canada and Greece, where they had been undocumented. They continued to live in their village waiting for a chance to re-emigrate. Some older parents returned after having lived in the US with their children for one or two years. All other returnees to the villages were from Greece. These were often men in their 40s or older. Through earnings in Greece they had managed to meet some immediate needs of the family as well as make some repairs to the house or invest a little in their small farm. They either missed the opportunity to benefit from the 1998 and 2001 Greek regularisations because they did not meet the criteria or did not want to do this for various reasons. Others who stayed in the villages were those who benefited from employment opportunities provided in the state administration by the new political party that came to power, such as in the police force, local authorities and education. In some cases, ill health of the migrant or a family member influenced the decision to return and stay.

A large number of those who returned, however, moved elsewhere in Albania, especially to urban and peri-urban Tirana, Durrës, Korçë and Vlorë. This corresponds to pathway 7 of the diagram. On the basis of my research findings, this is the most important sequence of migration from this area of Albania. This pattern goes against the 'common wisdom' of the international literature on migration, as discussed in Chapter 2, according to which internal migration leading to international migration is commonly the case. However, in Albania, the erstwhile intention of many rural households and individuals to settle in the city, preferably Tirana, could not possibly be realised without financial backing. Especially in the 1990s, the only way of accessing such financial capital was through emigration abroad, namely, to Greece. For many Albanian rural families, the road to Tirana continues to pass through Omonia Square (see King & Vullnetari 2003: 42). I discuss various aspects of this type of sequencing in more

detail in Chapters 6 and 7, especially in the context of the deployment of remittances in Albania. For now, here is a telling quote.

... we wanted to come here in Tirana. Our father came here and found a plot. We then built the house and moved in 1996. Until then both my brother and I were in Greece... I went to Greece in 1991... to and fro<sup>10</sup> like all the others [Albanian migrants]. I worked in a factory in Thessaloniki. I worked there for four years... Of course, it's all migration money... If I had not worked in Greece where would I find the money to build the house? [Renato, 35 M, migrant in Tirana]

This typology of moves – international first, then internal upon return – has also been identified and evidenced in countries such as Mexico (Lozano-Ascencio et al. 1999: 151), Morocco (De Haas 2007a) and Turkey (Abadan-Unat, Keleş, Penninx, Van Renselaar, Van Velzen & Yenisey 1976).

In addition, literature also provides evidence for another internal move pattern that is influenced by international migration, this time through replacement migration, as discussed in Chapter 2. This has been especially the case in South Asia (Skeldon 2006), but also in Morocco (De Haas 2007a). In my study area, however, there was almost no evidence of such replacement migration, for the following reasons. To start with, this is an area that has traditionally been characterised by high population density, especially retained during communism (Sjöberg 1992a: 63). Emigration in fact dealt with labour surplus and thus did not produce labour shortages in agriculture. Apart from the early 1990s when mass migration resulted in land being left fallow, in more recent years a modest land (primarily rental) market has developed. Although there has been large-scale emigration, these villages are far from abandoned and the work in agriculture can be performed by the residual households. True, there is an ageing of those who work in farming, but this has not yet been replaced by hired labour.

However, in other parts of Southern Albania, researchers have found evidence of such replacement migration whereby poor internal migrants from the north relocate to southern districts to work the land left fallow by international migrants (King et al. 2003; Labrianidis & Kazazi 2006). Some of this internal migration from the north is seasonal rather than permanent (King 2004).

#### 4.3.4 *Other variations*

The sequences outlined above are not the entire picture of Albanian migration, particularly from this area of the country. First, internal and international migration may occur simultaneously within the same family.

Typically, in such cases, different family members have moved to Greece and to a city in Albania simultaneously (see also King et al. 2003). For instance, Ledia, 33, moved to Tirana in 2002 following her youngest sister, who had settled there a couple of years earlier while attending studies for her degree in fine art. They had both been working in the capital until the time of the interview and they had never emigrated abroad. By contrast, their brother emigrated directly from the village to Greece in the 1990s, after completing his secondary education in the village. He has been living in Athens for ten years, working mostly in construction-related jobs. The parents meanwhile stay in the village, where they live on subsistence farming and remittances from their son. The other part of these external remittances has been invested in a new family home in Tirana, where the brother plans to settle upon his return from Greece. It is uncertain when this will take place, but for the time being the sisters live in the house and look after it. Here is an excerpt from the interview with Ledia.

It is simply the fact that Valbona [her youngest sister] was here, and her insistence for us as a family to live in Tirana was why I moved and settled here... I came here when she completed her degree, in 2002... He [brother] is 30 years old. He has been there [in Greece] for ten years. He is waiting for the right moment to return... until he fulfils his objectives... Remittances from his work... were used for daily needs in the first years of migration... but from the moment we decided to build a house here, they have been used entirely for the house... At the moment, my sister and I live there. Gradually, our parents and brother will move here, too.

Second, a similar situation may be extended to another destination such as Italy, France, the UK or the US. This will occur when a sibling (almost always a young man) who had emigrated to Greece, often clandestinely, has moved to one of these countries. As he settles there, he may arrange for the entire family or only its youngest members to join him. Particularly for much emigration to Italy and the UK, Greece has been an important intermediary station (see King et al. 2003).

Third, an international move may be followed by an internal move, which, in turn, may be followed by another international move, either to the same host country or a different one. A prototypical example is that of one of my interviewees, Marenglen, a young man now in his early 30s who emigrated to Greece in the early 1990s and worked there for several years. At a certain point Marenglen married Adelina, now 28, who had never moved, internally or abroad. They decided to continue to live in the village for a while and then moved to Korçë. Adelina and their children lived in Korçë, while Marenglen continued to work in Greece and return home for short spells of time. Thus, while she became an internal migrant,

his trajectory was international-internal-international. Remittances from abroad were supplemented by income from her job in a local garment factory. However, the difficulty of maintaining such a situation of family separation – including matters of jealousy on both sides, combined with a lack of basic living conditions in Albania (e.g. interrupted electricity and water) – compelled the couple to relocate the entire family to Greece after a year. This time, Adelina's trajectory extended from the internal dimension to the international. A return back to Korçë is envisaged, but it is uncertain when this will take place, especially as the children are now enrolled in the Greek education system. If a return were to take place, the trajectory of Adelina and the children would fit with diagram pathway 9, whereas that of her husband would be pathway 7.

Adelina's 25-year-old sister, Blerina, had a similar migration trajectory from the village to Tirana and then to Thessaloniki.

My husband has been in Greece for ten years... I came here for the first time in 2004... we married in 2000... My husband was in the village then [i.e. his home in Albania was in the village]. Later we decided to move to Tirana... my husband had a plot of land. We went and built our house there. After a year we had our daughter... but there was no work there... my husband would come here in Greece to work for some time and would come back to Albania, back and forth. We realised that there was no work in Tirana, no future... So we decided to come here, stay for some time and return. We have our own house there, we have just built it new... We are now letting it... our dream was to build our house and live there. Tirana is a good place to be... But, we couldn't stay there. Simply because there was not enough work. You can't make a living without any income.

This was in fact the case for a number of lower-skilled individuals and families who, after having moved to Tirana or Korçë, found it difficult to make ends meet on the local daily wages and casual jobs, as we saw earlier. After savings from work in Greece – which topped up local earnings – dried up, it was necessary to re-migrate to meet the living costs. Greece was often chosen as the most accessible place since migrants, especially men, continued to hold on to their permits as an asset against insecurity, whereas wives were able to enter on tourist visas. In most cases observed under this category, either only the husband worked seasonally in Greece while the wife and children stayed in the city or the entire family emigrated to Greece. In a few cases, the destination was either Italy or the UK.

Finally, returnees from Greece who have settled in Korçë or Tirana and do not intend to re-emigrate themselves hope to reap the benefits from their family's internal migration 'step' – such as higher-quality education for

their children, which serves as a stepping stone for them to find better opportunities abroad. The following quote illustrates this situation well.

My daughter is in the third year... in the school of Malta [prestigious secondary school in Korçë run and financed by a Maltese organisation, where classes are taught in English]... I will prepare the paperwork for my daughter's education... after her third or fourth year here... [to go to] Malta or America... she can also go to England, but the biggest chances are for America. Around 80 per cent of students from this school have gone abroad to study... the family pays the first year and then the school. God willing... [Mondi, 44 M, migrant in Korçë]<sup>11</sup>

#### 4.4 Conclusion

In this first findings chapter I presented the various typologies of internal and international migration as they take place in my study villages. The typologies display similarities with countrywide trends, such as the predominance of emigration to Greece or internal migration to Tirana, as well as local migration directed towards the region's principal town, Korçë. However, other trends are specific to the area, such as emigration to the US, Australia and France. This countrywide versus locally specific categorisation can also be applied to factors affecting migration. Thus, the first category includes the role of kinship networks, the embassy events of 1990 and the crisis year of 1997. The second category includes factors related to the area's geographical proximity with Greece and the resultant lower cost of migration, as well as historical ties to North America and Australia.

Analysing differences between the two types of migration revealed a number of points that are valuable not only for theoretical purposes, but also from a developmental perspective. First, international migration to Greece was accessible to a large number of poor households, while internal migration was an option taken by the more affluent segments of the society in these villages. However, emigration to regions where wages and thus returns to migration are higher (for instance, the UK and North America), is more expensive. In this case, it is again the more affluent sections of the society who can afford such migrations. Still, poorer (although not the poorest) households were able to get access after having accumulated capital from work in Greece. Others accessed such destinations by travelling first via international migration, again most often Greece.

Second, international migrants (especially to Greece) had lower levels of education than internal migrants. This signifies an internal brain drain followed by a weakening of ties with the areas of origin. Yet, considering these 'brains' were trained in the cities where they settled anyway, the

debate about their cost takes a different dimension from concerns in an international migration setting. In our case, although the money spent for their training is retained within the country, ill-informed development policies cause brain waste and misguided distribution of wealth. Third, geographical and socio-cultural distances were important factors in international migration, especially for distant destinations, though such a distance was not negligible in internal moves either. Fourth, the permanency of migration was generally related to the motivation to emigrate in the first place. For instance, migrants moving to Tirana or North America were looking to settle there, as these places offered better opportunities in all major aspects of life. On the other hand, emigration to Greece, and less so to Italy, was envisaged as a means to accumulate capital, often with the purpose of reaching the end goal of a settlement in urban Albania. However, these were neither clear-cut nor static patterns, as other factors intervened and decisions to stay or return changed over time.

Differences were also clear in gendered patterns of migration, in that labour emigration to Greece for capital accumulation was dominated by men to start with. Women joined later, and children were either born there or brought from Albania (see also King & Vullnetari 2009). Although the aim continued to be capital accumulation, in real terms migration had all the signs of a semi-permanent settlement. Where the migratory objective was permanent settlement from the start, family migration was more often the case, including a large number of women. When professional advancement and personal freedom were the main objectives, migration especially affected the highly educated and, in particular, women. This was the case in migration to Tirana or North America.

The major – and most apparent – difference, however, is the issue of legality that accompanies international migration. A border between two countries divides two geopolitical territories. On the one side is Albania, a poor country with a developing economy and poor governance, with a high share of young people in its labour force desperate to emigrate. On the other side is Greece, a relatively developed country and an EU member – showing a significant need for cheap, irregular labour and home to an ageing population – a country that nevertheless continues to actively obstruct entry of Albanian migrants to its territory. These and other factors linked to the historically antagonistic Greek-Albanian relationship often result in discrimination, abuse and exploitation of migrants by employers, the state authorities and some sections of the public, thereby affecting migrants' access to rights and denying them a humane and dignified life. A very different experience is related to internal migration, where exclusion results from administrative processes, an infant democracy and corruptive practices of public services and state administration, rather than from specific legislation.

However, the most important conclusion that results from my findings as presented in this chapter is that internal and international migration are closely linked together. First, most differences are not clear-cut – many overlapping areas occur. For instance, the 1997 crisis triggered moves internally and also abroad. Those migrating to North America and Tirana were motivated by better life chances for themselves and their families and personal and professional advancement, not just by poverty and insecurity. Furthermore, networks of family and friends were crucial factors in both migration types.

Above all, the interlinkages are significant in the ways both migration types are used by migrant families as well as their combined developmental effects. While most migrants' moves to urban areas were fuelled by remittances and savings earned through work abroad, this was not a simple emigration-return process. Sustaining a decent livelihood in the city exclusively through local employment, particularly for lower-skilled labourers, often proved impossible. This spurred another emigration abroad by either the male head of the household or the entire family. On the other hand, those who emigrated abroad following an internal move to the city were aiming for more permanency after having experienced the best that Albania could provide. Notably, these were highly skilled persons and sometimes single females, and destinations were often countries other than Greece.

But families also spread risk across localities and borders by employing a strategy of multiple income-generating activities. These included simultaneous internal and international migration of its members, sometimes to more than one destination for each type. This scattering or 'diasporisation' (Mai 2005; Van Hear 1998) was strongly influenced by the key role that networks of friends and kin played for both internal and international migrants, often serving as strong decisive factors in migration decision-making.

The sequencing I analysed in this chapter, as well as the accompanying motivations and outcomes, highlight the agency of migrants and their families to improve their lives. These complex and linked migration pathways and trajectories, however, could be even more productive when macro-level support structures are in place to sustain the positive outcomes and reduce the negative consequences. The discussion in this chapter has also highlighted that analysing these complex situations within intra-national and transnational social fields is paramount for a better understanding migrants' lives, decisions and experiences, as well as the various structural supporting and constraining factors that affect their decision-making. This framework will be adopted continuously in the subsequent chapters, as I first discuss migrants' lives in Thessaloniki and then come back to Albania again to analyse the developmental effects of both migration types in more detail.





## 5 Across the border: Migrants in Thessaloniki

After having discussed the various migration types and strategies from the villages of origin in Albania, I now ‘move’ across the border to examine in more detail migrants’ life trajectories in the Greek city of Thessaloniki. I start by discussing some of their experiences as they left their villages in Albania and arrived in Greece. The discussion that follows focuses on some of the strategies my respondents used to integrate into the socio-economic life in the city, including negotiations of gender, ethnicity and religion. Furthermore, issues of immigration regulations are analysed, running as they do like a thread throughout the account in this chapter, since they affect almost every aspect of migrants’ lives. Then, the migrants’ position in the labour market is explored, followed by a discussion of their housing situation and spatial diffusion. Finally, I explore migrants’ feelings about their integration into Greece and their future plans.

### 5.1 Leaving Albania and arriving in Thessaloniki

Since I dealt with many facets of migration from my study villages to Greece in the previous chapter, I will focus here only on a few additional notes of importance. Most of my male interviewees had travelled over the mountains – that ‘was our entry visa’, as one of them put it. Some women had taken that route as well, but many others had arrived on visas and through family reunification.

My husband has been in Greece for more than ten years. He first lived in Athens, then in Larissa, then he went to an island. After we married we came to Thessaloniki together... He had his papers, whereas me and Krista [their daughter] got visas... I paid € 1,500 for my [entry] visa. [Blerina, 25 F]<sup>1</sup>

Most of the early migrants had lived in various places in Greece, especially rural areas, before settling in Thessaloniki, as the above excerpt shows. By contrast, some of the migrants who moved later arrived directly in the city. The factor that made the difference was the strength of kinship networks that had been accumulated over the years. These networks were important

for all my interviewees in facilitating travel, accommodation and work upon arrival, assistance with paperwork and familiarisation with the surrounding environment (see also Carletto et al. 2005; specifically for migrants in Thessaloniki, see Hatziprokopiou 2006; Labrianidis et al. 2004). However, it is also important to note that there are limits to these networks, which not always deliver what is expected of them (see Collyer 2005). Many interviewees told me of relatives and friends in Greece who were either not interested or not in a position to help them.

But in these early years of migration, Albanians were also helped and supported by local Greek people. As other studies for Greece (Hatziprokopiou 2006) as well as Italy (King & Mai 2008) have shown, accounts of hospitality from local people were found among my interviewees, too. The following excerpt exemplifies a combination of ethnic and kinship ties with support from local Greek acquaintances, as part of a support network.

In 1997, I went again for two months in Veria. I walked there. There, some Greeks told me: 'Don't stay in the village anymore, go to the city, because the income is very low here.' I had a relative there [in Thessaloniki] who I spoke to on the phone and asked if he could find me a job where he was. Finally, he said I could go there. I told this to a Greek guy, a colleague of mine. He asked if I had been paid for the work I had done already. I told him I hadn't. 'Well, you get the money first,' he told me, 'and then I will take you to Thessaloniki by car.' I was worried that he [his employer] wouldn't give me the money... My Greek colleague advised me to tell my employer that I needed the money because my friend in Thessaloniki was going to Albania and I needed to send the money to my family there... [After some negotiations and with the help of the Greek friend] my employer gave me my wages... Then my Greek friend... advised me to take a shower and asked his wife to iron my clothes, so that when we travelled we wouldn't be looked at with suspicion. This way the police would not catch us... We then got in the car, him and his wife in front. He told me that if the police stopped us on the way, I would tell them that my stomach was aching and the Greek couple found me by the side of the road, and picked me up to take me to the hospital. In this way, we didn't know one another. There was no problem on the way. He took me to my relative. I asked him to come inside and have a coffee, but he had to return home. We exchanged greetings and goodbyes, wishing each other all the best. I spent the night at my cousin's and the next day we went to a plumber. [Blerim, 53 M]

While such examples of help from Greeks did take place, Albanian migrants were overwhelmingly subject to very serious forms of both open and subtle discrimination, exercised by authorities, the media and many sections of Greek society. I discussed some of these issues, as well as the roots of what amounts to Albanophobia, in Chapter 3. The interviews I carried out with migrants and their families provided numerous accounts in a similar direction, which confirmed discrimination, violence, abuse and exploitation. However, my interviewees also confirmed a temporal difference reflected in the improvement of the socio-economic position of migrants in Greece over the years (see also Hatziprokopiou 2006). Migrants' agency, as a crucial element of success in this betterment, is at the centre of my analysis as it unfolds in the following sections.

## 5.2 Identity and survival, or strategies to 'fit in'

In Thessaloniki, as elsewhere in Greece, migrants employed a number of tactics as part of their survival and integration strategies, often in the face of brutal discrimination and hostility in the host-country discourse and practice. To name but a few, these tactics included creating and sustaining a supporting network of Greek local people, name change, religious conversion and learning the language (see also Hatziprokopiou 2006; Labrianidis et al. 2004; Pratsinakis 2005). I look at each of these in turn.

Alongside migrants' kinship networks were also those extending to the Greek locals whom migrants were in contact with – employers, work colleagues, neighbours, godparents and their children's teachers. Often, however, many dynamics were structured around unequal power relations. This was reflected in the very word Albanian migrants and their families usually used for a Greek employer – '*pronari*', literally meaning 'owner' (see also Kokkali 2008: 358). Especially important in this context were relations with godparents, often women, who were usually in contact with Albanian women, helping these migrants' families with food and clothing in some cases, finding jobs or accommodation in others. Where there was a godparent, there had often also been a baptism, usually of a child or young person. This second tactic was practised quite early on in Greece, often in combination with a name change. As one of my interviewees put it '... it was the necessity that made us do that, otherwise we would not succeed'. However, the opposite reaction was also evident, in that some migrants refused to change their names even when they had to endure humiliation from their employers. Dorina, 28, said:

We [her and her husband] will not be coerced to become Christians... we have not changed our names either. They [Greek employers] look at us differently as soon as we say our names...

There was an Albanian woman where I used to work before and... our *pronar* used to make fun of her name... Her name was Dafina, and he pretended he couldn't pronounce it right so he would call her 'Dafnuku'. He would say: 'Dafnuku, *kalimera* [*καλημέρα*, Greek for 'good morning' or 'good day']. What can you do?

In some cases, migrants would use name changes and religious conversion as material for making fun of each other, especially when the tactics reflected transgressed gender-assigned understandings of masculinity and femininity.<sup>2</sup> During one of my group discussions with young men in Thessaloniki, loud laughter erupted as one of them told me and his friends sitting around the table about a common acquaintance of theirs. The storyteller was ridiculing what he considered as submissive behaviour of this particular man towards his employer, an elderly Greek woman in rural Veria, who was also his godmother. This was considered funny. First, because the man had been baptised at the mature age of 45 – the baptising of children is more acceptable – and second, because the 'servile' behaviour towards his godmother undermined his masculinity.

My interview material revealed various ways in which masculinity had been challenged for migrant men in Greece (see also Papailias 2003). First, household chores had to be carried out by men in the absence of their female relatives, especially in the 1990s. As the latter joined them, some gender spreading of tasks took place, as discussed in more detail in the next chapter. Second, some of the jobs migrants did were considered as 'female' jobs, which only – or especially – women did in Albania. For instance, one young man, describing his experience in Greece, mentioned that he had also worked in fields 'picking tobacco, just like women'. This was indeed a task done almost entirely by women in Albania's agricultural cooperatives under communism, whereby the work process required patience for detail though was nonetheless also heavy labour.<sup>3</sup>

Masculinity was further challenged by migrant men's internalisation of their 'unsuitability' as attractive partners for intimate relationships in the Greek context. First, if approaching Greek women, their ethnicity would mark any advances as a sign of their 'barbarity'. Seen only as useful instruments for the labour they provide to the host society (Kasimis & Papadopoulos 2005: 119-122), migrants are stripped of their socio-cultural identity, including their sexuality. Any expression thereof is considered to be breaking the unilateral rules by which they are accepted into the host society. Second, on the part of the migrant men themselves, the internalisation was reflected in the way they described their 'unworthiness' of women's attention. Had not the impact of hard labour in construction or agriculture under the scorching sun made them thin, with shrivelled skin and unattractive faces and bodies? This came up during various conversations, but particularly during the same group discussion in Thessaloniki

mentioned above. As I was sitting with this group of young men around the table sipping our *frappés* (iced coffee commonly served in Greece), young women were passing by. The men would talk to one another about the qualities of one woman or another – often quite typical conversations among Albanian men in such settings, although my presence was a deterrent to some extent. At one point, one of the young men in his early 20s expressed his dissatisfaction at not having attracted the desired attention: ‘It’s easy to spot the Albanians, immediately. Our appearance has shrivelled from too much hard work, my poor man. They [the Greeks] are taking our soul.’<sup>4</sup>

In such cases, learning the language becomes paramount not only to improve this sense of masculinity, but also to blend in the society more generally, as the following interviewee recalls.

I set myself to learn the language since when I was very young [when he first arrived in Greece he was around sixteen years old] so that I would not feel that I was a foreigner when I went out for a coffee [with girls]. Because of course we were young and ambitious, although we were migrants [using the word *kurbetllinj* derived from *kurbet*], we liked beautiful girls and so we needed to learn the language. In order not to be spotted as different from the rest [the Greeks], we learnt the language so that we had another plus point. If we couldn’t offer them riches, at least we should be able to communicate our feelings to them. [Drini, 30 M]

Albanians seem to have an aptitude for learning languages fast, which has been beneficial for their upward social mobility in their host countries. Such a finding has been confirmed by various studies in Greece and Italy (for Thessaloniki, see Hatziprokopiou 2006; Labrianidis et al. 2004; Pratsinakis 2005; for Italy, see King & Mai 2004, 2008).

Some of the more adventurous single men found other ways to feel sexually and emotionally accepted: spending the summers working on Greek islands. There, they would meet foreign women from other Western European countries such as France, the UK and Norway who were on holiday. These women proved more open to relationships with the men, lacking the ‘Albanophobia’ that the Greeks were hindered by. However, it is important to emphasise here that, for their part, many Albanian men also display strongly ethnicised attitudes towards women. While they consider their sexual relationships – including extramarital ones – a ‘right’ for men to exercise, this became a ‘shame’ once Albanian women entered into a similar relationship outside the traditionally prescribed parameters. Thus, while such Albanian women would be considered to have ‘loose’ morals if their relations with a man did not end in marriage, foreign women in the same position were considered as adventurous. Moreover, a relationship of

**Photo 6** *View of the seafront in Thessaloniki*



the latter type could prove beneficial if it ended in marriage, with legal EU travel and residence permits being the ultimate trophy. At risk of oversimplification, there is a mixture of elements at work here. The need and desire to feel and act equipped with a complete and unfragmented identity is combined with the need to ensure one's survival and break away from the debilitating vicious circle of legality/illegality imposed by Greek immigration rules.

### **5.3 The nightmare of 'papers': The effect of ineffective immigration policy**

Documents were a constant worry for migrants in Thessaloniki, whether men or women, married or single, young or old, skilled or less skilled. Çimi, a young man in the discussion group mentioned earlier, captured this by saying the following about the Greeks: 'As much as they are taking our soul through work, they are taking our money too. It [the situation with the papers] is giving us heart attacks.'<sup>5</sup> Çimi had paid around € 8,000 in lawyer's fees and his paperwork was still pending at the time of the interview (for the legal cost of such a procedure, see also Kasimis & Papadopoulos

2005: 105). His brother, who had been living in Thessaloniki for over ten years, had a more or less regularised status. Yet, the money he and other migrants paid each time to renew their permit could be considered institutionalised robbery, since the Greek authorities did not provide the rights-associated services for which they so highly charged.<sup>6</sup> One was the right to move outside of Greece.

I pay € 300 every two years [per person]. And they [the authorities] are obliged to give me the stamp, the permission which is called *agia paramonia* [ἀδεία παραμονής, Greek for 'residence permit']... why are we paying that money which gives us the right to move between the two countries, when in fact they keep us here and won't allow us to move?... They either don't work or they get them [papers] ready whenever they feel like it, or they prepare others' papers even though it's not their turn... To be able to get this stamp you need to pay a lawyer... no matter how many times you go there yourself, they will always find one excuse or another to send you away. Pay a lawyer and your stamp is ready within ten days... You need to pay a lawyer here in order to access your rights... [Namik, 30 M]

In recent years, bilateral agreements between Greece and Albania have provided that migrants can visit their families in Albania four times a year, including those in a quasi-regular situation. Some of my interviewees likened this state of affairs to a prison, where one is allowed to go visit their families only with permission from the guards. This regulation totally ignored emergency cases when a migrant would not be able to travel to Albania outside these periods; for instance, if a family member fell ill or even died. Furthermore, because of the peak numbers that accumulate during these times as well as the inadequate provisions in human and technical resources, the queues at the two major border-crossing points between Greece and Albania – Kakavijë and Kapshticë – become kilometres long. Migrants have to wait for hours, even sometimes one or two days, with their young children in the car or bus, in order to cross from one side to the other. While the Iron Curtain has disappeared, the walls of Fortress Europe stand strong.

Just as Çimi told me of his 'heart attacks', many other migrants in Thessaloniki or family members back home in Albania spoke of a 'heavy burden of stress', 'fatigue', constantly feeling physically ill from perpetual fear and insecurity because of 'the papers'. Some had even had clinical depression and more severe cases of mental disorders. The suicide of a young man from one of the villages, only in his 20s, was also attributed by his family to extreme stress created by this perpetual anxiety and fatigue over papers. For some, the only solution was return, while others felt



coerced by the situation in Albania to stay in Greece for the sake of their children's future. For those who stayed, the rules were a constant obstacle to their successful incorporation into Thessaloniki and Greek society, more generally (Labrianidis et al. 2004: 1192).

Immigration regulations affected the separation of families across borders in other ways, too. First, the financial requirements in terms of a migrant's income for family reunification are very high, which has meant that this legal entry channel could be accessed only by the most successful migrants.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, even when migrants earned the required sums, it was difficult for them to prove these on paper, since many worked informally or were paid in cash. Second, migrants' parents found it extremely hard to obtain visas to go visit their children, let alone help with child-care and other things. One of my interviewees in the village, 52, wanted to take part in her granddaughter's baptism ceremony in Thessaloniki. She applied twice for a visitor's visa and was refused without being given a reason. Her sons and daughter, all of whom have lived in Thessaloniki for nearly ten years, joked that her name sounded too Muslim; she should change it if she wanted to be considered more sympathetically by the Greek consular staff in Korçë.

Grandparents usually do not want to live permanently in Greece. They merely want to be able to participate in the important life-cycle events of their family members there, visit every now and then to see their children and provide help with child-care when and as needed. However, such ideal transnational trajectories are disrupted by immigration regulations, especially by applying a very narrow concept of family for purposes of reunification. In the 2001 and 2005 Greek immigration laws, for instance, parents are not considered part of a family for reunification purposes (Kanellopoulos & Gregou 2006: 15). I have written more on the themes of elderly care, elderly migration and transnational grandparenting in a pair of joint-authored papers (see King & Vullnetari 2006; Vullnetari & King 2008).

Third, for children who were born in Greece or arrived there at very young ages, this country is the only home they have known. Yet, as they are only given the same permits as their parents – in fact, as part of their parents' documentation – they are made to feel neither Greek nor Albanian. Sometimes they are even excluded from social services such as public nurseries, since these require proof of valid residence permits and insurance payments of at least one parent. Even when parents can show them, it does not guarantee that the institute will not apply its (unlawful) discretion (Vaiou & Stratigaki 2008: 124-125).

I leave my daughter on her own in the house when I go to work. Sometimes she stays with the children of my sister, sometimes alone. She is a quiet child, doesn't make trouble... She is five years

old now, she understands many things... But, I am not away for long, just two or three hours... I don't take her to the nursery because they didn't want to take her in. 'We don't have places,' they told me. You know how it is here... [Blerina, 25 F]

Thus, in terms of documentation, the most privileged were Albanians who could lay claim to Greek origins in some form or other. This was a minority in my study group, but searches were ongoing by villagers in Albania to find any official document that would confirm any type of Greek belonging. Although this did not result in a Greek identity per se, the difference this status made in practical terms to migrants' lives was significant. The ethnically biased tier system of immigration legislation (Triandafyllidou & Veikou 2002) has created two classes of Albanian citizens in Greece, which, in turn, impacts on social and economic structures in Albania. There are the privileged, i.e. those possessing the *homogeneis* status, and the downtrodden, i.e. the rest who are treated disfavouredly in any sense, particularly suffering family separation (see also Chapters 3 and 4). A couple quotes from migrants in the *homogeneis* group show this.

We have three-year papers, as *vorioepirotas* [those originating from 'North Epirus', the Greek name for Southern Albania]. It is a great help to us. We don't have to deal with the social security stamps. Every three years I hand in the documentation, pay € 50 per person and that's it. Whereas they [Albanians], if they don't have the right number of social security stamps they have to pay something like € 1,000. And then wait and see if they have the right to travel to Albania or not. Whereas, I can go to Albania whenever I want. [Thimi, 29 M]

I do not feel like a migrant. Emigration to me means to go far away and not see my family for a long time... In our case, my relatives have always been able to visit us: my mother and father, as well as my in-laws, and also we have been able to go and visit them [in Albania]. [Sofika, 30 F]

Under these circumstances it comes as no surprise that Greek ethnicity has been 'instrumentalised' by many ethnic Albanians as another tactic of survival and integration strategy (De Rapper 2005; Kretsi 2005). Immigration regulations are also strong factors that shape migrants' position in the labour market, the subject of the following section.

## 5.4 Work and gendered labour markets

Of the 37 men and women I interviewed in Thessaloniki during in-depth interviews and group discussions, twelve had completed eight years of education, sixteen (mostly in their 30s and 40s) had completed secondary education, six had completed between eight and twelve years of schooling and three men had either completed or were attending tertiary education. The two extreme ends of the skills continuum were a man in his 50s holding a university degree from Albania who worked as a day labourer loading and unloading lorries near the port and a man in his late 20s with a degree from a Greek higher technical institute who worked as a highly skilled electrical engineer.

Generally, there was a positive progression in jobs for most from the time of arrival in Greece until the time of the interview. Most had started off working in agriculture and various other manual and physically demanding jobs in the 1990s. However, over the years, migrants had improved their work situation and most had gained skills by working in various sectors and occupations, as Table 5.1 shows (see also Hatziprokopiou 2006). Some of these jobs continued to be physically demanding, especially construction work, but at least they offered better pay (see Photo 7).

**Photo 7** *Albanian migrants working in construction, Thessaloniki*



I'll tell you the jobs I have done. I have worked as a driver for two years in two or three different places, as a welder, as a porter, interior painter for buildings, waiter, as a delivery boy. I have done many jobs. [Thimi, 29 M]

A few migrant men had started to work freelance parallel to continuing dependent work for their employer – the first steps towards starting their own businesses. However, immigration rules came into play again here, too. Since most residence permits are linked to employment, for TCNs to be able to obtain a residence permit under the category of business owner, they need to show they have € 60,000 deposited in a bank account in Greece as well as the intention and financial means to invest a minimum of € 300,000 in this business. This visa is valid for one year and annually renewable (Kanellopoulos & Gregou 2006: 15). Consequently, much of this freelance work will continue to be in the informal sector, as has been the case mostly so far, while migrants hold on to their principal employment elsewhere.

Table 5.1 shows the various occupations as well as daily wages for my interviewees, based on self-reporting. As can be seen, there is a larger vari-

**Table 5.1** *Daily/monthly wages by gender and occupation for interviewees in Thessaloniki, June 2006*

Sector	Occupation	Men	Women
Construction	Unskilled assistant making concrete	€ 30-€ 35	
	Skilled (masons, interior painters, etc.)	€ 45-€ 50	
	Skilled (as above) self-employed	€ 1,000/month	
		€ 5,000*	
	Electrician (mid-level)	€ 50	
Services	Electrical engineer with Greek degree	€ 1,500/month	
	Welder	€ 40	
	Locksmith (self-employed)	€ 45-€ 70	
	Mechanic (for industrial machinery)	€ 1,500/month	
	Petrol station attendant	€ 35-€ 45	
	Port worker	€ 40	
Agriculture**		€ 15-€ 25	
Manufacturing	Electrical appliances	€ 30-€ 35	
	Furniture	€ 35-€ 40	€ 23
	Garments		€ 40
Catering	Cook	€ 1,300/month	
	Assistant in restaurant (taverna)		€ 30
	Fast-food restaurant assistant		€ 35
Domestic	Cleaner in houses, apartment stairs, offices; elderly day-carer		€ 30-€ 40

\*The sum of € 5,000 is to refurbish an entire house and thus does not reflect a regular income. Other higher sums include overtime.

\*\*This respondent arrived in Thessaloniki just two weeks prior to the interview from rural Veria, where he continued to be registered for his social security payments.

ety of occupations – a number of which are for skilled work – for men than for women.

In their survey carried out in Thessaloniki in 2000, Labrianidis et al. (2004: 1194) found that the majority of female respondents was either a homemaker (28 per cent) or worked as a daily paid house cleaner (27 per cent). The rest worked cleaning offices (9 per cent) and in small garment factories (17 per cent). The 2001 census data summarised in Chapter 1 presents a slightly different picture, with higher shares of employment in manufacturing (25 per cent). Although I cannot provide statistical inferences from my small sample of interviewees, my data do suggest that not much progress has been made in five years, at least regarding other and better-paid sectors. Hatziprokopiou (2006), on the other hand, found evidence that some women had managed to secure highly skilled and better-paid jobs. Perhaps the difference in the two results is related to the sample, mine being entirely of a rural background and overwhelmingly less skilled. Other studies in Greece also reveal contradictory results of no significant improvement of women's status in the labour market (Charalampopoulou 2004) and, in other cases, positive upward mobility (Vaiou & Stratigaki 2008).

At times, however, women's work in cleaning was more stable (and therefore less upwardly mobile) than the casual jobs men had in construction. Nonetheless, in most cases they lacked social insurance.

If one works in houses [cleaning], the job is not recognised [i.e. it is not insured]. It's only for here and now... I don't agree with this. When I was working in this garment factory, my employer would tell me that I was insured and she paid IKA [main social security fund] stamps for me. How was I insured? The entire time I worked there I didn't receive any paperwork. She asked me to bring her some documents and so on, but I never saw any *ensima* [social security stamps] card, like my husband has. [Sofika, 30 F]

Even though they may have had a regular immigration status, migrants were not always working in the formal labour market, i.e. insured. The following account is from Agron, in his 50s, who lives with his wife and teenage daughter in Thessaloniki. He works in construction as a skilled mason, although not always with *ensima*.

Our *pronar* tells us to hide if an IKA inspection is to take place. Or, he tells the inspectors that it is our first day at work and it's our trial period [usually this can be without *ensima* and can last up to three days]. If we speak up, we can lose our job. There are many others waiting to be employed, he only needs to come here in the square [near the railway station] to find them.

I heard a similar account also from a woman in her early 30s who worked in a small furniture-making workshop. She added that she and her fellow colleagues had to accept the exploitative conditions because it would be difficult to find another job should they lose the current one. Many others mentioned how their employer would bribe the IKA inspectors to avoid fines for not paying the *ensima* for their employees.

It appeared that those, in particular, who had been given an opportunity to gain skills while on the job had been in close contact with a Greek employer who had himself once been a migrant, often in Germany. My interviewees pointed out that these Greeks were more open-minded and less discriminatory against them than those who had never had emigration experiences (for corroboration, see Hatziprokopiou 2003: 1050).

Previous studies in Thessaloniki have also found a social upward mobility pattern among Albanian migrants there, as in my case (Hatziprokopiou 2006; Labrianidis et al. 2004: 1093-1094). Some broader statistical data also throw light in this direction. Based on data of valid residence permits and the 2005 LFS, in that year in Greece there were almost 100,000 skilled Albanian workers employed, of whom only around 7,000 were women (Kanellopoulos & Cholezas 2006: 24, Table 12). The majority of them, however, were in the category of crafts and related trade work. In 2001 the figures were around 60,000, of whom around 3,000 were women (Kanellopoulos & Cholezas 2006: 22, Table 8).<sup>8</sup> Parents I interviewed in Albania, too, had stories to tell of skills their children had gained abroad.

However, this was not always the case. One of my interviewees, Florian, told me how the construction company he worked for employed around 80 workers at the time, almost all of whom were Albanian men, many from my study villages. Some of them had been with the company for eight to ten years, yet they had not been able to move beyond the level of preparing concrete. Some of the men and women I met also continued to work in more than one job or have casual employment, thus struggling to make ends meet.

## 5.5 Housing and spatial location

Work, earnings and immigration status all combined to affect the housing and living conditions of migrants in the city. Although much progress had been made over the years, I visited one or two families with young children who continued to live in unhealthy conditions in very damp basement apartments. The migrants living there had poorly paid casual jobs and had arrived in Thessaloniki only two or three years prior to our interview, often onward-migrating from rural areas or peripheral towns in Greece. The immigration status had yet again been a serious impediment in their migration trajectory, as they had moved from one place to another

to avoid arrests and deportation. This entailed job loss, moving costs, a disruption in the entire lifeline and, ultimately, the weakening of ties with the established family and local networks.

By contrast, the migrants enjoying the best living conditions from the sample were those who had been living in Thessaloniki the longest, had worked in the formal labour market the longest (thus having a more or less constant regularised immigration status) and had been with the same employer for a long time (similar findings are presented by Hatziprokopiou 2006). Their apartments were quite spacious, often with separate bedrooms for the young children and on building levels above the ground floor. The interiors were furnished with stylish furniture, sometimes newly purchased, had complete kitchen appliances such as a refrigerator, an electric cooker and a washing machine, and sometimes they had computers for the children's use. If the family owned a car, it was used for men to get to work every day – and also for them to do the shopping. On weekends a car allowed the family to visit relatives and friends in the city, while in the summer, it brought them to the seaside. Women continued to travel by public transport – usually buses – to get to and from work or for other needs. However, all migrants had stories to tell of the early years of their life in Greece, when they were living rough in the open in the fields or in damp, squalid basements when they first arrived in the city. There was thus an improved housing situation, although this was not universal.

Besides the immigration status and the extended duration of stay in one job, accommodation conditions were closely related to the marital status of the migrant. The comfortable living conditions I just described were the case primarily for migrant families comprising husband, wife and their young children. Single men continued to live together – often up to four friends or relatives. Some single men or married men whose wife and children were still in Albania lived with their relatives' families – brothers' or sisters' families, for instance – if they had any in the city. I did not meet any single women who lived in Greece without their families, although I learnt of a few single women in their late 40s who worked as live-in carers for elderly Greek women. All other women I met were either married and thus living with their families or, if single, with their brothers or other families of close relatives.

The 'myth of return' continued to live among migrant families – some had even bought or built houses in Albania in readiness. However, the mentality that life should be enjoyed also prevailed and thus earnings were invested in improving living conditions in Greece, especially their children's. Since the entire family was in Greece, and considering the migrants' earnings and their expenses in the context just discussed, remittances to parents back home had been reduced to small amounts. These were considered as 'presents' or 'just for a coffee', simply to top up pensions or to be used in emergency situations. In the case of single men, on

the other hand, remittances were higher, but they were primarily saved in preparation for a future wedding. Once the wedding took place, remittances were sent to support the wife and child. More earnings would then be saved to enable them to join the migrant man in Thessaloniki, at which point he would be moving out of his communal apartment in a poor inner-city area to a more comfortable home in one of the surrounding districts.

However, unlike accounts of the 1990s (Iosifides & King 1998: 216), or for other migrant groups such as Bulgarians (Kokkali 2008), there was no particular clustering of my respondents or others from my study villages in Thessaloniki.<sup>9</sup> They lived spread out in various parts of the city, usually occupying older housing stock without elevators. There was a slight concentration in some neighbourhoods according to villages of origin, often related to large kinship networks. The migrant families lived in the mini-municipality of Eleftherio-Kordelio, Evosmos, Stavroupoli, Polichni, Neapoli, Sykies and Triandria (see Chapter 1 and Figure 1.4). Within the mini-municipality of Thessaloniki, a few families lived in the neighbourhood called Delfon (from the same-named street), which is closer to the city centre. Finally, a small concentration could be found in the neighbourhood of Harilaou to the east of the city and in Ipokratio in the area near the big hospital with the same name. All are cheaper and unprosperous areas (Hatziprokopiou 2006), but the apartments I visited were quite spacious, even if usually lacking elevators. The rents ranged between € 200 to € 300 per month, excluding utilities, service charges and local taxes. A few families lived near (Demokratias) Vardaris square and the train station within the mini-municipality of Thessaloniki, both of which are identified as poor neighbourhoods (Hatziprokopiou 2006). The area near the train station often provided the first step into the city for those moving from the neighbouring villages such as Kalohori. A few families and single men lived in this village, too.

Most young single men, on the other hand, lived in communal accommodation in the inner city-centre in the neighbourhood of Kamara, somewhere around the streets of Kassandrou and Agio Dimitriou – again both identified as poor areas. For a room in a building basement, they were paying around € 160 per month, the cost of which they split. In these types of run-down basement apartments, one or two families also lived. According to a study that analysed 2001 census data, the living conditions of some Albanian single men, in particular, were very poor, with no electricity, heating or water. This included migrants in Thessaloniki (Baldwin-Edwards & Kolios 2008: 18-21).

My findings largely correspond to those from previous studies based on primary data in Thessaloniki (Hatziprokopiou 2003: 1195; Labrianidis et al. 2004), as well as more recent analysis of the 2001 census data (Kokkali 2008). Kokkali (2008) examined the diffusion patterns of Albanian and Bulgarian migrant populations, among other things. She found that



Bulgarians were more spatially concentrated within the Greater Thessaloniki conurbation. Albanians were spread around the city, with a slight concentration in the port area, although not along the seafront where rents are very high. Kokkali argued that this spatial dispersion was a part of Albanian migrants' strategy to become invisible in Greek society, alongside the other tactics I have already discussed earlier.

This spatial diffusion was made more possible by an equal distribution of workplaces around the city as well as outside it, e.g. in the industrial area of Sindos to the west or in affluent homes in the village of Panorama to the east. If jobs were casual or not particularly place-bound, such as in construction, for instance, or domestic cleaning (especially when women's employers were scattered around the city), it was not possible to find housing on the basis of its proximity to work. Often a location was important if it provided a spacious home for the family at affordable prices and a good school for the children nearby, although getting to and from work was rather inconvenient and meant 'changing two or three buses', as one interviewee put it. For instance:

I live here in Polichni and if I were to mention to my children that we would move to another part of Thessaloniki, they wouldn't agree. Why? They are now used to their environment, their friends and teachers... If my landlady gives me problems in the future about the rent, etcetera, I will search for another house here in the neighbourhood because my children won't want to change schools.  
[Mira, 36 F]

In contrast to this spatial diffusion and 'invisibility', I found two main centres of Albanian concentration and visibility<sup>10</sup> in the city: areas near the train station and near Vardaris. The first location is important because a number of coach companies travelling between Greece and Albania along with their coach stations are situated here. In addition, an informal market of private passenger cars is also present. The drivers are usually Albanians who are in possession of *homogeneis* documents allowing them to travel freely between the two countries. They use their personal vehicle – almost always an old Mercedes Benz – to transport migrants and their families back and forth between Thessaloniki and the border or the Korçë region for around € 30 per person each way. They themselves may live between the two places, while their wife and children may be settled in Greece. Besides serving as the main travel hub to Albania, the area also contains a small informal labour market where migrant men wait to be picked up for daywork, serving as a mini Omonia Square, so to speak. This concentration has attracted a number of businesses such as a major branch of the (Greek) Piraeus Bank (linked to its Tirana Bank branch in Albania and offering services in Albanian), as well as a few small cafés and fast-food restaurants

catering to the migrants. I carried out a group discussion with migrant men from one of the villages in such a café on a Sunday morning, as this was when they usually gathered to socialise there. Throughout the day, the square and its surroundings were dominated by men. Only in the evening do Albanian grandparents, including women, come to the square to let their grandchildren play for a few hours (see also Kokkali 2008: 419-426).

A second visibility point is related to the location of the Albanian consulate in Thessaloniki. Around the building a number of small businesses have developed, mainly Greek-Albanian translation services, which also assist in filling in all kinds of forms<sup>11</sup> needed for regularisation, residence permit renewals, social security applications, as well as a few cafés and fast-food restaurants. This was also where the only library with Albanian books in Thessaloniki could be found. However, with the Albanian consulate having moved to another location in the city centre in 2007, it is unclear whether the businesses will stay where they are or move closer to the consulate.

## **5.6 Incorporation, assimilation and return: Between myth and reality**

The various socio-economic indicators discussed in this chapter point to a significant degree of incorporation of Albanians into Greek society. This was achieved in part by trying to be as invisible as possible and by not outwardly celebrating their Albanian identity. This was the case amongst adults as well as children, who often did not even speak Albanian. This invisibility was also reflected in the low level of participation in the city's civic and political life, including through migrant organisations. Migrants from my study villages had not formed any hometown association in Thessaloniki (and indeed anywhere else in their emigration places).<sup>12</sup> Neither did they participate in the Albanian migrant organisations based in Thessaloniki; a few ethnic-Greeks participated in the activities organised by the Epirote House federation (for more on the various organisations in Thessaloniki, see Hatziprokopiou 2006: 213-217). Many respondents did not even know that such organisations or cultural and ethnic networks existed, while others thought they were run by the Albanian consulate or embassy. Most of them did not trust them anyway or were cynical about their ultimate aim. The lack of trust is rooted, on the one hand, in the Albanian forced collectivist experience – and thus distrust towards collective action generally. On the other hand, general distrust towards individuals was reflected in the sceptical belief that these organisations are simply vehicles for the personal (often monetary) benefit of their leaders. Other reasons for non-participation were of a more practical nature: long working hours and family commitments. Agim, 32, said:

There are many organisations here... but, I don't have time for that. I get up at five every morning to get ready and go to work... because it's far away, I have to change three buses... Then I get home at six in the evening, sometimes even later...

Furthermore, these organisations suffer from internal disputes within and among themselves, as I found out from my interviews and informal conversations with a number of the leaders, as well as a few activities I participated in while there. These antagonistic relations stemmed either from personal rivalries or deeper ideological factors (read: political persuasions). This is a classic example of transnational activity, except that this time home-country politics are transmitted to the Albanian immigrants in Greece. Indeed, there are also branches of the three main Albanian political parties in Thessaloniki, which are often used as vehicles for garnering migrants' support during electoral campaigns back home.

Although I found Albanians in Thessaloniki increasingly well integrated, the 'myth of return' was present for the middle generation, but this was expected to take place upon retirement. For children who were born or moved there at very young ages, many now in their teenage years, Thessaloniki was the only home they knew (Photo 8). There was no question of returning to Albania – a country they visited only perhaps twice a year and whose language some did not even speak (see also Gogonas 2007). These families were focused firmly on Thessaloniki, had started to invest in living a better life there, perhaps thinking of buying a house there in the future – a secure sign of settlement.

My husband and I will return one day. Whereas I can tell you with 100 per cent guarantee that our children will not return. Not even if they can find jobs there, it won't happen. Even if it is better there [in Albania] than here, they won't return... Because their entire life has been built here. [Mira, 36]

Wherever I go, even when I go to Albania, as soon as I set foot in Thessaloniki I think to myself: 'I am home now. I would never change Thessaloniki for anywhere else.' [Bardha, 40 F]

On the other hand, there was another group of migrants who had invested in a home back in Albania, often in Tirana or Korçë. Although they lived in Thessaloniki, their focus was Albania; thus their earnings were not spent to enjoy life in the city, but were saved for the return. If they had children, some had sent them to Albania to be looked after by grandparents in the village. The family depicted in the following excerpt is one such case.

**Photo 8** *Children and parents in a primary school, Thessaloniki*



End of school-year celebrations, where it's impossible to spot who is Albanian and who is Greek

We are part of that minority of Albanians here who plans to return to Albania. So, we are saving money to buy a house there. Those who plan to stay here, they have their children here and live normally. [Eranda, 27 F]

However, these return plans were constantly being redrawn, conditioned by the situation in Albania, as we shall see in the following chapters.

## 5.7 Conclusion

This chapter chronicled migrants from my study villages who live and work in the Greek city of Thessaloniki. The most important element strongly shaping migrants' life in the city and in Greece, more generally, is their immigration status. Discriminatory immigration regulations pose many problems for migrants' incorporation, including their work, living conditions, socio-cultural identity and future projects. This is combined with the deep-seated Albanophobia that exists in Greek society, due to historically antagonistic Greek-Albanian relations (Kapllani & Mai 2005). Nonetheless, many migrants have achieved significant progress whether in terms of their improved position in the labour market, improved language

skills and identity image, comfortable living conditions and, not least, the future of their children. Although not universal, this upward social mobility is a testimony of the strength of migrants' agency in the face of adversity and structural exclusion. What is often ignored, though, are the costs to migrants' lives over the years achieving this improved situation: exploitation, health-related issues, psychological problems, family separation and generally a fatigue among an entire generation who feels lost. As Blerim, 53, summed up: 'We have been treated worse than slaves.'

Shaped by the unequal geopolitical and socio-economic relations that exist between Albania and Greece, migrants' strategies have gone beyond incorporation. Indeed, in aiming to achieve 'invisibility', many segments of the migrant population have in fact achieved assimilation. This is particularly the case with the second generation, who, after so many years on an 'integration' pathway in Greek society, do not even speak Albanian (Gogonas 2007).

The unequal power relations between these two neighbouring countries, shaped by historical as well as contemporary global and regional processes, further influence the developmental effects migrants have on their country of origin. This is the subject of the next two chapters, where discussion is again centred on the intra-national and transnational social field.

## 6 Family, migration and socio-economic change

After the last chapter's sojourn in Thessaloniki, I now come back to Albania to examine the impacts that international and internal migration have had here. I start by analysing the resulting socio-economic transformations at the micro-level, i.e. how individual migrants and their families have been affected by migration over the past two decades. I open with a discussion of the effects that money sent by migrants abroad and internally has had on their families, but also others around them. I then continue with an analysis of various aspects of social remittances. This is followed by an examination of the gender and generational processes that have shaped and are shaped by migration. I conclude with some observations on the ways the Albanian family has adapted to the new era of migration. Throughout the analysis, I employ a temporal dimension to highlight change over the years.

### 6.1 The difference that money makes: Remittances

Financial remittances are one of the most important and obvious impacts of migration on migrants and their families. Here I discuss remittances sent from abroad and internal transfers. In both cases, I also examine the often-ignored reverse remittances, i.e. monetary or in-kind transfers that flow in the opposite direction, from Albania abroad or from the villages to urban areas. Finally, I pay attention to how they interact with gender.

#### 6.1.1 *International transfers*

My findings on this theme confirm what has been found by other studies in the Albanian context, namely, that remittances have been crucial in enabling the economic survival of families and lifting them out of poverty (De Soto et al. 2002; King 2005). If I were to make a list of the items remittances were spent on, it would include many of those highlighted in the literature (e.g. Gedeshi et al. 2003; King & Vullnetari 2003: 48; Nikas & King 2005) as follows:

- Basic survival needs of households such as food and clothing
- Improving the quality of life by enlarging or refurbishing the dwellings through repairs; replacements of roofs, windows and doors; installing a

system for indoor running water; moving the toilet indoors; purchasing furniture and key domestic appliances

- Maintenance of life-stage cultural traditions such as weddings, funerals and births, as well as participation in such events in the kinship networks, thus ensuring the social respectability of the family
- Purchase of urban land and/or construction of new houses
- Financing the education of young family members
- Investment in farming and non-agricultural businesses
- Saving, often informally and intended for use in emergencies, often related to ill health (on this, see Abazi & Mema 2007; Balliu 2007).

Indeed, as I visited migrant families in the villages during my fieldwork, I observed how major investments were made in repairing, refurbishing and extending existing dwellings. Most extensions involved modern tiled bathrooms since pre-existing houses did not usually have such features indoors. Other times, an additional extension was used for a living room with a fitted kitchen or the kitchen was integrated into an existing room. The indoor bathroom and the fitted kitchen were probably the two most fundamental changes. During the communist years, these two were features of urban living found in apartments (although quite often cooking was also carried out on the balcony or in the bathroom). Coveted by rural households, an indoor bathroom and a separate fitted kitchen were only possible with money made available through emigration. By adding such features to rural houses, the rural-urban divide that had been in place for decades, and concretely manifested in people's living conditions, narrowed somewhat.

Overall, the 'migrant houses' I visited in rural areas were furnished with modern<sup>1</sup> pieces of furniture, as opposed to the utilitarian pieces prevalent prior to 1990, or 'the furniture of Enver Hoxha's time', as one of my interviewees put it. Often it was a mix of what could be bought locally and what was brought by emigrants during their trips back to Albania, most often from Greece. In-kind remittances were most common in the early 1990s, when dire poverty was combined with a general lack of supply of items and appliances in Albania, as well as less stringent rules at customs in Kapshticë. In recent years, most items have become available in local shops, albeit imported from abroad and thus rather expensive. For many migrants it is now easier to send money for purchases rather than to transport these items back themselves, especially if they live far away. These issues are concretised in the following quotes.

My husband brought back 100,000 lek [€ 900] this year. But can you live on that for the entire year? What will you use it for first?... Our sons are growing up now and the eldest wants to wear a decent jacket, but that costs 3,000 lek [€ 25], a pair of decent trousers cost 2,000 lek [€ 15], but he also needs trainers, shoes... I like to buy

things for the house... What about when we need to go to Korçë? Let alone for *sebepe* [family rituals]... Everything is so expensive nowadays... So all from emigration, but even that is not enough. [Liza, 38, wife of a seasonal migrant worker to rural Greece]

From remittances we have been able to build the kitchen compound, the veranda in front of the house, all repairs... And also... for our everyday needs. But, then there are also other expenses such as in ill health, *sebepe*, etcetera. It's all their money that supports us. We, for instance, produced some apples and sold them for only 35,000 lek [€ 300 total a year]. What can you do with that? What will you buy first – food, clothing? They buy clothing for us and bring it here when they come to visit... Clothes... shoes... also food... and furniture. We did [already] have a television, but they brought the washing machine and the electric cooker... [Lavdije, 50, mother of two migrant sons in Greece]

Confirming the above, Lavdije's eldest son, Namik, 30, who emigrated to Greece when he was sixteen and has now settled with his wife and younger brother in Thessaloniki, sums up what migration has meant to him and thousands of others like him.

If we had not emigrated, me and my brother... we would not have the living conditions we have today. We were able to do all these things in the house [repairs, etc.] because we worked in Greece. I was able to get married [pay for the wedding] and so on, because of this work.

As Namik's quote also reveals, remittances played an important role in the maintenance of life-stage cultural traditions, such as weddings. As soon as the most basic needs of the parental household, including necessary house repairs are met, many Albanian single migrant men turn their attention to the personal project of forming their own family. This entails two things: creating conditions for establishing a new family and the wedding. The first of these often means that the migrant starts accumulating capital in order to invest in his own house, which most often will take him to one of the major cities in Albania: Tirana, Durrës or Korçë. Yet, the project of a future family is not complete without a big wedding, which demonstrates the wealth of the migrant, his close family and the wider kin to one another and the community at large.

Not only single migrant men, but also the married, had invested large sums of money in houses or apartments in Tirana or Korçë. Some of the houses – villas in fact – were quite large, having being built to accommodate two or more nuclear families that included the son or two or more



brothers and their parents. A mix of traditional and new was reflected in these arrangements: the sons' families and the parents were able to live close to one another, yet occupy separate dwelling compartments, abiding by both customary and contemporary norms. The interiors were modern and well furnished.

We bought the land... and we are building the ground floor now... It's all for them [her sons], we were fine here. But we will go to live with them because we can't stay on our own here. We will have our own separate floor there. If they don't like to live with us, we will live separately... Our daughter-in-law and our son will have friends for a visit and they may not want us around, so we will go to our own place. We are not surprised by this [way of living] now. [Lida, 52, mother of two migrant sons and a migrant daughter in Greece]

More modestly furnished were homes of internal migrants who had not been abroad or had migrated only for a short time, as well as a handful of unskilled returnees from abroad. Those who lived in rented accommodation were mostly families who had recently relocated to the city and were waiting for their own home to be finished and young single migrants (often women). Some of the latter lived in cheap and thus poor accommodation offering run-down, if not altogether lacking, basic amenities.

Remittances were important not only in building and maintaining homes of the living, but also the houses of the dead. Investing to repair and improve the quality and appearance of a family member's grave is significant for local social prestige. It also worked to quell spiritual and emotional feelings of loss and longing for parents, partners, children and others who have 'moved' to their eternal home on the outskirts of the village.

Besides enabling an internal move of the family or the young couple, remittances could also facilitate younger single family members' internal moves along separate trajectories. This would take place as young men and women moved to the city to study or work, which could be followed by yet another migration, this time abroad. The case of one of my group discussion participants illustrates this well. In his early 50s and holding a university degree, Miço had been working in Thessaloniki for around thirteen years, usually in unskilled jobs, often as a porter. His wife lives in the village and works there, while their two daughters are in Tirana. The primary purpose of the money Miço makes in Thessaloniki is for his daughters' future. In the first stage it was used to buy an apartment in Korçë for the daughters to live in, while attending secondary education there. Once the daughters graduated and moved to Tirana to continue their university degrees, the apartment was sold. The eldest daughter is now working as a teacher in a prestigious foreign college, while the youngest is in the last

year of her degree. Remittances financed their second internal move to Tirana and continue to support their studies and living costs there.

Considerable sums of remittances have been invested in agriculture – ploughing, sowing, harvesting, pesticide spraying, etc. Without such investment, smallholders struggle to cover their increasing costs with the income generated from the sale of produce. Especially significant have been investments in apple orchards, which I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter. The following two quotes from parents of emigrant children in Greece and Italy, respectively, typify a number of the issues discussed so far.

We also use the money to buy young trees, pesticides, buy the potato and bean seeds to plant them, pay for the tractor to plough the land and such... [Fillareta, 55, mother of a migrant son and daughter in Greece]

The majority of remittances I brought from Greece went to buy clothes and other means to secure a decent living such as a fridge and furniture; and we did some repairs in the house. The other part we spent on buying water pumps to water our orchards and use in agriculture and in our garden... We did some major buildings last year: we built a warehouse for our apples. We did this with the money our son sent us. It cost around € 7,000... [Lulëzim, 50, a returnee from Greece and father of a migrant son in Italy]

As income from farming may keep a family at survival level, but cannot enable prosperity beyond that, families follow an income-diversification and risk-spreading strategy, consistent with the ‘new economics of migration’ literature I briefly reviewed in Chapter 2. This is to a large degree made possible by work abroad. Thus, besides income from farming or perhaps the meagre pension of an older family member, some households have invested the remittances of their younger members in non-agricultural activities. These are small concerns, focused on trade and services, usually employing only members of the immediate and sometimes extended family (see also Papapanagos & Sanfey 2001; Korça Regional Council 2005; Kule et al. 2002; Nicholson 2004). In my four study villages, they overwhelmingly include bars and small restaurants, but also carpenter workshops, two construction firms, a car wash, two petrol stations, a small motel, transport services by car, van and bus and a funeral service. A few, somewhat larger, activities linked to the agro-industry include storage halls – one of which is a cooled warehouse for storing fruit and vegetables, financed by remittances from Italy – one vegetable and one dairy processing factory, a shop trading tractors and other farming equipment, one flour mill and two or three small bakeries.

Typically, men of the family emigrated seasonally until the mid-1990s, and started the family business upon return. Some businesses became quite successful over the years, while others were simply keeping their head above water. Thus, for each such success story, there was one or more of failure and bankruptcy that led to re-emigration, often to Greece, where migrants hoped to top up their cash. One of the group discussion participants I met in Thessaloniki had arrived in the city only two weeks prior to our meeting. His family's small grocery shop in the village had failed and he bought a visa to work in Greece, hoping to have his wife and children join him there later on.

Anticipating some of these problems early on, and perhaps taking a higher risk in an unknown market economy, many returnees settled in urban Albania instead – in Tirana and Korçë in our case. Others who continued to emigrate to Greece followed this route of investment in later years, thus becoming internal as well as international migrants. Besides the house or apartment, a part of the remittances or repatriated savings was also invested in income-generating activities. These included trading, often in grocery and dairy goods, but sometimes also electronics, packaging materials and small carpentry factory productions. These endeavours were different from their rural counterparts in terms of the size of the concerns, their higher skill profile and their higher turnover. Here is an example.

We have a small shop in Korçë. In other words, all the money that has been accumulated during these years of emigration has gone towards the house and the shop in Korçë. My wife is now employed in this shop we have and that's it [Lavdërim, 32 M, migrant in Greece and Korçë, interviewed on a return visit]

The following quote shows a typical sequence of back-and-forth emigration periods, during which money is saved and then invested in building the house in stages. The migrant continues to work in Greece and his family continues to live and work in the village, while the house in Tirana awaits an internal move upon his return (see also Photo 9). The excerpt shows how migrants regard investing in a house as an alternative to other investments – guidance and a supporting environment for which are lacking in Albania (for similar findings in the 1970s in Turkey, see Abadan-Unat et al. 1976). Finally, the quote throws light on the gendered decision-making within the family when it comes to large family projects like this, as well as the way families work and pull resources together to make these life projects happen.

After having worked in Greece for many years, I was able to save some money, not a lot. I then had the opportunity to find a building plot in Tirana... and I told my old man [father]: since we have these

**Photo 9** *Houses in peri-urban Tirana waiting for the next round of remittances*



savings, let's invest them somewhere. If I were to keep them at home they would be spent [on consumption]. So after buying the plot in Tirana I went back to Greece to earn some more money, came back to Tirana and built the foundations and the ground floor, went back to Greece for more money and so on... I couldn't invest that money in some other activity, like a business, because I didn't know how and where to. And anyway, you need big money to do that. All I had was this. However, I have now completed our house in Tirana. So in other words, with my earnings in Greece I fed and clothed my family, they [the family] contributed some through work in agriculture, and whatever was left over was invested in the house in Tirana [Sajmir, 29 M, migrant in Greece, interviewed on a return visit]

### *6.1.2 The counter-flow of money and goods, or reverse remittances*

Although most remittances from abroad were spent in various ways in Albania, some of it was redirected abroad, to Greece or other countries. This took place in a number of ways. First, most of the items traded in Albania continue to be imported from abroad, mainly from Italy and Greece. To name but a few, these included food, clothing, construction materials, furniture and other domestic appliances. One of the most important outbound flows consisted of money spent on telephone calls to family members abroad. Since both telecommunication companies operating in

Albania – Albanian Mobile Communications (AMC) and Vodafone – are foreign firms, all profit made in Albania is channelled to their shareholders or company headquarters abroad. Second, migrants spend significant amounts of money to enable their emigration back to Greece or to ‘better’ destinations such as other EU countries and North America (I presented various such examples in my previous chapters). In addition, their money also pays for family members to join them abroad. Although some of this goes back into the local economy via payments to local smugglers or dealers, other sums are paid for visas to foreign consulates or indeed foreign smugglers. Third, large sums of remittances invested in the pyramid schemes were allegedly channelled into deposit accounts abroad by the managers of these funds.

Other types of reverse remittances occur when families send money to migrants abroad. The overwhelming majority of this is when parents finance the education of their children abroad. Almost all such students from my study villages were in this category. A minority of affluent parents also send money to their labour migrant sons or daughters. Such funds are often used to help get set up or to plug temporary income gaps when migrants are unsuccessful at finding jobs in the host country. This came up during some conversations with single young migrant men in Greece, although I suspect that in quantitative terms their occurrence is quite low. Besides, they would be even less reported since receiving money from parents who live in Albania would present a challenge to the pride of these young migrant men who have migrated precisely to ensure their own financial independence and help their families.

Finally, in-kind reverse remittances are sent to migrants abroad, often made up of ethnic food. The most common are *raki*, *turshi* (pickled vegetables), *lakror*, *byrek* (pies), *bakllava* (dessert eaten during celebrations) and clothing, the latter more as tokens of love and affection between family members.

### 6.1.3 *Internal remittances*

Reverse remittances were particularly important among internal migrants. Food was a permanent feature of counter-flows from rural to urban areas, including any agricultural and livestock products that could be used in the city. Indeed, as I have mentioned, many families who had moved entirely to urban areas kept going to work their fields in the village and bringing back potatoes, beans, apples, flour, vegetables, etc. with them after harvest.

Especially in the case of young single migrants, but also sometimes young couples, parents in the villages would send money to support their studies or living costs in urban areas. This financial help was particularly strong in the first months and even years of migration, until migrants established themselves. The following quote is from a 30-year-old woman who

migrated to Tirana in her early twenties with her teenage brother. Initially they received support from their parents living in the village, but as they continued settling in the city, they became the ones sending money.

We had great support from our family in very difficult economic circumstances. It could happen that we couldn't cover our living costs for a month or even more. So of course they [parents] would be the ones to help us, our parents were always there to cover our deficit. This was important. It makes you be stronger and firmer in your decision [to succeed in migration]... I don't help my parents often, only when they need something, at certain times... When I earn some extra money from other jobs besides my regular job [as a teacher]... even if it is simply as a present... [this may be] a certain amount of money in a year or a certain appliance that is necessary for their household.

In contrast to the above case where reverse remittances were sent to make ends meet, those in the next example are used to support new businesses. The couple in the interview – Klodi, 25 F, and Durim, 30 M, both highly educated – have settled in Tirana, while the parents of the husband are in the village. The couple runs shops in Tirana and the husband's parents have a machinery sales and service business in the village. Here, a complex flow of money in both directions takes place, reflecting the needs of the two nuclear families as well as the centrality of family coherence in all (economic) projects. At the first stage, 'reverse remittances' from the husband's family to the migrants supported the young migrant couple in setting up their business in Tirana. In the second stage, remittances were sent back to Durim's parents.

*JV: Do you help them [husband's family in the village] or do they help you?*

*Durim:* When it's necessary... Recently we gave them \$ 8,000 when they bought their last tractors.

*Klodi:* This means we are becoming powerful [economically].

*Durim:* Sometimes these are also loans without interest and even loans that need not be returned [read: gifts].

*Klodi:* We have taken small loans from them, without the condition of returning them.

*JV: Is this only from the village to you, or vice versa too?*

*Both:* The reverse is the case as well.

*Klodi:* But on condition of return, because we are the ones who are in need. They are more settled... We started our very first business entirely with his [her father-in-law's] help. Then our next business was partly from his support and another part from what we had saved ourselves. We also got a loan [from the bank].

The other feature that becomes apparent from the above excerpt is the relatively large sum – \$ 8,000 – sent in the form of remittances from urban to rural areas. However, first, these were unusual cases that involved loan-type financial transfers rather than simply gifts. Second, they were sent among members of middle-income families, thus not the poorest of the poor. Yet, their importance in business development cannot be underestimated.

If we consider the main flow of internal remittances, i.e. urban-rural transfers, a number of points are revealed. As we saw in Durim and Klodi's case, these are used to support businesses in rural areas, in markets where perhaps formal loans or other such capital are difficult to obtain. But, most often these types of remittances are sent to support families to meet their needs beyond survival. Of particular interest in some of these transactions is the gendered process. We got a glimpse of this in the story of the 30-year-old migrant woman in Tirana. The following example concerning two sisters is also quite revealing in new and different ways. In their early 30s, highly educated and with good jobs – one an economist and the other a university lecturer – the sisters settled in Tirana in the mid-1990s. Even after they got married, their level of education as well as their personal social capital enabled them to continue to send some remittances to their widowed mother in the village.

[In Tirana] my sister and I were both working. We were single and I can say that we managed to send one of our salaries back home. We lived on Qyteti Studenti [university campus] where we didn't pay rent. Other costs we had were quite low... When I was single I was contributing a lot. Whereas now that I am married I do help her [mother] as my parent... as the occasion has presented itself. Not for a birthday, because that is something for pleasure, but when she has organised the engagement of one of her children, when she needs some real help... I want to say that a daughter always wishes to help her parents... But it depends on how her relations are with her husband in the new family that she has created. And also on the economic possibilities that this family has. Because if you can't make things work for your own new family, you can't send remittances to your parents. But, since I work myself and I earn a

salary... I help my parent as far as I can... Even if I don't have much... I will coordinate with my husband, I will take some money from the family income and I will make my mother happy... [Laura, 34, eldest sister in the family]

We don't have a fixed amount that we send to our mother every month or every year... But of course we help her from time to time, whenever the need arises. It's been almost ten years that we've been helping our mother, since I started work... Before it was more because our sisters and brother were younger and they couldn't contribute to the family economy. Perhaps less now because our brother works himself, our other sister is married and the other will be married soon. [Irena, 31, youngest sister in the family]

Both quotes reflect some features similar to remittances sent from international migrants. First, they are not sent regularly, but respond to the needs of the family as and when they arise. Second, they also depend on the family situation of the remitter, not least their ability to negotiate with their spouse. And third, some light is thrown into their uses, which include life-stage events such as engagements and weddings.

Generally, however, internal remittances among my interviewees were not as significant as international ones (Castaldo & Reilly 2007). A number of factors help in my analysis of this point. First, due to the family character of internal migration, there were often no other members left behind to remit to. Second, moving to these cities was an end in itself rather than the means to an end – the latter being the case with emigration to Greece. In other words, the aim was to settle in these urban areas in order to access a better quality of life, benefiting from the wider socio-economic, cultural and other opportunities these towns presented. This, however, could be realised through money earned during migration episodes in Greece. For others, the ticket was their higher education and professional achievement or a trade, with financial help from parents in many cases.

#### 6.1.4 *A word on the gendering of remittances*

As the examples from internal migration showed, women may send financial remittances to their parents while they are single, but these become less frequent or even dry up when they marry. Reasons of both a practical and traditional nature are behind this process. The first has to do with the creation of the new family, for which most future income is accumulated. The second is related to the Albanian tradition that women become part of their husband's household upon marriage; as *her* parents 'lose' a daughter, *his* parents 'gain' one. If her husband is the youngest or only son in his family – or if for some reason he is responsible for looking after his



parents and consequently any other younger and unmarried siblings who might still reside in the ancestral home – the income of the young couple will partly go towards looking after them (for gendered patterns of remittances amongst migrants from northern Albania, see King et al. 2006). However, this is a two-way street, so to speak, since these women, together with their husbands, will inherit the husband's ancestral home (even though it might be a semi-derelict house in the village).

The study of King et al. (2006) suggested that one of the ways migrant women dealt with this injustice was to remit in 'hiding' to their own parents. Although I was unable to collect sufficient material to go deeper into this issue, some evidence did come to light, as the following extract reveals. A migrant couple in Thessaloniki – Dorina, 28 F, and Agim, 30 M – discuss these issues of gender, money and migration.

*Dorina:* If they [her parents] have a problem, then I will send them money. But I won't starve my family here to send them there... I can't do that, to take money from him [her husband] and send to my brother who is studying. If he needs something, I will buy it for him or, if he has a problem, I will help him, but I don't take money from him [her husband] and give to my brother, I won't do that. This is how it goes in my family. There are many others [women] who send remittances [to their parents] in hiding. We are open in my family.

*Agim:* Well, we don't see that, they may do it in hiding [he laughs].

*Dorina:* There are lots [of women] who send money in hiding, but I for one don't hide anything [from her husband]. Even when I was working myself I didn't keep the money for myself. At the end of the week, when I would receive my money, I would say to him: 'This is how much I earned this week, here it is.'

*JV:* So is it the husband who manages the finances?

*Agim:* Yes. But, when they [women] go and do shopping or buy food they sometimes hide some of this money from us [men].

*Dorina:* What are you talking about! What am I going to do with it? It is all mine at the end of the day [i.e. the household is hers as much as his].

In my study sample, women had primarily emigrated abroad in order to join their husbands or they went together with them. Thus, there was very limited single female emigration and, as a consequence, it was not possible

to ascertain their remittance sending patterns. On the other hand, more women had migrated internally independently, overwhelmingly highly educated ones who had been sending remittances since they were single. Because of these two different typologies it was not possible to draw comparisons on the remittance patterns of single women emigrating internally and internationally. This was only possible to some extent for married women, as discussed above.

Another aspect of the gendering occurs on the side of remittance receivers. Here again, patriarchal gender relations and the strong patrilineal character of the family have implications, which can be quite adverse for some groups of people such as daughters-only parents. The following is one such example. Rexhep, 73 M, and Feruze, 65 F, live on their own, their five daughters all married and living away from the village – in Korçë, Durrës, Greece and Australia. The old couple live mainly from subsistence farming and pensions that barely cover Feruze's medicines and Rexhep's cigarettes. The washing machine bought by the daughter in Greece stands out in the spartan-looking house, whose walls are adorned with photographs of their children and grandchildren. The daughter in Korçë comes now and again to help with farming but, as far as remittances are concerned, there are no expectations; it was emphasised that 'they [their daughters] are with their husbands now' and 'send you money only if the husband agrees to it' (Vullnetari & King 2008). This has related implications for care in older age, which I will come back to later in this chapter. For now, let us look at if – and if so, how – migration had triggered any change in these gender relations in Albania.

## **6.2 Social remittances or the wisdom of a traveller**

The flows of ideas, behaviours, practices and identities from host to sending communities – a process labelled by Levitt (1998) as social remittances – have increasingly gained importance in the migration-development debate. They are often considered key to understanding migrants as agents of social and political change in their communities of origin, as well as how migration effects change for those left behind (Nyberg Sørensen 2005). These activities and channels relating to social remittances are some of the ways through which transnational or translocal social spaces are functional, linking the villages with their multiple migration destinations in invisible yet intersecting social fields. Moreover, there is a connection between social remittances and the patterns of monetary remittances utilisation; for instance, a switch might occur from wholly consumption-oriented expenditure to investment in business, as a more 'entrepreneurial' spirit develops throughout the wider migrant or family network.

The influence of social remittances in the rural areas under study was manifold. First, it was obvious in the interior design and construction of individual homes. I mentioned earlier the fitted kitchen, which was in concept and construction a novelty for most Albanian families. So was the bathroom including the bath and the sitting toilet: things people had previously only seen in movies or read about in books. The individual house is now built with different, stronger and more aesthetically attractive materials, often imported from Greece or Italy, along with architectural styles from these countries (Photo set 10).

Some houses might incorporate indoor arches and solar water heating and garages outdoors. In fact, most work on the houses was done by the migrant men themselves over a period of several visits and with materials they would bring from Greece. As was noted in the previous chapter, most Albanian migrant men working in Greece are employed in construction; many have become specialists in various practices of the trade, such as tiling, interior painting, masonry, carpentry and plumbing.

Besides economic income, we benefited a lot as far as skills are concerned. We gained work experience. I have been to [technical] school and I have worked here [in construction], but there were certain processes that were simply not known to us at the time. So we learnt a lot of technological processes, as well as, in practice, being able to do a particular job. These possibilities existed over there. For instance, this flat that was built here now was constructed by using special equipment for rendering that has come here only recently. We don't work with primitive tools anymore... Emigration taught me a lot. [Besim, 45 M, returnee from Greece living in Korçë]

These trade and professional skills gained during migration were a crucial factor for some return migrants who settled in urban areas such as Tirana and Korçë after several spells of work in Greece. They provided a much-needed supply of skills to the growing construction industry in Albanian cities. Such skills embody the 'technological' end of the remittances spectrum. One more quote on this.

I didn't know any trade or profession, I had only worked in agriculture, hoeing, watering plants – that was it. In Thessaloniki, then I started working with a plumber. I worked eight years with him. After eight years I returned here [to Albania]. ... So I learnt plumbing. And I learnt other things, too. I worked as a plumber in the morning, and then I was doing odd jobs in the afternoon, on my own. I was earning up to € 70 a day... Here I work as a plumber and I also fit new heating systems... I only work with individuals

**Photo 10** *What financial and social remittances mean to migrant families, Devoll*



and smaller firms when they build houses or apartments and put the systems in. [Aurel, 38, returnee from Greece living in Korçë]

Other migrants who worked in agriculture had worked in peach and apple orchards in Greece and vineyards in Italy. They had employed these skills in creating apple orchards and, to a lesser extent, vineyards in their villages of origin. These individuals had become expert in pruning trees, having done it for years abroad, and had introduced the various techniques and cultivation processes in their origin villages.

Working in Greece has helped me a lot indeed. I have learnt a lot about how to prune, how to tend to the trees. Because there I work in orchards of apple, pear, peach trees... When I come here I do all these myself, I know how to do it now... I also bring all the pesticides from Greece with me when I come here to visit. [Pajtim, 53 M, migrant in Greece, interviewed on a return visit]

However, skills were not always gained, but sometimes lost. True, the majority of people I interviewed were not skilled in any trade at the time they emigrated to Greece in the early 1990s. They had simply worked in the agricultural cooperatives doing repetitive and manual tasks in what were quite primitive and unmechanised processes. As a result, the overwhelming response was that they had learnt new skills in Greece and other places they had emigrated. However, there were also some migrants who were highly skilled at the time of their migration. They, on the other hand, lost much of their professional and other knowledge while in Greece, to the point where a migrant woman said that she had forgotten even how to read and write! Here is an extract from the interview with her and her husband, both 39 years old, in the village.

As Albanian intellectuals [read: professional elite] we were confronted with two difficult things in Greece: first, to meet our economic needs, which was a must and, second, the Greek psychology... in order to defend our dignity... It was thus very difficult for an intellectual. Whereas for someone else [who was not highly educated] it was not; they went to a similar environment and found there good economic prospects and resolved all their problems. [Ilir]

His wife, Egla, continues.

Why did we decide to return? For a better life, so that we didn't do any more degrading jobs as we were doing there [in Greece]. Ilir used to work in construction, I used to work in a place where if you

saw me you would be terrified [after having done other jobs before such as picking tobacco, cleaning wood in a carpentry workshop and working in a garment factory]. And so we thought to return and live at a level that suits us. We finished higher education and we have some brains, in spite of the loss we have suffered; as I said, we even forgot how to read and write when we were there. So we thought of finding a job, something that was suited to our professional qualifications.

Olti, who is now 33, had a similar experience. After assessing that working and living in Greece was not giving him what he wanted, he returned to Albania, continued a post-graduate specialisation course and became a highly skilled professional in Tirana. Ironically, he is now an IT director for one of the biggest Greek banks in Albania.

Working in Greece benefited me a lot. I worked in agriculture there. I had never done that here in Albania, or since. I had no idea how to handle a shovel. We were all teachers in my family and never worked the land. We only had to do with books. But I had a bad experience because I had a university degree and I was working there, whereas someone who was simply a shepherd was supervising me and practically made the laws around there. I would say to myself: 'What did I do this degree for?' This was what made me return. I told myself that I should not lose my education. There is a moment when one needs to evaluate one's skills and act accordingly. And then try to build on the potential that one has... This was the idea that made me decide to return... Very few Albanian migrants who have had higher education have been able to adapt there [in Greece]... Because no one respects your knowledge... For instance, I was working in Thessaloniki, in an exhibition of navigation. Many tourists would come there. My supervisor didn't speak English and would ask me to translate, since I knew the language. As soon as I would finish, he would ask me to go. Not even a 'thank you'. I was like a tool in his hand, like my mobile phone is in my hand. He would not appreciate any of my contributions, and of course this made me feel bad. I didn't want money, but at least I would have liked a 'well done' from him. One doesn't live simply for economic gains, but needs moral incentives as well.

Coming back to my rural study area and migrants with lower educational levels, social remittances in the shape of behaviours were brought back regularly during visits. This was reflected in the ways migrants discussed various issues and handled debates, especially related to politics and the development of the country, the ways they dealt with rubbish, the ways

they dressed, gender and generational roles and attitudes, etc. However, this was not uniform and depended on the location of emigration and the amount of time emigrants had spent there. For instance, someone who has been living and working in rural Greece for many years would generally bring back a more limited knowledge and range of experiences than someone who has been living in Athens, Milan, London or Chicago. Yet again, an unskilled emigrant who lives in North London and never ventures out of their workplace or neighbourhood might have less to tell than their contemporary who has migrated to Tirana and works as a highly skilled professional there. The following extract from an interview with one such highly skilled migrant woman in Tirana highlights the differences she observes between herself and her peers who now live in Greece.

Emigration has many positive sides, but... the vast majority... of migrants in Greece or Italy where most Albanian migrants have settled... have remained at the same level of intellectual development as when they left... I feel very sorry when I meet my friends whom I was with together at secondary school. I always valued their capacities, of course, during the time we attended school together. When I meet them now I am disappointed. Apart from their higher economic level of living, luxurious clothes and higher-quality food, they have remained very poor intellectually. Even my relatives are like this, they suffer from this kind of [intellectual] poverty... Perhaps it's the discrimination they were confronted with there, perhaps the degrading jobs they do. [Ledia, 33]

Introducing change in these rural communities was a two-way process: through migrants' visits, as I have just described, and through visits of their parents to the urban areas migrants go to. In this respect, Korçë continued to be regarded as a provincial town, while Tirana offered opportunities for acquiring more knowledge. Social remittances were also transmitted when migrants' parents visited them abroad. However, because these visits were obstructed by stringent visa regimes, fewer of these remittances could flow back in this way. In addition, in places like Thessaloniki, but also in North America, these elderly parents felt isolated to a certain extent, not knowing the language or their way around. If they went there, it was primarily to care for the grandchildren, as a 70-year-old father of two migrant sons tells about his experience in the US.

We [he and his wife] went there and if we went out, we had no one to talk to, we didn't meet other people... Especially for our generation, without any doubt, it was difficult... We went there because we were needed to look after our grandchildren, so that they [his sons and daughters-in-law] could go to work. So, did I then have

time to go out? I didn't... Even if there were other people like us, we were very far away... others were at work; yet others couldn't communicate with us because we didn't speak the language. Without knowing the language... what can you enjoy? Even if we watched TV or listened to a radio programme... nothing.

The age and gender selectivity of migration has negatively affected the population composition in the rural origin communities, as we shall see in more detail in the following chapter. But first, let us look a little further into the changing gender and generational roles and attitudes due to this migration.

### **6.3 'I am a man and a woman', or the gendered household**

The first point to make in order to put my analysis into perspective is to emphasise that gender and generational relations in south-east Albania are somewhat more balanced than those among communities in, or originating from, the north of the country (for some of these issues, see also De Rapper 2002a). This is a result of the change in the south from the clan-like patriarchal family and social organisation to a village-based feudal system quite early on. Second, this area has been more open to outside influences because of its geographical position and because of historical migration, as already mentioned in previous chapters. Thus, decision-making within families in these communities, including those related to finances and remittances, concerns both women and men. Nonetheless, a certain gendering does take place related both to smaller household purchases and bigger financial investments. In the first case, it is women who are in charge of the household financial activities such as spending for food, clothing, school, taking care of presents and customary rituals, etc. In the second case, men are mostly in charge, although women are involved too, for instance in purchasing large pieces of furniture, installing a new kitchen, investment in new property and so on.<sup>2</sup> Remittances have reinforced these patterns to a certain extent, in that money earmarked for use in daily consumption is generally administered by women in the family; this may be the mother of the migrant son or his wife.

Equally, certain improvements made to the household as a result of remittances, such as the kitchen, had made a substantial difference in the quality of life for rural women. It has enormously facilitated women's work within the house, especially as the cooking and cleaning processes are now carried out indoors. Equally important has been the use of technology such as washing machines bought with remittances or brought back during one of the visits. Comparing this to the days when women had to wash clothes by hand outside even in the rain and snow and had to cook



and clean in primitive conditions, this signifies a major improvement. Nonetheless, this does not testify to a substantial change in the deeply rooted gender roles within the family. Women still continue to bear most of the responsibilities for work within the home that relate to cooking, cleaning and keeping the house in order. It is simply easier to carry them out now. In addition, in many families, migrants' mothers continue to use the old-style kitchen anyway, so as not to 'ruin' the new one. Finally, while many men may have emigrated or do so seasonally, women also shoulder the responsibility of working on the family land, looking after the older people in the household (often in-laws) as well as grandchildren from migrant sons and daughters.

Although not fundamental, a change in gender roles and relations is taking place in migratory situations. This is conditioned by two things: the exigencies of migratory life and the surrounding mentality. As both migrant parents have to work outside the home, they often share child-care and cooking between themselves. In these situations, the husband will look after the children, even cook and do some cleaning, when the wife is working. The wife then will do the major cleaning of the house at the end of the week, in the late evening or even the small hours of the morning after her paid work. And of course, when single migrant men live on their own or with friends, they will have to do these things themselves. However, when migrants return to Albania for visits, these roles switch back to what they used to be.

The following extract comes from Sajmir, whom we met earlier. In this discussion, he provides an interesting view of how gender roles are perceived by migrants and their families, how they are acted out in migratory situations and at home, the reasons for such behaviours, as well as the changes that have taken place due to migration. The combination of monetary and social remittances contributing to this change (which I italicise for emphasis) resonates with the opinions of many migrants and family members I spoke to in the course of my research.

Talking about myself, I am a man and a woman<sup>3</sup> [meaning doing jobs that are associated with both genders]. I made *kulaçe* [soda bread], I made *petë* [dough leaves for a pie] when I was in Greece...<sup>4</sup> Like every migrant has... Now cooking or washing, these are women's work, because God has separated these things. But, one has to live and... the time comes when you need to eat... It is important that you cook in order to eat. The day comes when you shower and change your clothes, but the dirty clothes need washing. You can't afford to just throw them away and buy new ones... When I am here [in Albania] I cook sometimes for pleasure... a grilled fish or a stuffed rabbit, I like cooking these. But, I haven't done these things because I needed to, as it has never been

necessary. My mother has been here all the time. When my sisters were not married they would do these. Then, I got married and now my wife does them. So here in Albania I never do the washing and the cooking, never... Because there have been other people to do them, but also a little because of the mentality: if you have a wife at home you should not cook and clean!... Now, of course, emigration and our experience there have helped. In Greece and Albania people have different lifestyles. Here, we are a little behind... the old Albanian mentality still survives and will never be eradicated completely. But, some ways of life have changed... *The more one sees, the more one learns and progresses...* Poverty also plays a role. Economic conditions are the main factor behind arguments and quarrels in the household and also behind the lack of communication between a husband and a wife. Money changes the level of such interactions and everything else. So, *once the economic situation improves, these other old mentalities also change.* [interviewed on a return visit]

Through my interviews and observations I found that gender roles had not changed substantially in internal migration situations either, even among those who were highly educated. In these contexts, men – often brothers – controlled to a certain extent where and with whom their younger sisters went out. In married couples, women were expected to look after the house and the children even if they were working. The following exchange is from an interview with Durim and Klodi, whom we met earlier in our discussion on internal remittances. This nuclear family has lived for almost a decade in Tirana, are highly educated and have reasonably good incomes.

*JV: What about your roles in the family? Who does what?*

[They both laugh.]

*Durim:* These are our roles. Klodi has to take care of the cooking. But, sometimes when our son is ill, I have to do this [cooking].

*Klodi:* The general picture is that I have a little more right to complain, because the tasks are divided in such a way.

*Durim:* I have given you a little more right.

*Klodi:* It's not like I am at home, my husband works, he comes home and finds everything ready. If you think about it, he should come home and find everything ready, so that he can feel good, feel relaxed. But we are not like that because we leave the house

together in the morning and I go home only two hours before he does, because I have to take our son from our baby-sitter. For a long time we would both leave home in the morning and return home in the evening at the same time. So, I was all day at work.

*Durim:* But for a time she also stayed at home all day...

*Klodi:* This was the time when our son was very young. And of course he [her husband] would find everything ready when he came home, dinner and everything. And so he didn't complain a lot. Whereas now he complains. Although my husband has lived abroad and has always been in contact with people of other cultures, so in a sense he is not a traditional Albanian man, he still *is* a traditional Albanian man.

*Durim:* I do like to go home in the evening and find dinner ready. Although with a cold logic I can say that she didn't have time to prepare it. But, this is what I would like.

#### 6.4 Migration as a rite of passage for young men

Migration and its related monetary and social remittances have not only impacted gender roles, albeit sometimes in contradictory ways, they have also transformed generational perspectives and expectations. I will now discuss this aspect in the context of the cumulative effects of migration (Massey et al. 1993), particularly on young men.

The high level of participation in migration, combined with the cumulative length of time during which this migration has been continuing, have created a 'culture of migration' in the communities of origin.<sup>5</sup> There is a certain standing in the community accorded to migrants, especially those who are financially successful and are equipped with 'knowledge' about migration and other countries.

However, this is a gendered and age-related process. It in fact applies primarily to young men and involves the gaining and sharing of the migratory experience. As young men go abroad, by surviving a very arduous journey, they learn how to work hard and make money. This allows them to fulfill their dreams of possessing material goods, especially those that others in the community cannot afford, such as fashionable clothes<sup>6</sup> and cars – the dream of practically every young Albanian man; they have money to spend in bars and buy their friends a drink. More importantly, not only do they not have to beg their parents for '100 lek' to go to a friend's birthday party, but they now help their families through remittances. In addition, they have travelled to a foreign country, learnt and

experienced new things, talked to beautiful foreign women, drunk Coca-Cola, seen the city lights of Thessaloniki or Athens and had many stories to tell about it (see also King et al. 1998). Suddenly, all the suffering during the journey, all the discrimination suffered in Greece, all the hard work and exploitation are forgotten in those hours and days during which they are the village heroes.

Emigration took thus a particular social meaning of emancipation for young men, but also as a rite of passage. The suffering, as well as the sacrifice for one's family turned a young boy into a man, who had his own money, could provide for his family – hence, he made a very attractive future husband and commanded the respect of his peers and even older men. Migration has thus come to replace previous life-cycle events such as army service or higher education in asserting masculinity, maturity and independence.<sup>7</sup> Now migration is the school of life and university blended into one.

This scenario was particularly typical in the 1990s, as Albania was being introduced to other ways of life, primarily through migration. However, the culture of migration is now embedded and continues to affect the communities of origin. One consequence is of course that migration has fuelled further migration; at an individual level to achieve this maturity, masculinity and independence; and at a family level to achieve a competitive standard of living. In the mid to late 2000s it has not been absolute poverty in these communities; rather, it is relative poverty and inequality (see also Stark & Taylor 1991). The pressures and fears of exclusion created by this migration culture become migratory pressures. Clearly, the economics behind migratory decision-making comprise other strong motivations.

Now I turn to some interview material on this culture of migration and the gendered discourse that accompanies it. The last quote in the sequence, from the migrant woman, is an oddity, which I will come back to a little later in this section.

... this was the image created to us by my friends who had gone there before me... they had put some money together and bought some good clothes... This was a big thing at the time, it made people stand out... Particularly for us guys, because the girls were still more orderly, more in control... They would get married and... end of story. [Zamir, 32 M, migrant in Italy, interviewed on a return visit]

I have always wanted to go abroad, because... when I looked at my peers who were in Greece, they worked there and then would come home with some money and it all seemed... They would buy us a drink and it seemed as if money was above everything. They would tell us stories of how Greece was, how it was constructed, where

they had been, what they had seen. Perhaps they lied a bit... Nonetheless... we believed them even if it may have not been 100 per cent true. So I have always had this desire to go abroad. But I have never had the opportunity. [Keli, 25 M, migrant in Tirana]

I went so that I would not be left behind my friends. They would tell me: 'Your parents are teachers and so you have money, why do you need to go? Whereas we do it because of necessity.' But, I wanted to try it... like everyone else, because everyone was talking about Greece at the time. [Olti, 33 M, migrant in Tirana]

Well, it was poverty, on the one hand. But also we would hear that girls were going abroad and think: 'Why shouldn't I go?' [Mira, 36 F, migrant in Thessaloniki]

Gendered roles and expectations of public and private experiences of socialising are closely intertwined with migration. Going out to socialise in public places, such as a café, is a given for (especially young) men, a life process of being able to belong. Money earned through migration thus enables a man to assert his masculinity and feel counted. On the contrary, young single women are only expected to take part in such experiences when accompanied by older women or their male family members, *and* if these experiences take place away from the 'gaze' of the village, for instance, in the city. This is where the importance of the city comes into the picture.

The city, with its anonymity and opportunities, presents a platform where young women can become adults through experiential learning and through exploring their capabilities and potentials. In rural Albania, where women still marry at young ages, they often pass from the tutelage of their fathers and brothers to that of their husbands without achieving full emotional and psychological maturity. Their role as child bearers, elderly carers and housecleaners is pre-decided for them by patriarchal well-wishers (including other women), who care more about the honour of the family than the future of their young daughters and sisters.

The city is particularly important for another group of disadvantaged people, divorced women. Suffering widespread stigmatisation, their escape from rural conservatism is either through emigration abroad to live with relatives or through migration to the city (see also Davies 2009). The position of married women in the cities has also improved, although not always at the pace they desire, as the following extract reveals.

The first time I was able to drive the car on my own and go out, I realised how much under control I am all the time. I have to ask my husband to let me have the car, my mother-in-law to look after our children, and all of them if I want to go out. [Besa, 32 F]

On the other hand, life in the city is associated with other pressures for young single women. In order to 'belong' in Tirana, one must dress expensively, in the 'right' style and present a well-groomed appearance. This challenges the budget of someone who earns just enough to pay rent and bills. One of the ways to resolve such situations is to engage in liaisons with rich businessmen, relations that not only provide material benefits, but also opportunities for adventure and explorations and perhaps possibilities for future settlement and family creation (when the men are single).

Equally, because of these discursive gendered constructions of migration, single women migrants from these rural areas were an oddity in the early to mid-1990s. Those few who dared break away did so accompanied by male members of the family. Only later on, when men began to regularise their status in Greece and other countries, did this international migration of women become more commonplace. In fact, now, if a migrant man is engaged with a woman in Albania, there is an expectation that she will join him in his host country. Sometimes, this is even a condition for marriage. Once more, there is pressure put upon those who cannot fulfill the requirements for family reunification and/or do not have money to buy a visa unofficially.

## 6.5 Transnational family and care

Undoubtedly, separation over great geographical distances – and, even more so, geopolitical borders – is one of the most difficult challenges the Albanian family confronts nowadays. Parents are separated from their sons and daughters, wives from their husbands and parents from their young children. Over the years, and as a result of family reunification, parts of the family have been reconstituted in the destination country, hundreds or thousands of miles away, in Athens, Thessaloniki, Turin, London or Chicago. Other family members, mainly the elderly parents of migrants, but also sometimes the young children of these migrants, remain in the villages. Years can go by without seeing each other, especially when migrants are undocumented and thus cannot travel freely. The migrant continues to work in Greece, for instance, while his entire family is in the village, as the following interview extract illustrates. Sajmir, 29, whom we met earlier in the chapter, has been working in Greece for more than ten years. He has continued to live there with his friends, as his job requires him to travel around Greece. His parents, wife and children continue to live in the village, where he visits when time and documents permit.

This is torture, because even when my wife gave birth for the first time I was not near her. If there is ill health or a similar situation in

the family, I can't be here... But necessity makes us close our eyes, turn our back, leave our families behind, leave our wives and sons behind. No matter what age he might be, young, just born or ten years old, we will harden our heart, make it like a stone and leave. When we are over there [in Greece], we live there, we work there, we eat and drink there, but our minds and hearts are over here, with our families. Because family is above everything.

Indeed, in the public discourse contemporary migration has reclaimed many of the features of *kurbet*, including those attached to it by the communist propaganda in the pre-1990 years. Loaded with negative connotations, many public interlocutors describe it as a 'wound of the nation' (*emigracioni kjo plagë e kombit*). Nonetheless, resilience at the local level is apparent in many ways.

Separation following migration has affected the ways in which roles are carried out within the family, particularly those relating to care. According to tradition, care for the elderly, children and those in ill health is provided primarily within the family. While the middle generation will look after the elderly parents in their later years – traditionally, this is the responsibility of the youngest son and his wife – both of these generations will look after the children. However, as migrant sons and daughters-in-law emigrate, many elderly are having to fend for themselves in old age (King & Vullnetari 2006). The expectation that the wife will be staying with her in-laws, to look after them, even when her husband lives in another country, is slowly being eroded through family reunification abroad. The irony is that many of these women will look after elderly people nonetheless, albeit in a different context and in another country, because looking after elderly Greeks is one of the main job opportunities open to migrant Albanian women. Yet, the nature of unpaid and paid care and its value – or lack thereof – in being considered as work affects the 'care drain' taking place in Albania (Vullnetari & King 2008). Here is a typical example: Jorgjia, 70, lives on her own in one of the villages, while both of her sons, their wives and children have emigrated to Greece. While there is no care for her – she cannot afford it on her 2,000 lek [€ 15] monthly pension – her daughters-in-law are looking after older women in Greece.

The youngest one serves [*i shërben*] an old woman who has Alzheimer's... The other one cleans. I haven't asked them that much in detail. Even if I ask them, they won't tell me. So, better not ask.

Besides being care-receivers, elderly parents can also play an important role as care-givers by providing much-needed child-care for the young kids of their adult children. This takes on added emotional and cultural

importance given that grandparenting is considered by them as the very *raison d'être* of their life in older age (King & Vullnetari 2006). But with migrant children and grandchildren living far away, family links are being weakened, as this reciprocal intra-family care has had to adapt.

One of these adaptations to migratory situations is for elderly parents, particularly grandmothers, to join their migrant children abroad, where they are able to play the traditional and practical role explained above. However, this option is not always possible because of old age, difficulties with documents or a lack of will on either or both sides of the family. Happy families are not always the norm, and intra-family conflicts took place prior to migration and continue to exist in migratory situations. Under such circumstances, when parents cannot travel abroad, a different type of adjustment takes place: transnational care. Following Baldassar, Wilding and Baldock (2007), this occurs through a number of practices: financial, in the form of remittances and presents; 'hands-on' during visits; and emotional and moral, in the form of exchange of photographs, video-tapes and telephone calls. Indeed, all the families I visited in the villages had mobile phones, which serve as probably the most important tool to preserve family cohesion over geographically long distances (for a discussion of telephone calls as the 'social glue' of transnational life, see Vertovec 2004). One of my elderly interviewees called mobile phones 'blessed', telling me how she and her husband fanatically stay indoors the day their migrant children are supposed to call in anticipation of hearing their voices and their news.

This separation was accompanied by stress and anxiety about children's lives abroad. In residual families where only older parents lived, the mobile phone, eyeglasses and a blood-pressure measuring device were a frequently recurring trinity of items placed next to one another on the sofa (Photo 11). The walls of rooms were always adorned with pictures of migrant children and grandchildren, used often by grandparents to carry out imaginary conversations and even real monologues. I illustrate this with an extract from an interview with two women in their late 50s whose children and grandchildren live in Greece.

*Lumturi:* Emigration has been very good because we are now so much better off economically. But it has also brought separation, we are far from our children, we are stressed, we miss them terribly. Without the children we don't need all these other things. Nothing else seems important to us. Our house is full, what do I need it for? I only live here in this small room. Who lives in the big house? If the children and grandchildren are not here, they might as well be empty... Here is the son of my eldest son [takes a photograph off the wall, kisses it and shows it to me].



*Roza*: This picture is of our grandson – the son of her eldest son and of my eldest daughter. I say, '*Kurban nëna*' [roughly translated as 'May I lay down my life for you', an expression of cherishing the grandchildren beyond life itself] to it a hundred times a day. And how can we have peace, my dear?... When we need our children and grandchildren to run around the house. Instead, our eyes and our hearts are always crying because they are far away. Even if we want to go and see them, we can't... and so we only cherish these photographs instead.

This separation was considered to affect the older generations even more, since it took longer for them to adjust to this new reality. Pëllumb, 58, explains how family functioned when he grew up and how this has all changed now.

Young people adjust to situations much easier, they are now used to emigration and the situations it has created for the family. Whereas for us this emigration abroad is very, very difficult... Perhaps it will not be like this in the future. But for our generation, all these emo-

**Photo 11** *The 'holy trinity' of transnational care in rural south-east Albania, Devoll*



tions of separation... We are of that generation who had meals all together, the entire family gathered around the table and we would not start eating unless our father had started... Whereas now we never eat together. In our time, the son or daughter had to ask their parent, their father about everything. Nowadays they never do, everyone has their own life...

What has been discussed so far in this section and many other intra-family and intra-community frictions and conflicts reflect the pressures and opportunities presented by migration, as well as the new post-communist socio-economic reality (Fuga 2004; Murzaku & Dervishi 2003).

## 6.6 Conclusion

This chapter explored some important transformations that have taken place for migrants and their families as a result of migration. The combined effects of internal and international migration have been manifold. First, my findings confirm the importance of financial remittances from abroad for not only pulling families out of poverty, but also improving their living standards in rural Albania. In addition, by financing an internal move to Tirana or Korçë they have enabled entire rural families or, in some cases, just their younger members to access better life prospects, health and education. Internal remittances were more limited in scale. Where they did exist, however, they appeared to address other needs of the family beyond the survival level such as maintenance of life-cycle cultural traditions or rural businesses. This is related to the segmented participation from this rural area of Albania in both types of migration – poorer households externally versus highly skilled and more affluent ones internally, as well as the objective of both migrations – capital accumulation in Greece versus settlement in Tirana and Korçë.

Second, international flows, especially to Greece, are dominated by money and goods sent by migrants, although some counter-flows are observed as well. These counter-flows, however, are very limited at the micro-level, but have more important effects at a macro-level. Thus, in terms of developmental outcomes, such counter-flows undermine the macro-effect of remittances for Albania, as long as the country continues to import the majority of its products and services from abroad. I discuss this in more detail in the next chapter. On the other hand, money and goods flowing internally moved more equally in both directions among migrant members of the family and those remaining in the communities of origin. These confirm a stronger pattern of a trans-regional (intra-national) social field that is less fragmented and more fluid, whereby families exploit multiple income-generating activities. This reflects to a certain extent the difficulty of making a

living and improving one's life in the city, but also the cohesion of the family unit, not fragmented by immigration regulations and country borders.

In contrast, international migration, which was affected by such regulations, was experienced as particularly negative in terms of the emotional cost it entailed, especially for those elderly remaining behind. Strategies of adaptation were employed in such cases, including transmission of transnational care at a distance. Despite the strength of human agency to adapt and shape life situations, the important role of structures such as policies and legislation in helping to improve the lives of migrants and their families becomes apparent.

The structure-agency interaction was also prominent in the combined effects that internal and international migration had on gender and generational roles and relations. International migration had contrasting effects in shaping the identity of young men, especially with regard to masculinity. While this had been undermined and challenged in Greece, as we saw in the previous chapter, it was reinforced in rural Albania. The arduous journey, the money and the experiences migration provided, emancipated young men and increased their independence from their parents, thus challenging traditional generational roles of income provision in the family. For young single and divorced women it was the city – above all, Tirana – that became the most important place to access opportunities for personal development, beyond the conservative rural milieu. Overall, however, changes in relations between married men and women seemed to be superficial, in that they were more egalitarian when abroad but reverted to 'traditional' patterns when migrants were back in Albania. The structural factor often referred to as 'the environment' – i.e. the surrounding mentality – was much stronger in Albania, even when couples had emigrated internally. In spite of the challenges brought about by migration such as separation and, at times, conflict, the family continued to be the most important unit to which individuals anchored their lives.

Finally, in terms of developmental policy outcomes, besides what has already been mentioned, the importance of international migration cannot be overemphasised. In reducing poverty, financing health and education of families, sums of money migrants send from abroad have acted as a private social security system. In providing credit for small businesses and agriculture, they have ensured employment and income-generating activities at the micro-scale. In enabling families to move out of poverty-stricken and public investment-starved rural areas, they have empowered families to take their lives into their own hands. Remittances and migration, abroad and internally, have given migrants and their families the means to take control of their own lives. In so doing, migrants have come closer to personal and family socio-economic and human development than they ever could through any government programme or internationally funded development strategy implemented so far.

## 7 Migration and Albania's dynamic transformation

This chapter discusses the combined impact of international and internal migration on Albanian development at the meso- and macro-levels. I first examine how the villages of origin and the areas of destination in Tirana and Korçë have been transformed by migration. Then, I enlarge the analysis to encompass issues at a national level, including secondary data from various published reports and opinions expressed by key informants and national experts on issues of development and migration. The analysis at each of these two levels includes three major dimensions that reflect the links between migration and development: the economic – related to financial remittances, inequality and underdevelopment; the socio-cultural – related to social remittances; and demography and gender.

### 7.1 The village, the city and the rural town

In this part of the chapter we climb up one step from the individual and the family to investigate the impact of internal and international migration at the community level. I start by looking at issues of inequality in the rural areas of origin, followed by a more focused discussion on the transformation of agriculture. I then consider the impact of financial remittances at the local level, before continuing with social remittances. Finally, I examine issues of gender and demography.

#### 7.1.1 *Migration and inequality in rural areas*

The rural areas of origin in Devoll, like the rest of south and south-east Albania, have been significantly affected by both internal and international migration. Their impact, combined with the wider post-communist transformations, can be distinguished at a number of levels. First, there are the abandoned houses whose gardens have been overgrown with wild vegetation, while the outside gates are overcome by rust. These belong to emigrants – usually to North America – who have never returned since leaving. Other migrants, especially those living in Thessaloniki and in Tirana or Korçë, have made repairs to their houses, although they only use them as holiday homes now. 'I keep the house keys for several families in the

village,' a village head (known in Albanian as a *kryetar i fshatit*) told me during our interview. Second, there is the demographic factor that I discuss later on in this section. Third, large Greek-looking villas have sprouted close to the main village roads, contrasting with the architecture of most of the other houses, especially older ones (refer back to Photo set 10). Fourth, we can note the lack of any meaningful public investment in the electricity supply, roads, medical or community centres, schools and nurseries. Fifth, there is a deeper change in the social structure of the villages, not always visible from the outside.

Going back briefly to the time when the communist regime came to an end, the social fabric in these rural areas displayed a certain egalitarian distribution of poverty, yet a number of subtle social inequalities were present. These existed between the professional elite (cadres) on the one hand, and the peasant workers on the other, between persecuted families and the members of the various party organisations, between men and women, not to mention the much wider gap between these villages and the urban areas (Sandström & Sjöberg 1991). The dire levels of poverty reached by 1991 in Albania, combined with higher income levels in Greece and its geographical proximity to the villages, stimulated a large-scale emigration there. Thus, the journey to Greece was more attractive, as well as more affordable, for a large segment of the community than, say, a more complex relocation to Tirana or elsewhere. The latter required at least some capital to buy an apartment or land for development later. This pattern contrasts with most research on migration and development in other countries, which suggests that the poorest of the poor cannot afford to emigrate abroad, but they may move internally instead (see Chapter 2).

In our case it was the poorest who emigrated en masse to Greece in the 1990s, as they suddenly found themselves with no income when the co-operatives disintegrated. In fact, very few of the professional elite ventured over the mountains to Greece; instead they held on to their jobs, albeit with meagre wages. This pattern was also conditioned by the nature of jobs available to migrants in Greece, which were largely in agriculture or construction. Consequently, having an education but no experience of working in physically demanding jobs was a disadvantage for migrants in those years, as we heard from Olti's and Eglä's testimonies in the previous chapter. Furthermore, the larger the families and the more physically able adults a family had, the higher their income.

Remittances generally turned the pre-1990 village power positions on their head, as the local professional elite could not compete with the money earned in Greece. Laura, 34, now living with her family in Tirana, explains.

I come from an intellectual [i.e. professional elite] family and so we didn't emigrate because my mother and father had jobs. The jobs

gave them a certain security, a certain income, but it did not give them capital. So we were left where we started [in the 1990s], because we could not accumulate capital...

Parallel to emigration, the introduction to capitalism was accompanied by a general lack of the rule of law, as well as outright corruption and smuggling. The upcoming local elites were those associated with political power of the ruling party, many of whom did not emigrate, but made a small fortune through the privatisation of state property, by working in the local or regional authorities or at the Kapshticë customs office. This has been continuing with each successive local or national election. Others engaged in smuggling activities – migrants, livestock and other products – over the mountains to Greece (see also De Rapper 1996).

In these early years, migration had a certain equalising effect as remittances streamed into the community, to socially and economically uplift those who had little or no income secured locally. They overwhelmingly comprised the poorest households, as the following quote reveals.

We were persecuted during communism, because my brothers defected in 1949, first to Greece, then [they moved on] to the US... My husband died when I was young and my children were small: the eldest only nine years old... We suffered a lot... I often had to put my children to bed hungry; we never had enough clothes, particularly in the winter, when I would wrap their feet in plastic sheets and then they would wear plastic boots on top. When Turi [the eldest son] was ten years old, I would take him to help me with work in the field [tries to contain her tears at this point]. We didn't have a TV and would sometimes go to our relatives or neighbours to watch television. Sometimes people would let us in, at other times they would let the dogs on us, so that we would stop going there again... When we bought our first TV in those early years after Turi had returned from Greece with some money, we were all so excited. I remember it was a Sunday when he arrived and we could hardly wait until Monday to go and buy the TV. [Drita, 52, mother of a migrant son to Italy]

However, this situation only continued during the 1990s, stimulated by much to-and-fro movement to Greece, during which time migrants simply brought almost all of their money to Albania. The mid-1990s saw another equalising effect within the communities, this time downwards, as those equipped with skills and/or accumulated capital from Greece, moved to Tirana (and coastal cities, such as Durrës and Vlorë) or to Korçë. Here they were situated in the middle ranks of the society, since they soon owned their house or apartment, as well as a business. Once again, this typology

defies what has been established by international as well as Albanian literature on migration and development, the latter being based primarily on internal migration from northern Albania. In contrast, it was the affluent families from these rural areas who migrated internally, rather than the poorest (see e.g. Carletto et al. 2004 whose analysis of the 2001 census data suggests the opposite).

As migrants learnt the mountain paths and made connections and money through work in Greece, the cumulative causation of migration ensured its accessibility to more people (Massey et al. 1993). This money paid for two other types of migration: one internally to Tirana and Korçë (or other towns), the other internationally to more costly and distant destinations such as Italy, other EU countries and North America.

In recent years, however, the typology of international migration in this part of Albania has approached the mainstream one: the poorest of the poor are now finding it increasingly difficult to emigrate abroad. This has been affected by stronger anti-smuggling regulations put in place by the Albanian, Greek and Italian authorities under bilateral and multilateral agreements. As a result, the prices for visas paid unofficially to agents have increased considerably – anecdotal evidence suggests that at the time of research this was between € 1,500 and € 2,000 per person. Seasonal work visas to Greece continue to be difficult to obtain, as they require at least € 500 for first-time migrants as a guarantee bond paid to the Greek employer and – most importantly – social capital in the form of networks and connections in both countries. So the cost of emigration to other EU countries and overseas destinations is beyond the means of many families. The poorest thus continue to venture over the mountains, but are often caught either en route or as soon as they reach Greece, being repatriated immediately thereafter. Statistics speak for themselves: for instance, the European Commission (2008: 45) reported some fourteen Albanian irregular migrants being apprehended at the Greek border every day in 2008.<sup>1</sup>

We can also turn our argument on its head, suggesting that those who could not emigrate – whose emigration was not successful in terms of money and contacts or who were not involved with the political elites – became *the* new poor. This quote says just that.

Those who have not emigrated have not progressed. No matter what one does, one will never progress simply by working here [in subsistence agriculture in the village]. One will simply survive, but not be able to improve their life. [Zhaneta, 55, mother of migrant sons in Italy]

The richest segments of the population, on the other hand, aimed for the big cities – Tirana, Durrës, Korçë. This movement, though, has also

decreased by the mid-2000s, as purchasing land and building a house in Tirana become ever more expensive, as the following quotes reveal.

In my opinion, whoever was able to move from our village to Tirana has moved already. Now there are no more families that will do that, because they don't have enough money. I am talking about my village... They might refurbish their house or buy a new piece of furniture and that's it. They work simply to survive. They don't have money to be able to live in the cities... It used to be easy to settle in Tirana in the beginning [1990s]. That's when most of the families from my village moved here... [Ledia, 34 F, migrant in Tirana]

To move to Tirana or Durrës, one needs at least five or six million lek [€ 50,000] to build a house or buy an apartment... Where can one find all that money? Of course, then one has to emigrate, work abroad and make such a move, if that is what they plan... I am talking about those who have been there [abroad] for years, because my son is working seasonally. He can't save that sort of money... [Bukurije, 57, mother of a migrant son in Greece]

### 7.1.2 *Transformation of rural areas: The case of agriculture*

As the cooperatives broke up and dire poverty threatened, male migrants from the villages rushed in by the hundreds over the mountains to Greece, first to collect used clothes and later on to work. During these early years, after being pillaged and destroyed, most of the fields were left fallow. In others, only older people and women worked (De Rapper 1996; King & Vullnetari 2003). In the years that followed, some remittances were invested in agriculture as well, helping transform this sector significantly.

Probably the most important transformation in rural areas as a result of emigration and post-communist restructuring is the nature and quality of farming. A significant reallocation of land has taken place since the early 1990s. First, there is the use of some prime arable land for building houses, although this is very limited. Second, there is a drastic decline in industrial crops. Whereas before 1990 tobacco was planted large-scale, especially as there was a large processing industry in the country, now this crop has almost disappeared from the villages. This is, in fact, a general trend in the region and countrywide. For instance, while in 1990 around 1,410 tonnes of tobacco were produced in the Korçë and Devoll areas, in 2003 this production had gone down to 81 tonnes (Korça Regional Council 2005: 20).<sup>2</sup> Production of sugar beet has also decreased considerably, especially affected by the 1990s closure of the sugar-producing plant in nearby Maliq. It is now grown only as fodder for livestock. On the other hand, areas planted with



vegetables such as tomatoes, peppers and onions almost doubled between 1990 and 2003. Cultivation of potatoes and beans has also increased. As for cereals, cultivation of corn has increased, while that of bread wheat has seen a considerable decline (Korça Regional Council 2005).

Second, the livestock sector has become concentrated and specialised over the years. Following the break-up of the cooperatives and the privatisation of land and livestock in 1992, almost every family in the villages had at least one cow and some sheep. In more recent years the number of families keeping livestock (except for fowl) has sharply decreased. The livestock are now concentrated in a small number of herds with 50-100 sheep each and less so with cows. However, attempts to develop larger-scale livestock farms have so far been unsuccessful. A recent investment enterprise, in which almost 100 pedigree cows were brought over from the Netherlands and Germany to be raised for milk and meat, went bankrupt. The irony was that the owner could not secure enough hay and forage for them in this wide fertile valley, and importing them from Macedonia proved to be not cost-effective. This was an investment from a pre-1990 migrant to Tirana, who employed the land and labour of his relatives in one of the villages to run the business. However, once it went bankrupt, the relatives re-emigrated to Greece. One of them took part in one of the group discussions I organised in Thessaloniki. Once more, Greece was important as a topping-up 'cash machine' (see King 2005), reflecting the failure of long-term agricultural policies in Albania.

Third, the observed concentration has also been the case for row crops such as vegetables. The first post-1990 phase when the peasant family grew almost anything in the fields – vegetables, cereals, fruit trees, forage for the cow, etc. – has now been replaced by a certain specialisation. Those who do not emigrate, but focus on making a living primarily from farming, concentrate now on growing tomatoes, peppers, potatoes, beans and onions. They may also rent land for this purpose from a number of families who do not use theirs, either because they are old and cannot work the land, or because the entire family has emigrated internally or abroad. However, the area used for these crops has shrunk significantly, having been taken over by fruit orchards.

This is my fourth point: the tremendous increase in apple orchards is probably the most significant change in the rural land-use in this area. Photo 12 is an illustrative example of this as well as of new remittance-financed rural housing.

Orchards provide an opportunity for higher household incomes, while requiring less intensive labour than other farming processes.<sup>3</sup> In addition, this activity is considered semi-skilled in the hierarchy of farming jobs, the labour-intensive, back-breaking work needed for row crops being at the bottom of the list. The latter is largely associated with hard work in cooperative farms and thus has a certain stigma attached to it. However, setting

**Photo 12** *Apple orchards and a new house, Devoll*



up and maintaining the orchards require some money and skills, both of which come from migration to Greece. Many migrants from this area, especially seasonal ones, work in the fruit-growing districts in north-western Greece, particularly in rural Veria. Since most work involves picking peaches, their most intensive labour period is during the summer months. This means that migrants can also attend to their own orchards at two of the most intensive peaks of activity for apple trees: spring pruning and autumn harvesting. The orcharding process of prime farm land in this part of Albania is being intensified by national policy, as the central government pledged in 2007 to subsidise the cost of orchards for planted surfaces in excess of 0.3 hectares per household.

This region, however, has traditionally grown apples and claims a quality reputation for this fruit. Thus, it is interesting to note that almost no *new* crops and vegetables have been introduced as part of the skills and knowledge transfer. For instance, many migrants in rural Greece have worked for years picking asparagus. Yet, this is a vegetable almost unknown to the smallholder in Albania. This is also a confirmation of the fact that most agriculture in these rural areas is overwhelmingly focused on internal consumer markets.

Despite these readjustments, farming remains at subsistence levels for the vast majority, while only a minority of households are able to produce to sell. However, even in these cases, it is not unusual for entire stocks of

produce to be left to rot in barns and small warehouses. Competition from cheap imported Greek and Macedonian produce, as well as internal infrastructural problems and inadequacies, continue to make it a struggle for farmers to focus on agriculture as the sole income-generating activity. This interview extract shows just that.

The apples were grown this year, but before harvesting they were all destroyed by some sort of disease. So people don't feel like working here. They say: 'It's better for me to migrate abroad, I know that I am working eight hours a day, but I know that at the end of the day I will come home and have money in my pocket.' Whereas here, you have to wait for a year to be able to get any money, if at all. [Berti, 45, living in village]

This is compounded by the stigma attached to farming, especially by the youth.<sup>4</sup> Under such circumstances, migration is used both as a risk diversification strategy and, overwhelmingly, to pull rural households out of agriculture and take them to the city (see also Miluka, Carletto, Davis & Zezza 2007).

### 7.1.3 *Migrants' money and the 'bricks and mortar' effect*

The desire of many individuals, especially the young, to leave the village for the city is strongly affected by the wide gap that has historically existed between rural and urban areas. As the first contemporary migrants were overwhelmingly from rural areas, the remittances they sent or brought on return trips narrowed this gap to some extent. However, this was at the family and individual levels. In contrast, the lack of investment in public social services and infrastructure in rural areas – indeed, the complete vacuum of regional development policies in the 1990s – increased this rural-urban gap at a local and national scale. Returnees thus generally settled in urban areas – in Tirana and, to a lesser extent, Korçë and other towns. This rural-urban relocation following return migration further exacerbated the polarisation. First, it was in urban areas that the majority of migrants' money was invested, especially in construction. Second, most who returned with new skills also employed them in the cities, an issue I will come back to shortly. Cities, especially Tirana, were thus given a financial and human capital boost, which, in turn, attracted in-migrants who had not emigrated abroad, through job openings and better life chances. In the two decades, the changes in the landscape and social structure of urban and peri-urban Tirana and, to a lesser extent, Korçë, have been obvious and rapid. Tirana resembles a big construction site where migrants' money is turned into 'bricks, mortar and iron', as one migrant put it (Photos 13 and 14).

**Photo 13** *'Bricks and mortar' effect: Construction in Tirana*



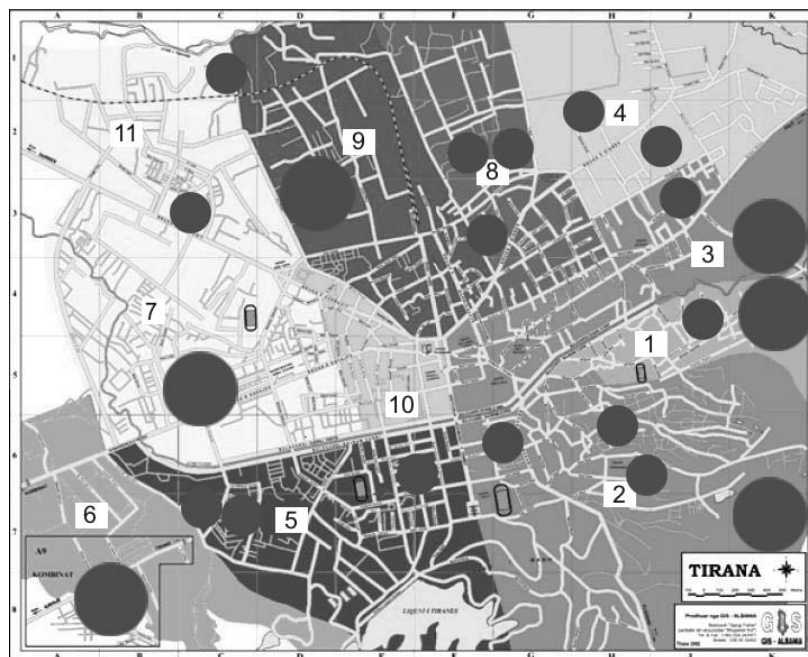
**Photo 14** *'Bricks and mortar' effect: Construction in Korçë*



Migrants from my study villages live spread out over various parts of the capital (Figure 7.1), with a slight concentration – marked with bigger circles – in the areas called Kombinat (which takes its name from the former ‘Stalin’ textile plant, situated in mini-municipality 6 to the south-west); Tirana e Re (mini-municipality 7 to the west); between Don Bosko and Jordan Misja streets (mini-municipality 9 to the north); Kodra e Priftit (mini-municipality 3 to the north-east); in Shkozë on the hills above the Kombinati i Autotraktorëve (former tractor-manufacturing plant located in mini-municipality 1 to the east – see also Photo 15); and on the hills of Sauk (mini-municipality 2 to the south-east).<sup>5</sup> Others live in the quarters named Laprakë, Frigoriferi, Spitalet and Porcelan.

The only mini-municipality that does not appear in the list is number 10, which is the most affluent. Even though there is a relative concentration in the poorest mini-municipality (number 6), these in-migrants are far from poor. Constituting a mixture of semi-skilled carpenters, electricians, affluent rural families and returnees from Greece, some of these in-migrants form part of Tirana’s nouveaux riches. Those who had set foot in the city prior to 1990 or who were in a better financial situation settled within the

**Figure 7.1** *Tirana: Location of migrants from the study villages*



Source: Map from Tirana Municipality (2002); circles drawn from my research data

city's former ring road in apartments situated within the formerly built-up area. A few such families lived in or near the Bllok, where the best amenities in the country could be found. The overwhelming majority, however, had built or bought houses and apartments in informal settlements on the outskirts of the city, some on low hills surrounding its east. Prior to 1990, most of these hills were planted with olive groves and vineyards, but soon after the collapse of communism this area became home to some of the biggest construction sites in the country. Neighbourhoods are named after the origin district of in-migrants, for instance, the quarter of Devollinj (in-migrants from Devoll) and Kolonjarë (in-migrants from Kolonjë) (Photo 15).

These new neighbourhoods are interesting mosaics of finished and half-finished structures, colours, architectures and sizes. However, they also resemble a chaotic jungle. Construction here has taken place without permission or planning, which has resulted in a lack of communal infrastructure including mud roads rarely wide enough for two cars to fit in at the same time, winding around the walls of the houses or gardens and lack of connections to any decent sewage system or electricity or water supply. The roads are a mayhem of blinding dust in the dry summers and ankle-

**Photo 15** *Peri-urban Tirana: Devoll neighbourhood (lagja e devollinje) on the hill*



Large derelict building in front of the hill formerly serving as the tractor-manufacturing plant (Kombinati i Autotraktorëve)

deep mud in wet winters, full of potholes as armies of large lorries drive up and down the hills, transporting building materials for more construction that does not seem to come to an end. Indeed, the Tirana outskirts resemble a village, as poultry and cows often graze in the patches of grass left around the large villas. Public transport is faraway and inefficient, and other public amenities such as schools, kindergartens, children's day-care, health centres and post offices are almost non-existent. Some small corner grocery shops, cafés and car garages have sprung up to meet the demands of an ever-increasing population. Most jobs are also far into the city or the newly established industrial zone to the west (see also the various studies and reports discussed in the last section of Chapter 3).

Yet, unlike in the village, there is hope here that things *will* get better! This is what keeps the newly arrived from running back as soon as they set foot in the city and what keeps those who have settled going. This is also what makes those who are still in the villages aspire to follow in the footsteps of those who left. This is what continues to make Tirana and other major cities powerful magnets and attractive places of residence.<sup>6</sup>

The following interview extract from Keli, 25, has been chosen because it clearly highlights a number of the issues discussed above and confirms the experiences of most rural migrants I spoke to in the course of my fieldwork in Tirana and Korçë.

When I first saw the place father had bought for the house... I was very upset. At that time I was living with my relatives, in central Tirana... which was clean, there was no mud around and the bus stop was close by. It was centrally located. I then went to look at the place we had bought and it was full of thorny bushes... just like our hills in the village... Rubbish was all around as it had been used as a dumping ground for building sites further afield... I told my father: 'Where have you brought us to? Do you mean we will build our house in this dump? Are we going to climb all the way up here?'... I was very upset that day... I didn't go there for a few days. My dad started working on the site, clearing it out, flattening the surface, and we started the building... They tried to convince me that it was a good place. Then, the second and the third time, I started liking it a bit more each time I saw it. The view of Tirana is pretty from there; when I climb on my balcony I can see all of Tirana.

However, the difficulties in the beginning were enormous. The place where our house is built used to be a hill. There were only two houses further down and all of the buildings that you see now have been constructed in the last two years... So we started, little by little... We had difficulties bringing the materials, because the roads were very narrow... Also, it was hard to walk all the way to

the house at the top of the hill. When I went to the city or to work, I would wrap plastic bags around my feet so that my shoes wouldn't get muddy, I would take my bike on my back and then walk, because the mud was terrible... I cursed myself so many times in those days: 'Why did I come here!' Then there were no sewage and drainage systems... We got together with other households in the neighbourhood – ten to fifteen of us in total – we got organised and invested... We bought a fine-stone mixture and managed to convince a lorry driver to spread it over the road... We then paid for a drainage and sewage system, drinking water, electricity network. We still don't pay for electricity, since a few years, to be honest. We bribe the electrician... These are matters of higher interests. This is how Tirana functions, through the network of interests. We have someone in our neighbourhood who is an important person, we pay him some money and he sorts it out for all of us. We now have a water supply running 24 hours a day, come summer or winter! And almost uninterrupted electric power. So, it's like paradise... Well, the road is still somewhat narrow, but it will get better. This is a place under construction and these things are normal... So, we hope that things will get better...

Thus, in spite of the difficulties, migrant families have found ways of cooperating and resolving their problems. Examples of such bottom-up development action show resilience and, to a certain extent, challenge the long-held opinion (my own included) that post-communist Albanians have very low associative initiatives. Although not in the shape of Western-style NGOs, these models of exercising agency and displaying social capital reflect a peculiar mixture of communitarian and individualistic values that are practical, although perhaps not always 'formal'.

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the migrants' houses are quite large and the sums invested in them, whether from emigration to Greece or work in Tirana, are considerable. Here are some relevant interview extracts. We start with Keli's house, which absorbed most of the money his father made in Greece and the family's earnings while working in Tirana.

Our house measures 130 square metres on each floor [three floors in total]. We have two bedrooms, a large living room, a large bathroom and a large kitchen on each floor. We have not completed these inside. The house is also empty, but the structure is in place... It cost us around four and a half million lek [€ 40,000] so far, including the land purchase... Everything coming from Greece would be invested in the house. Since we didn't have a house, everything went towards its building and equipment. [Keli, 25 M, migrant in Tirana]



We haven't really kept accounts. But, if we were to include all the money we have invested here... it comes to about ten million lek [€ 95,000]... This includes also all our work for the last seven to eight years, because we don't have money in savings, whatever we have earned has been invested here. This house is all our wealth, it is all we have. [Petrìt, 37 M, migrant in Tirana]

Although the cost of purchasing property or doing construction in Korçë is much lower, some of my respondents reported considerable figures for this city too.

Our house has cost us around seven million lek so far [€ 65,000]. But it is very big, a three-storey house. [Adelina, 28 F, migrant in Korçë and Thessaloniki]

However, property prices in recent years have increased considerably, with the result that now, fewer villagers can afford to fulfill their dream of living in a city (World Bank 2007a: 61). This price increase is also quite problematic for migrants who are accumulating capital with a view to returning and not only building a house, but also investing in their own business in Albania. Ardit, 30, in Thessaloniki, explains.

Our idea was to come here [to Greece] to work, save some money and return to Albania. I mean to return and start our own business in Albania. One year, and another year, we'll stay one more year; we still don't know when we will go. We still have the idea to go [return] but we don't know when. It could be that we won't go either... so you say to yourself: 'I will open this type of business next year and for that I need this much money.' So you work and save what you had in mind, but by next year the capital you need for the same type of business has doubled, so you need to work some more.

Although some of Korçë's new neighbourhoods display similar patterns of development as those in Tirana, the expansion of this town has been much more measured and less chaotic (for an example see Photo 16). In terms of spatial diffusion, the in-migrants from my study villages were spread throughout the entire town and there was no noticeable clustering in a particular area, with the exception of a settlement in the south-east, namely, between the roads leading to the nearby villages of Mborje and Drenovë. Others live near the NSHN (former state enterprise for construction), behind Petraq Shomo Street, in the newly built apartment blocks in Kìço Greço Street and opposite the town hall (Figure 7.2). A few had bought apartments in older buildings in the city, as they were some of the first to settle there in the early 1990s.

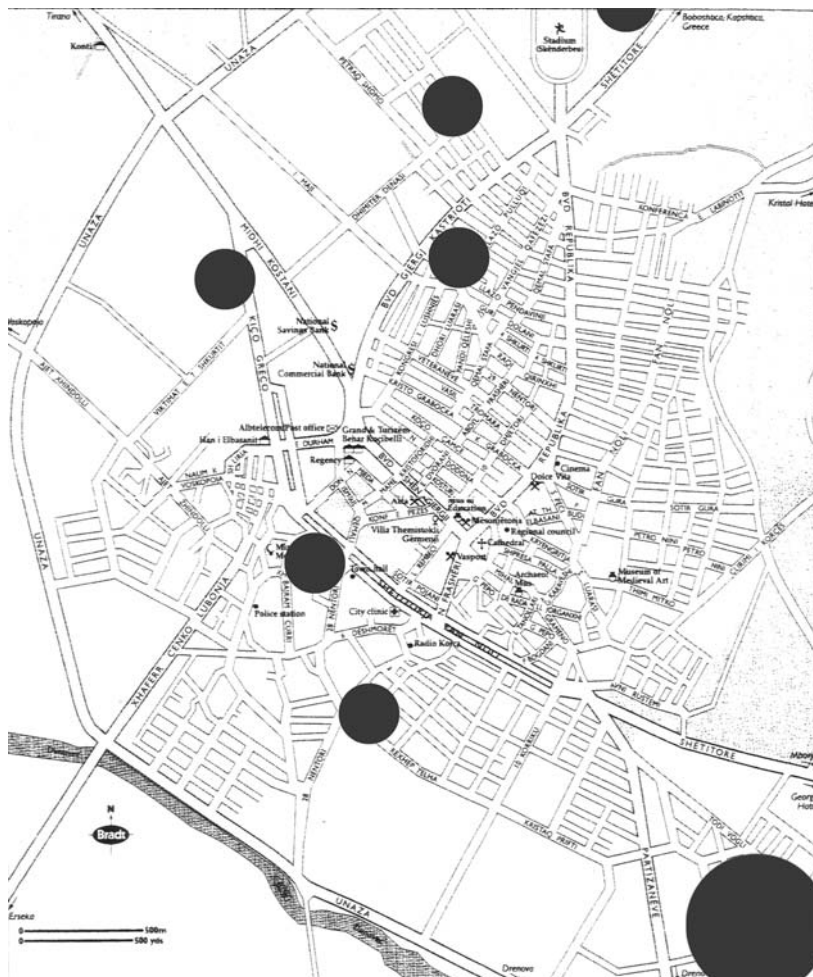
**Photo 16** *Mixed impact of historical and contemporary migration, Korçë*



Romanian-style houses of historical émigrés are falling into disrepair (e.g. building with round dome), while contemporary migrants from Greece bring back money and new building styles (e.g. houses farther down the road)

Korçë attracts primarily regional migrants from its hinterland. Although it has been able to retain some economic importance and business growth (World Bank 2007a: 20), Korçë is far from a major pole of growth. Even smaller regional towns, such as Pogradec to its north-west and Bilisht near the border with Kapshticë to its east, seem to have attracted more investment and in-migration *relative* to their pre-1990 size. In Korçë there are potentially many migrants who, after settling in the city, decide to go back to Greece to make ends meet. As such, a number of the newly built houses or apartments are again left empty. In other cases, elderly parents who moved here with their children are once more left alone to look after their

**Figure 7.2** *Korçë: Location of migrants from the study villages*



*Source:* Map from Bradt tourist guide; circles drawn from my research data

young grandchildren, as the following excerpt reveals. The interviewee is a 72-year-old mother of three daughters, who has moved to Korçë from one of my study villages.

My youngest daughter married in a village in upper Devoll and, together with her husband, decided to buy this apartment in Korçë, with the money he had made in Greece... Then, my daughter asked us [her husband and herself] to come and live here with her [while her son-in-law continued to work in Greece]... At first, we didn't

want to leave the village... But then they convinced us... We sold everything there [in the village], our house, our furniture, our livestock, everything... Later on my daughter went to Greece to work together with her husband in order to put some money together... So they left their young son and daughter here with us... Without Greece we can't live here.

Another migrant from one of the villages living in Korçë, who is an engineer for regional public works, describes the situation in this way.

Albania is a construction site. Let's take Korçë, for instance, because I know it better. Korçë is constantly being built. All these bars and restaurants, all these buildings, all these roads, all these things have a big impact [in terms of being an attraction]. Otherwise, there would not be so many migrants and so many families settling here from rural areas. A large number of those who live here are older people. How do they live here? On their pensions of 2,500 lek [€ 20] a month? Of course, they live on the remittances that their children send them from abroad. These emigrants come here for a month on holiday and then go back there [to Greece] to work. [Luan, 41 M]

Some of the migrants who have invested here regret their decision, as they have been forced to re-emigrate due to a lack of employment opportunities. On the other hand, as the town does not yet promise a decent living upon return, the stays in Greece become prolonged, while Tirana becomes increasingly out of reach. Adelina, whom I quoted earlier in the chapter, explains.

We moved to Korçë only because our relatives live there, my parents and my husband's parents are nearby... We always hoped things would get better. Since it is a town, we thought we would be able to find a job, and that it would be different from the village. But Korçë has remained a dead-end place. There are only some construction works going on here and there. There is no future like in Tirana. I think now that if we had invested all that money in Tirana instead, it might have not been necessary for us to come back to Greece and work here.

#### 7.1.4 *The 'technological' end of social remittances*

Money is not the only factor of the 'bricks and mortar' effect. Returnees from abroad or those returning for visits have brought back – or transmitted in other ways – many skills and technological knowledge to Albania.

Examples include techniques used in construction and architectural designs. Indeed, many words used in the construction industry in south-east Albania are Greek. The impact of social remittances, however, is mixed. As I discussed in the case of agriculture, skills and knowledge gained abroad while working in rural Greece were employed with some success in the rural areas of origin. Some non-farming skills were also employed in rural areas, for instance by returnees in the 1990s in construction.

However, most skills are channelled to urban areas, for a number of reasons. First, the decision to relocate to urban areas upon return *is* what rural families have aspired to for quite some time. Second, a large number of migrants abroad live in urban areas and have thus gained skills generally related to services and manufacturing, hardly rural sectors of the economy. Third, even in cases such as construction where some skills can be applied in rural areas, the customer base's size and purchasing power makes capital returns to labour and investment rather unsatisfactory. A number of businesses have suffered from this, followed by re-emigration abroad, as we saw in the previous chapter. For instance, in the case of construction, in the villages this is generally related to repairs and house maintenance; new houses are the exception rather than the rule. Third, some skills and professions simply cannot be exercised in the village economies, such as those of a cardiologist or a physicist. It is thus in Tirana, Korçë and other urban areas that most skills and knowledge accumulate upon return. The following quotes index a number of these points. The first comes from the father of two emigrant sons in Greece; the second from the father of a highly skilled emigrant daughter in the US.

Suppose they were to return here and work in farming and do the same kind of work that me and my wife are doing – basically manually pulling out the bad weeds, hoeing the earth, etcetera... They [his sons] are used to other kinds of jobs and they won't do that here... They wouldn't be able to do here the sort of jobs they do in Greece now, if they were to return to the village. Because most people here, if not all, take the brush and paint the house themselves. The eldest works as an interior painter, because he is more of a specialist, whereas the youngest renders and paints the exterior of buildings. If they were to return here, they would of course have to go and live in urban areas, because it is only there that they can do that work. [Serian, 57]

She is specialising as a heart specialist. Her husband is also a surgeon... She says that there are no workplaces in Tirana for her... they are all occupied... But, even if a place became available, I would not be the one to get the job there, she says... Because they will employ their own friends or relatives and also one has to pay

to be able to get that job... Now, she can't come here in the village and work as a general practitioner. Because then she will forget what she has learned all these years. [Arif, 56]<sup>7</sup>

Arif's quote also sheds light on the corrupt practices that still remain embedded in the Albanian administration and serve as deterrents to return, especially for the highly skilled migrants.

Besides this exacerbation of the rural-urban gap from human capital acquisition upon return from abroad, other skills are relocated directly from the villages to urban areas. First, there are the highly educated who will have attended universities in cities such as Tirana or Korçë. They usually try to settle there as soon as they graduate, as seen in previous chapters. Some do return to the villages. They often find work in the surrounding rural areas (e.g. as teachers or nurses) or in the nearby towns (e.g. as economists). A number of teachers from these villages, for instance, graduate from Korçë University every year. However, only a few can be employed in their chosen profession. First, securing any job in the state administration – teaching and nursing are but two examples – requires connections to the political elite in power or money. Second, there are limited positions available due to the decline in class sizes and student numbers – the result of migration and lower birth rates – as well as a now older teacher retirement age. Not having other job opportunities in rural areas, many graduates will simply sit at home, waiting to marry an emigrant or an affluent husband (most teachers and nurses are women). Some may move to the cities where other job opportunities can be found.

Thus, the lack of investment in public sectors, widespread corruption, political favouritism in administrative appointments and limited opportunities for employment in other sectors combine to diminish the quality of life in these rural areas. This is followed by the flight of the highly skilled, closing the vicious circle of rural decline. The stagnation – indeed near-death – of cultural life in these villages, compounded by the surrounding conservative social environment, especially for ambitious young women, only intensifies the process. The following excerpt is from Edlira, 27, who worked as a teacher in one of the villages, but migrated to Tirana in 2005.

I felt good professionally, because I had a job where I was respected [in the village]. As far as my personal freedom was concerned, the village was very limiting. So, if I'm here [in Tirana] having a coffee with you after 10 pm, I couldn't do this in the village... Then there is the mentality, the gossip and stupid things like these... Korçë is rather similar. Whereas Tirana offered me many more possibilities for entertainment... to display my creativity... or even get to know new people... Tirana provides... the necessary freedom that a 27-year-old woman should have in all aspects.

### 7.1.5 *The limits to social remittances: How much kulturë can a village have?*

Culture (in Albanian: *kulturë*) in the local population's perception – and in Albania, more generally – plays a strong role in identity formation. According to De Rapper (2002b), *kulturë* in this context means that one speaks at least one foreign language, possesses general knowledge especially gained by travelling (migrating) abroad and has contact with the outside world. Reflected in the way one talks – softly, not shouting – how one dresses, behaves with others, acts vis-à-vis gender relations, is able to show material 'modernity' and notably communal (village) infrastructure, *kulturë* is strongly related to historical migrations, particularly in south Albania (De Rapper 2002b, 2005: 186). Earlier we saw the role this *kulturë* played in the identity of young migrant men, discussed in the previous chapter. After the communist interlude, when *kulturë* gained through migration was only a matter of history, contemporary migrants have adopted this term once more to express the transmission of ideas and behaviours, as well as the culture of work and skills. In this expanded meaning, the word equals in many senses the Anglo-American term 'social remittances'. However, I focus here particularly on the impact of ideas and behaviours related to democracy-building and gender roles.

Their general impact in Albania at the meso-level was similar to that of the other factors I discussed in this chapter so far, i.e. a rural-urban polarisation. Worse, the impact on rural areas is even more limited than that of money or skills. Several reasons combine to create such an outcome. First, most emigrants who work seasonally in Greece and act as the most active bridges of transnationalism between the two countries work in rural areas in Greece, which themselves suffer from the same selectivity of emigration. Second, most other migrants who may transmit such ideas and behaviours during their frequent visits to the villages live primarily in Greece and, to a lesser extent, Italy. These are two countries that have to grapple with problems of corruption, lack of transparency and generally flawed processes of democracy-building themselves.<sup>8</sup> These are also countries where gender relations are not yet up to par. The following illustration is from an interview with a returnee from Greece. It suggests how politics interfere with the state administration, as well as the importance of friends' political connections for accessing jobs in the administration – very much like what takes place in Albania.

The employer I was working for [in a rural area of Greece] had two sons and a daughter. His daughter was married in Thessaloniki, the son was in Athens. He [the son] worked in the theatre... My employer used to tell me: 'Wait until PASOK [the Greek socialist

party] wins [the elections].’ When this happened, his other son became a policeman in Thessaloniki. [Ramiz, 54 M]

Furthermore, because of the difficult integration process these migrants have gone through – especially due to discrimination and their insecure legal status – they have been largely excluded from civic and democracy-building processes (Gropas & Triandafyllidou 2005; Hatziprokopiou 2006). As a consequence, their experiences are much curtailed.

Third, other migrants who live and work in more egalitarian and democratically mature European countries such as France, the UK, Germany, but also in North America and Australia further away, visit less often. The one or two weeks they spend in these villages on yearly visits are not enough to substantially change deep-rooted norms, customs and governance values. A more significant impact might be felt in the long run, although not many signs point in this direction after more than a decade and a half of large-scale migration. True, transmission over long distances does take place through telephone calls and videotapes, for instance, but these occasions are primarily used for personal and family conversations.

Fourth, the family typology of migration – which is the case for most migration to North America and is becoming increasingly the norm for destinations in Europe as migrants benefit from regularisation programmes – means that at times there is simply no one from the family left behind to visit or telephone. Fifth, as migrants firmly establish their presence in their respective destination places, they may often feel detached from what takes place in Albania. Altin, 33 M, living in Italy, explains.

I feel at home there [in Italy], because that is where I have my work, my life, everything. Here [in the village], I am like a guest now, that’s the bare truth. I simply agree with people during conversations, I don’t contradict them... I am not interested. [interviewed on a return visit]

Luan, 41 M, living in Korçë, expresses similar feelings of almost complete detachment from the rural reality.

When I go to the village, I only stay there for a few hours, just to meet with my relatives. To be honest with you, I am a little detached from life in the village, I don’t like to be involved... Primarily, it’s the peasant mentality that does not appeal to me. There are some positive features that are retained such as the tradition of hospitality... But, overall, I simply spend my time with my relatives. I don’t have any friends there. They have either emigrated abroad or moved to Tirana... I can’t see myself there anymore, because I don’t know what conversations to make with someone



who is my age, has only elementary education and works in agriculture. I simply don't feel connected...

Finally, as Altin hinted two extracts above, villagers are not passive absorbers of these ideas and behaviours despite the fact that migrants' knowledge is highly regarded. Their transmission is thus not a smooth process, but one that is naturally accompanied by resistance and conflict. Migrants and their parents, especially, often try to avoid such debates and simply spend those precious two weeks they have together in harmony and peace. Indeed, many migrants will simply try to 'fit in' with the conservatism of the rural communities for the two weeks they are there in order to avoid potential conflict.

On the other hand, internal migrants have moved to cities together with their families, so again there is no one left to visit or telephone. However, as mentioned before, many of them lead trans-local and trans-regional lives, where such transmissions are much more dense and frequent than transnational patterns. These transmissions from Tirana or Korçë may include ideas and behaviours of returned international migrants who have settled in these cities, thus becoming indirect conduits of change for rural areas. Particularly in Tirana, internal migrants experience inequality and relative deprivation at its extreme, as this is where the poorest as well as the richest sections of Albanian society live (Photo set 17).

And last but not least, as we shall see shortly, the selectivity of migration in these rural areas means that most of those remaining behind are

**Photo 17** *Tirana's polarisation*



'Self-employed' in-migrants making a living by selling bananas on the street



Tirana residents enjoying life at Taiwan bar in the centre of the city

older people and those with lower levels of education. This is a section of the population that is set in their ways and/or has a limited capacity to rapidly absorb and induce change. In the words of a migrant woman who lives in Tirana, 'Those who attend higher education and who are the ones who would bring change to the village do not return.'

#### *7.1.6 Demography and gender*

Although the villages in my study have not suffered from total abandonment for the reasons outlined in Chapter 4, selective depopulation has taken place. During the interviews, everyone commented on the mass-scale departure of most of the young men and women from the district and the consequent changes in the demographic landscape. The ageing and, in places, feminisation of the residual population is all too obvious. As Jani, 71 M, says about his village: 'Almost half the village [population] now is made up of old people.' Another confirms a similar situation for his village.

Albania is getting old. The rural areas are getting old. All the youth have left. There are only about ten young men left in our village who have not been able to migrate, from the 150 households we

have here. Not because they don't want to, but because they can't.  
No one wants to stay here. [Ramiz, 54 M]

Lacking any generational connection, young migrants are not encouraged to visit their areas of origin, which only perpetuates the situation, as Valbona, 26 F, who lives in Tirana explains.

I only go there [in the village] for my parents and nothing else. I don't like going there. Perhaps because none of my friends and peers is there anymore. When I go there and see only old men and women in their abandonment and poverty, I feel frightened. I feel sorry too, but...

This situation fluctuates seasonally as well, being more pronounced from April to October, especially as seasonal migration is quite intensive in these communities. As the summer draws to an end, the picture changes rapidly and the sleepy narrow village streets become alive as migrants come to visit their parents and relatives. Because of the large numbers of migrants living in Greece, Greek holidays such as Easter and especially summer vacation are times when the village bursts with life. Other relatives who live far away in other destinations try to arrange their yearly or biannual visit to the village during this time as well, so that they can meet up with as many of their family members and kin as possible. At this time, young men 'hang around' the centre of the village, participating in the daily routine of village men. Women are mostly indoors with other women folk or may sit by the gate of their house watching the men parade their cars. The cars display predominantly Greek license plates, but here and there some Italian, French and the odd UK one can be seen. Trying to access the narrow streets, the cars compete with donkeys, carts, small tractors, cows, peasants going to or returning from the fields and children, lots of children. A celebration of life, migration and the summer in all its glory!

Indeed, it is during this time that most weddings take place in the villages. Photo 18 presents a snapshot of a typical summer weekend in the Devoll villages: a wedding procession complete with the Greek license-plated cars parked outside the groom's house, engulfed by crowds of villagers (especially women and children) who have come out onto the street to observe the bride and welcome her to her new home. This 'home' in the village is symbolic for the moment because once the celebrations are over, the newly wedded couple will return to live and work in Greece.

A wedding, as explained earlier, has very strong significance in Albanian culture. For the couple to be considered truly married, the wedding should be shared with family and friends, preferably back in Albania. Since most of the couples who wed (or at least the young men) are

**Photo 18** *Migrants from Greece visit for a wedding in rural south-east Albania*



emigrants in Greece, as are most of the younger and middle-aged generations of the wider kin, such weddings display a fascinating combination of Albanian and Greek customs. These are reflected in dress codes and clothes, music played, dances, gifts, as well as some rituals. For instance, the 'dance of the drunkard' (*vallja e pijanecit*) (Photo 19) is an import from Greece usually done at weddings. The male dancer will circle around his beer bottle placed on the floor in a downward spiral until he squats on his haunches in front of it. The trick is to drink the beer without using his hands. In the meantime, while circling, his friends will have laid several notes of lek or euros next to the bottle as a prize for his successfully drinking the beer. Variations of this include a dance whereby a man staggers around the dance floor while holding a bottle of drink in his hand, pretending he is getting very drunk (often this is actually the case); one or more male friends join in the dance to 'support' him arm-in-arm from behind so that he does not fall. This version of the dance fits well within Albanian culture and folklore in two key elements. First, arm-in-arm support of the lead dancer's steps can be found in the traditional male dance of Devoll known locally as Devolliçe. Secondly, strong drink is an important symbolic item of Albanian manhood and masculinity, expressing the strength of those drinking it; it is also portrayed as a man's companion in times of loneliness and suffering from unrequited love.

**Photo 19** *'Dance of the drunkard' (vallja e pijanecit) at a wedding in rural south-east Albania*



At other times, old Albanian traditional rituals are revived and mixed with modern ones. For example, in Photo set 20, the bride's fingertips are dipped in honey by her mother-in-law, and she marks the frame of the main door as she enters the bridegroom's house. According to the ritual, this will make the bride sweet and there will be no quarrels with her in-laws.<sup>9</sup> Children from the village look on as these rituals are performed, unaware they are also witnessing a merging of the modern – bridal attire – and the old – the left-behind ancestral house and even older customs. This mixing of the foreign and the Albanian and of the traditional and the modern has become a common feature of today's Albanian society.

Unlike this seasonal life in the villages, large urban centres such as Tirana are vibrant, constantly full of people of all ages, but especially the young. The streets of peri-urban areas throb with activity as workers come and go from their daily shift in the factory. In the city centre, especially near the Bllok, the roads buzz with expensive cars, while the cafés by the side of the streets are full of young people socialising and killing time.

Developed almost entirely in the absence of effective – not to mention, far-sighted – regional and national policies, rural areas and peripheral towns are a juxtaposition to the Tirana-Durrës conurbation in all aspects.

**Photo 20** *The bride will be sweet: Wedding in rural south-east Albania*



Having pieced many of these smaller parts together, let us now look at the bigger picture and re-examine the internal and international migration-development debate at the national level.

## 7.2 Albania's socio-economic polarisation revisited

We now step up again in scale to the wider macro-analysis, looking at how the country has fared during the period 1991-2007 under the influence of migration. My research is fundamentally a small-scale ethnographic study of a rural area with specific features of migration and development. Although my findings at this local level cannot be extrapolated for the entire country, they provide some insights into the wider processes of migration and development that are taking place at this level. I first discuss the role of remittances before continuing with how behaviours and ideas are influencing Albanian society. I conclude with some remarks on return and the future.

### 7.2.1 *Migra-euros: A missed opportunity?*

The broad literature on the link between remittances and development points to two main factors linked to the effect of remittances on a country's development: the *size* of their flows and their *use* (see Nikas & King 2005). Chapter 3 discussed some of the estimated figures on remittances sent to Albania during the post-communist years, as well as what they have meant to the national economy in macroeconomic terms. Throughout my findings chapters, I have also provided interview and observational evidence on sums that individual migrants have brought back and invested in Albania, which, in turn, points to the importance of their *use*. While the sums remitted have been considerable and their role crucial for the

autonomous development of individuals and families, their macro-level effects have been more ambiguous.

First, there is an uneven sectoral development that, in turn, results in gendered employment opportunities. As my findings suggest, remittances have fuelled a booming construction sector in these years, especially in the Tirana-Durrës corridor. A study based on the 2005 ALSMS found that a quarter of Albania's total housing stock has been built after 1990 (World Bank 2007a: 14). In fact, construction has been the fastest-growing sector of the economy in the post-communist years, although it still contributed to only 10 per cent of the country's GDP by 2004. We had a glimpse of the sums being invested in housing in Tirana and Korçë by migrant families interviewed for this study. However, accurate figures of total investments in new housing are lacking since most of this vast stock of property is outside the country's formal economy (World Bank 2007a), having been built without permission in peri-urban areas, especially in the Tirana-Durrës agglomeration. Recent efforts to legalise them have been obstructed by the conflictual character of Albanian politics as well as the longstanding issue of land ownership.

Besides satisfying a basic human need for decent housing and accommodation, the propensity to invest in this sector indicates the limited access to safe and, at the same time, rewarding alternative outlets for savings and investment in Albania. This situation is not unique to Albania, however. In Greece, for instance, most emigrants who were remitting from Germany in the 1960s and 1970s also invested in construction and housing for similar reasons (Nikas & King 2005). Researchers in countries around the world find that investment in construction is the most common field targeted by migrants, after basic individual and household needs have been met (for a critical review of the literature on remittances, housing and development, see De Haas 2007b).

Many researchers and international analysts negatively judge this tendency as irrational. However, being able to live in a safe, clean, comfortable home is a basic human need and a basic human right. Furthermore, remittances spent in this way have enabled a larger – including poorer – segment of the population in Albania to get on the property ladder. Besides this improvement in the life of households and of the country's housing stock, this remittance-fuelled sector boom has provided employment opportunities for a large number of Albanians – overwhelmingly men – especially unskilled internal migrants from rural areas. The official figure for employment in construction stands at 17,000 for 2005, but the real figure is higher due to a now widespread informal economy in the country. In Tirana alone, the construction sector accounts for as much as a quarter of all male employment (World Bank 2007a:18).

The investment of remittances in alternative avenues has been primarily concentrated in small and medium enterprises, the overwhelming majority

of which are in the retail and hospitality trade, as we also saw in the previous chapters. Very small businesses rely especially heavily on foreign remittances (EBRD 2006). True, they provide employment for the family and other trickle-down effects for non-migrant families. Nonetheless, it remains problematic that the vast majority of retailed products, including those used in construction, are imported. Imported semi-finished parts also constitute the bulk of materials used in the factories of light industry. Most of these are foreign concerns from neighbouring Italy and Greece able to benefit from the inexpensive local labour costs in post-socialist countries like Albania (Labrianidis et al. 2004).

Moving on to other sectors of the economy, agriculture remains the most important employment sector, as it provides – according to official statistics – almost 60 per cent of total employment countrywide. In addition, it provides half of the household income for rural families and a contribution of 25 per cent to the country's GDP (McCarthy et al. 2006: 4; World Bank 2007b). However, it continues to be dominated by low-productivity subsistence farming, based primarily on the (often unpaid) labour of family members.

At the centre of it all remains the issue of land ownership, partly inherited from the communist reforms of land confiscation in 1946 and the subsequent collectivisation and partly created during the privatisation and distribution process in 1992. Agricultural land comprises around half a million private farms averaging 1.1 hectares each, and is further complicated by the existence of competing land titles over the same plot (McCarthy et al. 2006: 4). These household farms are further fragmented into smaller plots as a result of the criteria used to distribute land in 1992, categorising it according to its terrain, access to irrigation and distance to the transportation network. Thus, each holding consists of an average of almost four plots, bringing the total number of single plots to almost two million (World Bank 2007b: 6). This situation has resulted in difficulties – for land consolidation, large-scale investment and mechanisation of the sector, as well as for developing a land market, to name but a few. It therefore comes as no surprise that agriculture is not regarded as lucrative for investment, at least in the short or medium term. It is clear that such structural issues cannot be resolved by migrant remittances alone.

My findings on remittances in this sector reflect the needs of a population that finds itself trapped in rural areas with limited non-agricultural income-generating activities. Almost all of my respondents in rural origin areas as well as in their urban destinations were very pessimistic about the future of agriculture in Albania. They all agreed that agriculture simply enabled people to survive, being an option of necessity rather than of choice. Migration and its accompanying remittances have provided the means for them to pull out of agriculture and move to the cities.



Besides sectoral unevenness, the second feature of Albania's macro-development is uneven regional development and geographical polarisation, exacerbated again by external remittances. The rural areas, especially those in the mountainous north of the country, stand in stark contrast to the Tirana-Durrës corridor. The literature on this supports the findings from my research that most remittances – through construction of dwellings, setting up a business or investing in education – are concentrated in the Tirana-Durrës conurbation. Rural areas are drained of these much-needed resources, increasing the existing urban-rural divide.

Third, while geography does matter, so does the ability to move. Remittances have eased some inequalities, but others have been created or exacerbated in the absence of meaningful development policies. Lundström and Ronås (2006: 35) rightly point to the way that migration, development and geography have been interlinked over the years. Whereas during communism, improving one's quality of life depended on geography, i.e. place (urban or rural) of birth, in the post-1990s era this depends on the ability to be 'geographically mobile'. Indeed, the evidence I presented in these last four chapters highlighted how migration has improved the quality of life for individuals and households. Even spending on what are considered conspicuous goods, such as cars, has had a trickle-down effect for entire communities. A nurse in one of my study villages put the situation in perspective.

Before, if we had a case of emergency, the person might even die because it was difficult to find transport to the nearest hospital. Now, with all these cars in the village, you only need to go and knock on someone's door [to ask the car owner to take the patient to the hospital], even in the middle of the night, and the situation is resolved. [Asije, 52 F]

Such multiplier effects are especially essential for rural areas, where consecutive governments have underinvested in essential public services such as health care.

This brings us to the next and most important element: the role of macro-policies. Remittances have until recently been absorbed into the Albanian economy in a policy vacuum, being largely taken for granted.<sup>10</sup> True, Albania has a long list of strategies on regional development, poverty reduction and agricultural improvement, often designed with assistance from the best experts that the money of international development agencies can buy. However, migration has rarely, if at all, been included in them as a conceptual variable and analytical tool. The National Action Plan on Remittances approved by the government only in November 2007, as part of the National Strategy on Migration (Government of Albania 2005), is probably the first concerted effort to make the best of such valuable

assets.<sup>11</sup> However, both strategy documents fall short of addressing two key factors of remittance-led development: improvement at the macro-level related to the 'end of political cliquism and general extension of social trust among the population' and the infrastructural environment such as roads, utilities, telecommunications and the enforcement of the rule of law (Nikas & King 2005: 257). Furthermore, they completely fail to consider gender as an analytical category, even though international organisations were closely involved in the process (Nixon 2006).

The IOM study on which this action plan was based drew the attention of the government to the estimated pool of savings of Albanian migrants worldwide, which by 2004 was between € 10 billion and € 15 billion. It suggested that around € 5 billion of that could potentially be remitted back to Albania in the decade following the report (De Zwager et al. 2005: 64). However, although these moves are in the right direction, they might be too little, too late. As we saw in Chapter 3, remittances have been decreasing since 2008 and this trend is probably set to continue. Some return has taken place, but in the absence of studies it is unclear what type of return this is, especially considering the serious crisis that Greece – as the main host country for Albanian migrants – is going through. It might be that consecutive Albanian governments have simply missed the opportunity to harness part of migrants' remittances to further economic and human development in the country.

Certainly, migrants and their families are not oblivious to this state of affairs. They, perhaps more than anyone else, understand that their efforts alone cannot institute macroeconomic developments without the infrastructural framework to support them. It is thus unfair to criticise migrants for spending their money on 'luxury' goods or 'conspicuous consumption' and to put the burden of macroeconomic and human development entirely on their shoulders. As one of my interviewees put it:

The development of this country does not depend only on the money that we bring here. It also depends a great deal on the policies of the governments and the attitudes of our politicians. [Altin, 33 M, migrant in Italy, interviewed on a return visit]

### 7.2.2 *Beyond the money: Social remittances and human development*

As with monetary remittances, the ideas, behaviours and skills that Albanian migrants transmit to their areas of origin have brought about important changes in the socio-cultural landscape of the country. However, here too, the linked impact of internal and international migration has meant an uneven spread of these skills throughout the country. The geo-demographic and human capital map of post-communist Albania presents three principal polarisations: 1) very densely populated urban and rural

areas along the coastal belt as opposed to severely depopulated rural highlands, especially in the north, north-east and the southern parts of the country; 2) a stark contrast between rural and urban areas; 3) the skewed weight of the capital Tirana in relation to the rest of the country or the 'periphery' (Fuga 2004).

The demographic factor was one of the salient drivers of contemporary Albanian migration. As I highlighted earlier, at the dawn of the post-communist era Albania was demographically a very young country – one third of its population was under fifteen years old – and a majority of the inhabitants resided in rural areas, suffering from poor prospects and high levels of hidden unemployment. Emigration was a logical outcome under such circumstances, although its intensity and volume took most analysts by surprise. Analysing the literature in Chapter 3, I concluded that emigration will continue at least for the next two decades or so, due to the population's continuing young age structure and lack of employment opportunities at home to match this demographic potential. On the other hand, Albania's population will be undergoing an ageing process as well (World Bank 2007c). Contrasts are already evident in the distribution of this population: rural areas are ageing rapidly as a result of internal and international out-migration of young people. This is most pronounced in the southern areas of the country, where longevity is also higher and births are lower (King & Vullnetari 2003). The farming population shows even higher rates of ageing, with around half of farm operators aged 54 and over and 23 per cent over 65 (World Bank 2007b: 8).

If macro-development continues to be governed by the same political will and institutional inefficiency and discontinuity as thus far (see Tahiraj 2007), the problems of overpopulation for urban areas and lack of investment and depopulation in rural areas will be compounded in the future.

The Tirana-Durrës conurbation is already accommodating close to one-third of the country's population. Tirana, in particular, has become Albania's 'America', where merciless capitalism tests one's abilities to the limit, but also where the best and the brightest can go from rags to riches. Tirana is the place where the young can find themselves, where they have models of inspiration in their everyday life and where they can grasp opportunities. Indeed, I suggest that this vibrant, young and resourceful population bringing the capital a mix of skills, ideas and social capital is the main motor behind much of Tirana's economic growth and social prosperity. Such contributions may possibly have even longer-lasting effects for development than money (Kapur 2004). In emphasising the city's role in the country's economy, many of my respondents were of the opinion that the entire country works to support Tirana, whether through trading their products there or by supporting internal migrants in the city. Will Tirana, in turn, be the country's vehicle for higher economic growth and shared prosperity for other citizens around the country?

### 7.2.3 *'Fatherland is where money is': On diaspora and return*

It is difficult to answer the question with which I concluded the last section. After all, despite almost two decades of building a society on the basis of market economics and neo-liberal principles, fair competition and meritocracy are nowhere in sight. Many migrants I interviewed expressed concern that the money they send to Albania has also unintentionally encouraged a mentality of dependency among families who receive them. In fact, this can be said for policymaking as well, since remittances and emigration have resolved some very serious macro-problems such as unemployment and coverage of the trade deficit. Albania's gaze is set fast across the Otranto Straits towards Italy and over the mountains towards Greece, hoping that remittances will continue, and that one day Albanian migrants will return with their savings to invest in their fatherland.

However, patriotic reasons are not enough to entice migrants to return and invest, as experience from other countries has shown. As Skeldon (2008) firmly concludes, wherever return migrants, including the highly skilled, have made a difference to their country's economies – such as in the case of South Korea and other East Asian countries – they were able to build on policies and frameworks that were successfully targeted and implemented. In Albania, actions on return, remittances and inclusion of migrants, especially the highly skilled, in the country's development are not being accompanied by far-reaching macroeconomic, political or judicial reform. Existing programmes are simply paying lip service to international development agencies rather than displaying institutional commitment and political will. Furthermore, urbanisation – hence internal migration – is dealt with separately, although the evidence provided in this book shows that return and international migration more widely are closely linked to urban growth and to the need for socio-economic planning.

The following quote is from a young migrant living and working in Thessaloniki for more than ten years. He expresses his frustrations about many of the issues raised above.

Albania equals zero as far as I am concerned... First of all there is no water supply, no electricity. If I return there I'll stink. This is the most basic of requirements. Then, the roads are full of potholes. Also, villagers have worked all their life in the cooperatives and now receive € 18 to € 20 [per month] in pension. What sort of money is that? That's not enough even to cover the medicine they buy. Then there is no work. Where will someone who returns, work? Why should I go there, tell me?... When I go there on holiday I have to pay for being in the country with my car. Even though I am Albanian, but because my car has a foreign licence plate. Then the policeman stops us and fines us, without any reason. You were

overtaking, he says, even though I wasn't. So why should I go to Albania? When we are here [in Greece] we are called Albanians, when we are there [in Albania] we are called Greeks. How can I go there and open a business? It will not happen! [Thimi, 29]

Furthermore, those who *had* returned full of hopes and aspirations were confronted every day with a mountain of problems and obstacles. For some, the solution was to continue to move back and forth between Albania and Greece so as to maintain a certain living standard. Others were finding the return experience frustrating and humiliating, as they were confronted with another kind of discrimination – only this time in their own country. What follows is an excerpt from my interview with a returnee couple from Greece who had been living in Korçë for a year prior to our interview. They had set up their business in the village, but were struggling with a number of decisions they had taken, not least to return and invest.

*Egla:* We are very stressed at the moment... and almost to the point where we would return tomorrow back to Greece again...

*Ilir:* Well, here you are discriminated against as well, maybe more than in Greece... I mean you are not equal here because... there is unfair competition and the idea that you can only survive by bribery is a killer...

*Egla:* There are so many dirty tricks played... As a result... the peasants do not trust anyone anymore, not even us who are trying to work honestly... When we went for the summer holidays in Durrës it was totally different over there. And we then thought: 'Perhaps we were mistaken to have invested all our savings here in the village, we should have invested them elsewhere where development is much different [better]'... There is also a larger population there, and there must be more work as well. I don't know what to say, really. We are very stressed at the moment.

But those who chose Tirana were not finding things easy either. Even though in the capital there is a certain acceptable level of basic infrastructure compared to other parts of the country, the entrance cost to any well-established branch of business was discouraging. The next quote comes from a conversation with Lenci, a returnee from Greece. After working for ten years in Greece, he and his wife decided to return and open their own business in the capital. They had already built their three-storey villa in peri-urban Tirana with remittances, where they now live together with their ten-year-old son, Lenci's brother – also a returnee from Greece – and Lenci's mother. Upon their return, the repatriated savings were spent to

complete two floors of the house (the third is still under construction), as well as furnish them with mod cons, buy a car for the family and put aside a sum to invest. Since their return, Lenci, his wife and his brother have not been able to find any work in Tirana. Their savings are being eaten away, their other only sources of income being a small grocery shop next to their house run by Lenci's mother and the rent they collect from letting out the ground floor of their house. Lenci has been looking around for different investment opportunities in Tirana, but so far with no results. This is how he explains the situation.

Listen, those emigrants who can afford to open a business in Albania are very few. Not with the present tariffs and taxes... To open a business today in Tirana you need a large amount of money... Albania is a country where the majority of businesses are simply for money laundering... I have been here almost two years [as of November 2005], and there isn't an avenue that I haven't explored for business. It seems that if we try to start something there is a huge barricade in front of us that terrifies us... If a migrant returns now and wants to buy an apartment, which costs € 60,000 to € 80,000 – in the second category somewhere in the outskirts in Tirana, as those in the first category in the centre are now out of reach at € 2,500 per square metre – what money is left over for a business?... Last year I was at Qyteti Studenti [university campus] looking for a space to open my business and I found a suitable space in the ground floor of a building, but it was at € 3,500 per square metre [monthly rent]. This is beyond any reasonable human logic!... And so a business start-up is out of the question. And there is no large-scale return in this way...

Highlighting a crucial and often overlooked factor in the return process in Albania so far, he continues.

I didn't have the right to a Greek passport in Greece. I was simply given a piece of paper, just like a certificate that was valid for one year... If I had been living in another country like Germany or Italy I would not even contemplate return...

Current and future returnees may exacerbate existing socio-demographic and economic polarisations of the country, since, as the young and resourceful return to urban areas with their money, those who have come to retirement age will return to the villages. This 'return of retirement' (Cerase 1974) needs a far-sighted social policy taking into account a section of the population needing social protection such as health care and institutional

support for older people, especially in rural areas. Blerim, who has been living in Thessaloniki since 1992, explains.

At my age of 53 years old, I am not capable anymore [mentally or physically] to open my own business. Because for years we have been squeezed, mostly because of the stress... we were without documents for seven years, we have carried a heavy burden of stress on our shoulders during this time... We are tired... So, for us it is very difficult at this age to open our own business when we return.

Thus, more than just patriotic sentiments are needed for attracting returnees – or indeed diaspora networks – to invest in Albania. As another man in his late 40s living in Thessaloniki put it, in a mixture of Greek and Albanian: ‘fatherland is where money is’ (*patridha është atje ku është paraja*).

### 7.3 Conclusion

My analysis of the linked impact of internal and international migration at the community and macro-level presents a different view from that which emerged from the micro-level discussion. While crucial for poverty alleviation and life improvements for individuals and families, remittances have seriously affected inequalities between rural and urban areas by fuelling further internal migration. In macroeconomic terms, remittances have also had a mixed effect. Although they have contributed to easing credit availability for primarily small enterprises, thus compensating for the underdeveloped financial sector, they have not been able to push the economy forward. Despite all the investments, the majority of products continue to be imported, thus affecting the trade deficit. A decline in remittances, which is starting to take place – especially as the economies of host countries such as Greece and Italy suffer from their own structural problems – means this deficit cannot be compensated for by foreign currency. In a sense, remittances have oiled the motor of the economy, but have not been *the* motor of the economy. Sound and long-term macro-policies should play this role. Development through migration cannot be contemplated in the absence of such policies.

While there is a major impact in terms of monetary and in-kind remittances in rural areas of origin, the impact of social remittances is inconclusive. While some skills such as those used in the construction sector and in farming have had a visible and sustained impact, those related to processes of democracy-building, gender relations and attitudes and innovations have been quite limited. The reasons are manifold and are related to the gender,

age and educational selectivity of migration, but also the nature of post-communist transformations in Albania. For all these reasons, return is therefore also selective and will, in turn, favour urban areas such as Tirana in terms of financial capital, skills and labour.

The apparent gap in the results of migration at the individual and household levels on the one hand, and the macro-level on the other, clearly constitutes one important conclusion of my study. This is that migrants and their families have done their best to improve their lives and those of other people around them. It is the governments that have lagged far behind and are in fact obstructing development in Albania through a lack of long-term, far-sighted and people-oriented policymaking and effective implementation.

Instead of focusing on the return of migrants, which may or may not have the expected benefits for Albania, the governments and the country's policymakers should contemplate getting their own house in order: that is to say, institute macro-policies that will foster an environment conducive not only to investment from migrants who may not have large amounts of money left anyway, but especially towards FDI, which may bring more job opportunities and longer-term development in the country. Once more, very basic, yet essential provisions need to be at the heart of all such strategies. These include improving the basic infrastructure such as water, electricity supply and the road networks; improving the business environment; and restoring trust in democracy-building processes and democracy itself by rooting out corrupt practices that have plagued Albanian administration and the justice system for years (Nikas & King 2005).

However, in a country where being an elected politician is essentially a personal business investment in intent and outcome, it is unsurprising that the political elite strives to maintain the status quo. In this context, the will to build true democracy – where migrants, the poor and other vulnerable groups are dignified stakeholders – is an urban (or rural) myth.





## 8 Conclusions and recommendations

Having ended the previous chapter on a highly critical note for policymaking, I now step back and broaden my gaze to encompass the totality of my research findings in order to review and re-evaluate them against the aims I set for myself at the beginning of the book. I first revisit the interlinkages between internal and international migration and the impact of these dynamics on the development process in Albania. In so doing, I draw attention to some policy recommendations flowing from this discussion. I then highlight the limitations and strengths of my work, including its theoretical contribution, before closing with suggested potential avenues for further research. I use italics throughout this chapter to emphasise the key findings and policy recommendations.

### 8.1 Dynamics of internal and international migration in development processes

At the start of my research, I set out to find the ways in which internal and international migration are linked together, from the perspective of Albania as an origin country. From the beginning, I was faced with a double challenge. On the one hand, the theoretical and empirical literature focusing specifically on these links was rather limited, particularly from a development perspective. On the other hand, this was compensated for by a vast extant body of knowledge on internal and international migration, as well as their separate – yet multiple – links with development processes in various parts of the world. Although not vast, the literature on Albanian migration and development is growing fast; yet again, the two migration types are rarely linked to each other and to development processes in the country. My research findings have brought many new insights for understanding how migration – internal and international – interacts with development processes, but they have also confirmed some of the existing results from this wide body of literature.

Thus, the *first major conclusion is that both migration types are closely interlinked* in the way they affect development in poor origin countries like Albania. Consequently, in order to achieve a comprehensive understanding of migrants' lives, as well as the social transformations that migration is

part of, it is important – indeed necessary – for any analysis to integrate both migration types. Building on previous work, principally from the Manchester School of Anthropology (Banton 1966; Epstein 1958, 1967; Mitchell 1966) and the much later transnational literature (Basch et al. 1994; Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004; Portes et al. 1999; Vertovec 2001), Chapter 2 proposed the theoretical notion of intra-national and transnational social fields. Researchers in both schools of thought have applied the concept of social fields to link migrants and their families in both origin and destination areas, but only in one migration type or the other. My theoretical device goes further, as it incorporates all the constellation of destinations – internally and internationally – that emerge from a particular origin area. As I show in Chapters 4 through 7, the social field of overlapping and multidimensional relations presents significant potential not only in understanding migrants' lifeworlds in unfragmented ways, but also in better understanding social processes at a local, national or global level that affect their decisions to migrate, return or indeed live transnationally. Although geography is important, people rather than places are at the heart of this framework.

In integrating the analysis of both internal and international migration, I do not imply that they are the same. Indeed, more than anything, this contrastive and comparative approach showed the various differences that exist between the two migration types in the Albanian context, especially evident from my analysis in Chapter 4. We have been able to appreciate the *crucial difference the crossing of an international border makes* to the lives of migrants – *my second major finding*. This is, in turn, reflected in migrants' integration into host societies, in their contribution to origin communities and, more importantly, in retaining transnational family ties. The set of citizenship rights deriving from the legal framework that structures the entry, residence and integration of migrants in another country shapes practically every aspect of their lives. True, there are a minority of cases, such as China, where such legal frameworks produce similar results for internal migration (Davin 1999). However, more importantly, moves from LEDCs to industrialised countries are shaped by unequal geopolitical and economic power relations embedded within the global political economy. This has certainly been the case in the Albanian context, as my analysis of the literature in Chapter 3 showed and was confirmed from my own findings, especially those presented in Chapter 5. Thus, Albanian migrants' entry, residence and incorporation into Greece – the single most important international destination for Albanians – strongly reflect this power imbalance between a poor country in transition and a member of the EU. The outcome of such a process has been a kind of involuntary assimilation for a large section of the migrants' community, accompanied by a significant emotional cost.

Continuing with these differences, my *third conclusion is that migration, considered from a development perspective, is a segmented process*, at least in south-east Albania. Thus, the lower skilled and the poor gain capital and some skills from international migration, while the highly skilled capitalise on their degrees and skills from internal relocation to Albania's major urban areas, primarily Tirana. This is the case specifically for migration to Greece, affected by the bifurcated nature of labour markets typical of Southern European post-industrial societies (King 2000), as discussed in Chapter 3. Similar findings from Stark and Taylor (1991) in the case of Mexican migration suggest a link to the theory of relative deprivation in the analysis of migration.<sup>1</sup>

In this segmented process, outcomes of migration depended not only on the groups participating, but also on geography. For instance, men and women experienced migration outcomes differently, both in their destination and origin places. As showed in Chapters 5 and 6, international migration challenged the masculinity of young men while abroad. On the other hand, it also provided them with the financial capital and social and cultural experience, which, in turn, helped not only to reinstate this masculinity in their origin communities, but also to claim higher positions in decision-making within the patriarchal hierarchy of the family. A similar intergenerational power change – from father to son – is confirmed by other research on Albanian international migration, especially linked to remittances (King et al. 2006). By contrast, I found that large cities in Albania, especially Tirana, were the main platform for the emancipation and empowerment of most young single and divorced women. This outcome was conditioned on the one hand by the higher education levels of most migrant women in my study group, as well as the limited opportunities for autonomous female migration abroad, especially for the less skilled. However, migration was yet again shaped by patriarchal norms in that international moves of young single women of rural background, other than for studying, continue to be frowned upon. Meanwhile, an internal move was perceived as staying potentially within reach of the 'long patriarchal arm' of the family and the origin community.

While I have analysed my findings within an integrated analysis of both migration types, it is evident from my review of the literature in Chapters 2 and 3 as well as from the findings in Chapters 6 and 7 that international migration has taken a more prominent place in my discussion. This is not without reason and is closely linked to my *fourth major conclusion, namely, that this type of migration is more important for development than internal migration*, at least in some countries like Albania. International migration to Greece enabled individuals and rural households to take control of their lives in Albania by lifting them out of poverty and providing the means for improved quality of life. This took shape through investing money in farming or small non-agricultural businesses, financing better

health and education for family members, enabling an internal move to better living conditions in a major Albanian city or financing a longer-term move to a more desirable destination abroad, such as the UK or North America.

However, it is important to emphasise once more *the heterogeneous character of migration, as well as its dynamic and changing nature over time – my fifth major conclusion*. Thus, it was especially migration to Greece that had these empowering outcomes for Albanians in the context of my study, since its geographical proximity made it accessible to the poor in this area. This was notably the case in the 1990s, although it became less inclusive of the poor in recent years, due to a decreased tolerance of irregular migration as well as stringent immigration regulations and controls on both sides of the border. International migration to ‘better’, albeit more distant destinations such as the US continued to exclude the poor and those with fewer social networks. Such farther international destinations became accessible to the poor through a combination of financial and social capital accumulated in the course of internal and other international migration. Serving as a step to international destinations, the migration of Albanians to Greece has a rather peculiar position in the entire Albanian migratory social field. From the broader literature on the links between internal and international migration in other parts of the world, this role is usually played by either the capital city or a hybrid border area within an origin country (Lozano-Ascencio et al. 1999; Skeldon 2006). In this context, the commonalities between the two migration types become stronger.

Indeed, despite the differences, migration both internally and abroad display many common features and linkages. I touched briefly upon the *sequencing of these migration types* in the discussion above. Using King’s (in King & Skeldon 2010) ‘Migration pathways’ diagram in Chapter 4, I documented the various complex migration trajectories and sequences that occur in my study area. *The most prominent of these – and my sixth conclusion – is that international migration leads to internal relocation*, most often to major cities in Albania. The potential for development-related policy implications flowing forth from this finding, which I explore in the next part of this chapter, is significant. Within the entirety of sequences – i.e. whether one type of migration preceded another or whether these were carried out simultaneously by various family members, perhaps spread over several destinations – the most striking feature of these complex moves was the agency and resilience that migrants and their families showed in the face of hardship and poor socio-economic opportunities in their origin areas. I was able to tease out these numerous relationships and accompanying factors by using the intra-national and transnational social fields notion, which brought together the various individuals involved in the migration process, their experiences and feelings, across multiple locations.

While at the micro-level the developmental dynamics of internal and international migration had empowering outcomes, my findings on their impact on origin communities and more generally on Albania were less encouraging. This is *my seventh and last major conclusion: namely, the polarisation of Albania is affected by the interplay of internal and international migration*. At the community level, the deployment of some financial remittances and technological skills has brought about significant changes in the landscape, especially in agriculture, but also in the community's social structures affecting inequality. However, at the macro-level, there is a serious polarisation of the country between rural and urban areas, as well as between Tirana and the rest of Albania. My research results suggest that, through enabling internal migration, financial remittances from abroad have exacerbated the already wide rural-urban gap. It is also in urban areas that most skills are accumulated upon return from abroad, as well as through internal migration of the highly skilled. In contrast, social remittances such as ideas, attitudes and behaviours on gender relations and processes of democracy-building have only superficially impacted rural areas of origin and, to some extent, urban areas. Perhaps more positive results can be expected in the long term. However, sound and far-sighted policies are needed to harvest the best of these and the other types of benefits that both internal and international migration can bring to the country.

## 8.2 Migration and development: The role of policy

*The motor boats in Vlorë are working to capacity to ensure full employment for our workers.<sup>2</sup>*

Exploring the dynamics between internal and international migration, as well as their linkages to development, is not of purely theoretical interest. Although I have suggested above that remittances from abroad have exacerbated Albania's polarisation at various levels, this statement should be qualified to include the role of policy.

First, the rural-urban divide has existed for decades in Albania, as I discussed briefly in Chapter 3. Various measures taken by the government during the communist period – such as mass electrification, access to free health care, education and other social services – improved life in rural areas, but proved unsuccessful in closing the rural-urban gap. The life of the peasant worker continued to be difficult and, besides higher education, improving one's situation through migration was hardly an option. Indeed, one's future prospects were decided by geography – where one was born (Lundström & Ronnås 2006: 35), as stated in Chapter 7. Since the best place to be born in Albania was Tirana, the capital's attraction was not simply a fanciful dream of 'bright lights' (although that was part of the attraction, too); more importantly, it was Tirana as a platform to potentially

succeed and build a better future. On the other hand, years of poor returns from agriculture and a sense of alienation from it among the young have seriously affected the future prospects of rural areas (see also Fuga & Dervishi 2002).

Under these circumstances, the post-communist rural-urban mass migration was a logical outcome, as I also discussed in Chapters 3 and 7. This remains largely the case two decades on, as rural areas continue to suffer from poor prospects while the only hope for improvement, for those who cannot emigrate, is a life in the city. Indeed, the rural-urban gap has widened more, juxtaposing overpopulated urban areas along the littoral against semi-abandoned villages in the northern and southern highlands. Successive post-communist Albanian governments have failed to address many of the issues that affect rural life. As a result, even the achievements of the communist years in education, health care and electrification have slowly eroded.

As stated in Chapter 7, Albania has adopted a string of macro-strategies, including those relating to development, agriculture and migration. However, two elements can be singled out to explain the present poor results. First, these strategies and issues have not been linked together, although the importance of migration in the country's development is widely recognised. Furthermore, these strategies are, in turn, disconnected from policies on urban planning and development. Second, despite the reported achievements from the various governmental institutions, results on the ground testify to a poor record of implementation. For instance, according to a recent evaluation of the National Strategy on Migration and its accompanying National Action Plan on Remittances, the level of implementation is very low and there are major problems with the coordination and organisation of activities (Onorato, Keta & Totozani 2007). Policy outcomes have been particularly influenced by the conflictual character of Albanian politics, as well as the lack of continuity and stability among civil servants at every level (Tahiraj 2007).

Building on my previous discussion, notably in Chapters 2, 3 and 7, I argue that macro-policies play a particularly important role in shaping the effects that both internal and international migration can have for a country. First, considering the importance of migration in the development of a country such as Albania, its inclusion as an analytic and planning tool in any development policy becomes crucial. In this context, both internal and international migration should be brought together since they both affect development, in ways I have suggested in this book. Second, since the majority of international migration, especially to Greece – from which most return is also expected to take place – is oriented as a tool to enable an internal move, there is an implication that government policies to encourage return to promote rural development are misguided. Instead, policies should aim to: 1) settle the issue of land ownership once and for all, which

would allow for large-scale farming, productive investments and a secure land market; 2) resolve the closely linked issue of informal settlements in peri-urban areas, whose status resolution would bring a large stock of immovable property into the formal economy as well as put the future livelihoods of in-migrants on a more secure footing; 3) improve the physical and administrative infrastructure of the country and restore trust in democratic processes and the independence of the judiciary; 4) stop penalising rural dwellers through discriminatory policies, such as significantly less energy supplies than urban areas and less investment, in general; 5) ensure that policies are based on sound research and, in turn, efficiently implemented.

The polarisation of the country through return migration sounds a cautionary note for policymakers. If, as shown from my research findings, most returns – especially in rural areas – will be a ‘*return of retirement*’ (Cerase 1974), *policy needs to anticipate a significant social responsibility* for a segment of the population that might increase the burden of care and other social services. Not all retiree migrants may return with sufficient savings to cover their needs in old age and not all of them will have contributed to, or been eligible for, a pension, especially since pensions from Greece (and elsewhere) are not transnationally portable (Maroukis 2008).

On the other hand, as seems to be the case from my findings, if the majority of those who return at younger ages will concentrate in urban areas – which will, in turn, potentially increase the urban population through return and new births – serious measures should be taken to reduce the already apparent negative effects of such overpopulation. First, *urban areas should follow a planned development*, strictly adhered to, which should provide health care, education and other social amenities within neighbourhoods spread around the towns rather than concentrated in the city centre, as is currently the case. This is particularly relevant for Tirana, whose population growth is expected to continue in the years to come. Neighbourhoods should also have green spaces to break up the unhealthy concrete jungle that has developed in recent years, including adequate environments not only for the children and the young, but also the elderly.

Second, *internal movement within Albania should not be obstructed by policies*, as this is effectively a violation of human rights. Although such policies are more subtle at present than during the communist years, they especially affect the poor, making them feel neither here nor there, neither in rural areas of origin nor in urban areas of destination (see also Tahiraj 2007). As argued in Chapter 7, by conditioning the receipt of economic aid on not migrating, policies that penalise poor families who emigrate as a means to increase control over their lives work against the purpose of supporting the poor to become independent through a strategy of resource diversification. Thus, there is a risk of falling back into the poverty trap.



With regards to international migration, particularly to Greece, my findings suggest that the significant benefits this particular emigration has brought for individual migrants and their families, especially the poor, have come at a *high emotional cost*, as shown in the previous chapters. Discrimination, exploitation and family separation, to name but a few negative consequences, can be mitigated by human-oriented policies that not only show empathy with the plight of migrants, but also recognise the significant and crucial contribution they make to the host country. This demographic, economic, social and cultural contribution needs to be appreciated by host-country governments, such as Greece, and capitalised on by making migrants stakeholders in the country's development.

First, migrants should be given the right to *permanent residence and citizenship* after so many years of living in Greece. For those born in Greece or who arrived there at a very young age, especially, this is their homeland for all intents and purposes (Gogonas 2007). Granting migrants such citizenship rights not only mitigates against the negative consequences mentioned earlier, it also shows the democratic maturity of a government that does not feel threatened by a multicultural citizenry. Second, *migrant women living in Greece should be able to obtain residence permits on their own* rather than as dependants of their husbands, thereby increasing the empowering effect of migration on women's lives. Third, *family members of principal migrants* such as spouses and parents should be able to live with and visit migrants in Greece, a process that should be accessible, less costly and less bureaucratic. The 'younger old' parents, in particular, can contribute to the Greek economy and society by easing the burden of child and elderly care for Greek social services by providing such services for their own as well as Greek families (see also my previous joint work on elderly care and migration in the Albanian-Greek context in King & Vullnetari 2006; Vullnetari & King 2008).

Migrants' secure status would, in turn, positively affect development in Albania, since they could focus on capitalising on their earnings and skills rather than perpetually trying to stay legal in the host country. In particular, certain segments of skilled and semi-skilled migrants present significant potential as bridges between the two countries, in serving as guides and advisors for Greek companies that want to invest in Albania. Examples of the important role migrants play as transnationally operating entrepreneurs and investors have been confirmed by other research in the Albanian-Greek migration context (Labrianidis et al. 2004) and in other countries such as Turkey and India (Castles & Delgado Wise 2008).

On the other side, the Albanian government should firmly advocate on behalf of migrants' rights in destination countries as well as negotiate secure and accessible channels of regular labour or other migration for men and for women. Acting like an obedient student for eligibility to be accepted as an EU member, the Albanian government has succumbed to

pressures of the EU and subdued the interests of its own citizens to those of host-country governments. Thus, various bilateral and multilateral agreements have addressed primarily the fears of EU countries of irregular migration (for the negotiations of Readmission Agreements with the EU, see IOM 2006a, 2006b). It is important that during such future agreements, the positive contributions of migrants – grounded on research – be made clear to destination country governments, such as Greece. As I have shown throughout this book, particularly in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, the complex and multiple pathways that migrant families employ as part of their livelihood strategy demonstrate agency and resilience, which, if supported by policy, could be rewarding for both countries at the meso- and indeed macro-level. However, Albania should simultaneously pursue an integrated policy whereby development is not predicated on labour export and migrants' remittances, but on the provision of sound and long-term socio-economic opportunities back home.

### **8.3 Achievements and limitations of the study and future research**

This research makes a contribution to theoretical perspectives in migration studies in a number of ways. First, by presenting the innovative theoretical notion of intra-national and transnational social fields, I have emphasised the importance of examining internal and international migration together, recognising their differences and exploring their linkages. By analysing the complexity of migrants' mobility in multiple places internally and abroad, I was able to capture the multitude of experiences and perspectives as well as understand migrants' lives in a less fragmented framework. Furthermore, I was able to show the various ways in which migrants use internal and international moves as parts of their life improvement strategies.

Second, by considering migration as a process, I have emphasised the importance of longitudinal perspectives. Although the fieldwork for this book took place during 2005-2006, my own unique position with relation to Albania and the researched communities, in particular, as highlighted in Chapter 1, enabled me to provide a longitudinal understanding and interpretation of my findings. This is particularly relevant to ascertain the degree to which migration – internal and international – affects development in the long term. Third, and related to the previous points, my multi-sited and multi-method approach was extremely useful in understanding the complexity of migrants' decision-making and their various combined pathways in Albania and abroad. 'Follow the people' (Marcus 1995) became my motto, as reflected in my migrant-centred approach throughout the research. Their experiences and thoughts were at the heart of my analysis, as it unfolded through successive chapters of the book.

Last but not least, synthesising a vast body of literature on internal and international migration and their links to development from around the world as well as from Albania, specifically, has been an achievement in itself.

However, the complex analysis I have striven to achieve – at various scales, in multiple places, and including a rich primary database as well as an extensive literature review, all within the space of one book – runs the risk of missing the fine details of everyday life or the deep fine-grained knowledge that a more spatially confined ethnography could have provided. I acknowledge that my analysis would have been quite different had I opted for a more traditional ethnographic study of a single rural community. It would perhaps have been deeper in one sense, but also inevitably more narrow and restricted in its vision. For sure, the latter approach would have limited the broad understanding of issues in a globalised world, whereby village communities are not isolated, but are affected by internal as well as external socio-economic and political factors, and by obvious multiple channels of migration. And the true nature of migrants' multi-sited lives – in Greece, Tirana, Korçë or wherever – would have been missed in all its materiality, hardship and emotionality.

Would the results have been different had the origin areas been in the north of Albania? This is certainly an interesting avenue to explore in future research, and some clues can already be observed in the pages of this book. For example, comparing my own findings with those from other research on migration from northern Albania to Tirana (King et al. 2003, 2006) reveals a number of interesting insights. First, while migrants from the south-east come from relatively affluent areas (by Albanian standards), those from the north and north-east originate in extremely poor zones. Similarly, the places where they settle upon arrival in Tirana and their living conditions there are poorer for the second group. Since research on migrants from northern Albania has been limited to their arrival in the capital, we know very little about the migration process from the areas of origin – was it a segmented process whereby the most affluent left while the poorest remain behind, or was it a case of entire villages relocating to peri-urban coastal areas? Comparative research into the intra-national and trans-national social fields that originate from these northern areas, alongside those originating from southern counterparts, would be of academic and development interest, given the various differences in the socio-cultural and economic background of these two regional groups of people.

As I emphasised earlier, this book is fundamentally an ethnographic study of a particular area of Albania, following the migrants out from this source. As such, there are certain limitations to the extent to which generalisations across the country or to other parts of the world can be made. Three factors that set my chosen field area apart are the historical migration to North America and Australia; the dominant role that international

migration to Greece plays in the entire migratory social field of the area; and the gradual evolution of migration since the 1990s. The second and third elements limit the scope for generalisations for other poor countries, the majority of which do not border a richer neighbour. Even in the context of Mexican-US migration, the large existing body of literature has confirmed the very high cost of accessing such migration, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Originating from rural areas, my respondents' migration presents further specificities in the analysis. Considering the limited amount of comparative research within Albanian migration generally, the need to understand how internal and international migration are used by and, in turn, affect migrants of rural and urban origin becomes apparent. Of particular interest in this context would be an examination of other destination places, especially those internationally that are considered more valuable in terms of earnings, citizens' rights and future prospects. Furthermore, the comparative approach could be applied specifically to the group of highly skilled migrants of rural and urban background so as to understand how they use internal and international migration to advance their professional development. Much has been made of engaging this segment of the migrants' population in Albania's development processes, not least through transnational networks. The gender factor would be of particular interest here: how do women and men differently consider pathways for contribution to Albania – through return or transnational activities?

To conclude, this book has provided ample evidence to support the claim that an integrated study of internal and international migration is necessary – indeed essential – in the migration-development debate. Such an approach is crucial in bringing back to the academic scene the potential of internal migration for development, particularly for origin countries of the Global South. But more than that, stepping across the boundaries of the transnational and translocal provides an opportunity for a deeper understanding of migrants and the worlds they live in and transform.



# Notes

## Chapter 1 Introduction

- 1 'Development' in this book is understood as a broad range of dimensions well beyond pure economics, while at the same time recognising its various levels of operation. Thus, at the macro- and meso-levels, reform towards the improvement of the political, institutional and physical infrastructures are key requirements for, and components of, national and local development. These structural processes are necessary for human development, which is, in turn, considered beyond GDP and income growth, to include improved access to better health care, education, housing, human rights and opportunities for prosperity and well-being.
- 2 The five centuries of Ottoman rule have recently come under closer scrutiny from historians and linguists. Their sometimes controversial publications have sparked heated public debates in Albania about various themes and key figures related to the historical period, including national hero Scanderbeg, the creation of an 'Albanian conscious' and the legacy of the Ottoman rule more generally (see e.g. Schmitt 2009; Clayer 2007). Interesting though this is, a further discussion on this topic is beyond the remit of my study.
- 3 Although for the time being, internal and international migration are held as the two main migration categories, it should be borne in mind that they are not homogenous types. Both comprise a range of possible destinations, which may introduce further variability into the analysis.
- 4 A grammatical note: I use the indefinite noun form for the names of Albanian locations such as Korçë, Durrës or Kamëz. An exception has been made for the capital city: I use the more internationally known form Tirana (instead of Tiranë). For places in Greece I use the internationally known variant of names.
- 5 Map in Figure 1.2 courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries; from [www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/europe/txu-oclc-247232977-central\\_balkan\\_pol\\_2008.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/europe/txu-oclc-247232977-central_balkan_pol_2008.jpg); last accessed December 2010.
- 6 INSTAT census data at a village level were accessed from the REPOBA office, Tirana. I am grateful to Aida Guxho, Emira Galanxhi and especially to former INSTAT director Milva Ekonomi for helping me access this information.
- 7 Balkan Egyptians (Evgjit) along with the Roma are the two 'gypsy' communities in Albania. I did not interview anyone from these groups, partly because there are only a handful of families living in just two of the villages and I was concerned they might prove too small a group to make meaningful conclusions within the specific framework of the study.
- 8 For a visual impression of the spatial expansion of Tirana's population since 1990, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Tirana\\_Expansion.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Tirana_Expansion.png); accessed November 2007.
- 9 The *Bllok* is the residential area of the former communist Politburo members. During the communist time, it was guarded by the elite Republican Guard and

entry therein was only permitted for residents and their immediate relatives. The area is now part of mini-municipality 5 bordering on mini-municipalities 2 and 10 (Figure 1.3). Most of the former top officials' residential villas have been 'taken over' by international agencies such as the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Organization for Security and Economic Co-operation in Europe (OSCE); others have been turned into trendy bars and restaurants catering primarily to these organisations' international staff and the new Albanian affluent elites. Meanwhile, newly built flats house commercial banks and multinational (e.g. telecommunications) companies.

- 10 The administrative prefecture of Korçë comprises the districts of Korçë, Pogradec, Kolonjë and Devoll. My choice for Korçë as a research site was not as straightforward as for Tirana. While general literature on Albanian internal migration guided me to initially propose part of my research in Durrës, my preliminary analysis during the first weeks of research in Devoll reoriented me towards Korçë. Its importance for my study villages was not only in terms of numbers of migrants, but also because of the regional dimension of migration patterns, as Chapter 2 makes apparent.
- 11 Ersekë is the main town of the neighbouring Kolonjë district and its eponymous road leads to it. One of the problems associated with these informal settlements is the lack of an adequate, reliable address system that can be accessed by non-locals. Most of the roads in these areas do not even appear on the few town maps one can find. Thus, most locations are marked according to a local informal system that uses key buildings as points of reference. When I was contacting potential respondents to arrange meetings, their home address would be given as follows (this example comes from Tirana): in Laprakë, behind the former Partizani factory now housing the Filanto shoe factory, near the railway lines (the settlements were built within metres of the railway line), in one of the two or three seven-storey flats there, or at such-and-such-looking house. The person would then wait to receive me there.
- 12 Macedonia is a very important destination for migrants from the Macedonian ethnic minority living in the Lake Prespa area.
- 13 This does not necessarily imply a dramatic increase in the town's population in three years; rather, the discrepancy is mostly due to data sources and collection methodology.
- 14 This has subsequently changed due, above all, to the publication of Hatziprokopiou's Sussex DPhil thesis in book form (Hatziprokopiou 2006). See also Kokkali (2008), Pratsinakis (2005) and Vathi (2010, 2011).
- 15 The statistics on Thessaloniki refer to this census, unless otherwise cited.

## Chapter 2 The migration-development nexus

- 1 The systems model was first introduced into migration theory by Mabogunje (1970), who applied it to rural-urban migration in West Africa. It has four components: the environment, the migrant, control sub-systems and adjustment mechanisms. This approach recognises causes and effects, taking into account the (positive or negative) feedback that, in turn, creates the dynamics between effects and causes. However, the model has been criticised for its rigid precision of boundaries around the system, as the migration process is more fluid in real life. The model also appears to have a limited recognition of the social elements of networks (Boyle, Halfacree & Robinson 1998). Despite the seminal status of Mabogunje's paper, his model thus has had very limited practical application in subsequent empirical research.

- 2 Over ten years ago, Skeldon (1997: 14) noted that it had become impossible for one person to keep track of the number of publications on the topic of migration and development. One can only imagine that nowadays the task is insurmountable. I thus focus here only on a few key readings. Furthermore, following my origin-country perspective in this research, I narrow my review to such literature.
- 3 Internal migrants are defined by their birthplace and as having moved across only the largest zonal demarcations within a country.
- 4 However, some of the seeming increases may be due to better data collection. For more on this, see Gammeltoft (2002: 192-193) and Ghosh (2006). Sums in dollars refer to US dollars.
- 5 It might, however, be difficult to separate the data and isolate the impacts of remittances from internal and international migration within a household, since a considerable number of families use both types as part of household survival strategies (Afsar 2003, 2005: 12). This may have implications for the design of policy intervention tools.
- 6 However, this is changing and more empirical data and theorisation on the gendered aspect of remittances are becoming available.
- 7 Skilled migration is closely linked with debates on 'brain drain' and how to turn this from a loss for the origin country to a gain – brain or otherwise. It is one of the key areas increasingly being pursued by donor governments and policymakers, as part of renewed efforts to make migration work for development. Yet, the debate on how the migration of such skilled individuals affects countries of origin is as old as the migration-development discourse itself, its own mini-pendulum having followed broadly the same swings, too (for key reviews, see Docquier & Rapoport 2004; Kapur & McHale 2005; Lowell 2002; Ozden & Schiff 2006; Skeldon 2009; Stark 2004). As with the other strands in the overarching migration-development debate, here there is also an overemphasis on international flows and scant attention to internal migration.

### Chapter 3 Albanian migration and development

- 1 This chapter is a summary of my more detailed account in Vullnetari (2007).
- 2 In his detailed ethnographic account of 'Albanian migrations', Tirta (1999) provides migration figures, destination places, living and working conditions of migrants, reasons for migration, etc., by situating them in a socio-economic and historical analysis. His is a rare example of research combining international and internal as well as labour and forced migration in the Albanian context. Although Tirta's major focus is on the period between the Albanian National Renaissance and the struggle for independence (1845-1912), it is arguably the most thorough and complete work on the subject to date.
- 3 This evocative photograph by Lewis Hine of a woman from Albania who had just landed at Ellis Island in 1905 is a magnificent piece of ethnographic treasure. Depicted in her traditional Albanian clothing, the woman's photo appeared on the front cover of the spring 1998 exhibition brochure of the Fuller Museum of Art in Brockton, Massachusetts. Additional information about this rare Lewis Hine photo can be found at [www.frosina.org/about/infobits.asp?id=132](http://www.frosina.org/about/infobits.asp?id=132); last accessed October 2011. Many thanks to Van Christo, executive director of the Frosina Information Network ([www.frosina.org](http://www.frosina.org)), an Albanian cultural resource in Boston, Massachusetts, for making a print of the photograph available.
- 4 For an in-depth study of one of these 'Albanian' towns – Piana degli Albanesi in Sicily – see Derhemi (2003).



- 5 These restrictions included: a set of permissions from local authorities first for the right to leave one's domicile (*leje e shpërnguljes*), then to be allowed to settle in the new destination (*leje banimi* or *pasaportizim*); labour force planning on behalf of enterprises; control of housing and to some extent food and consumer goods by local authorities; etc. For more details, see Sjöberg (1994). A very similar – but much harsher – set of regulations known as the *hukou* system is still in force in China. See Davin (1999).
- 6 Figure 3.1 courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries; from [www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/atlas\\_east\\_europe/albania-pop.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/atlas_east_europe/albania-pop.jpg); accessed August 2008.
- 7 For an example, see Photo 2.
- 8 Article 47 (gj) of the Penal Code of the Socialist People's Republic of Albania, 1977, Law nr. 5591 (Kuvendi Popullor i RPSSH 15.6.1977). This article dealt with matters of high treason against homeland; point (gj) dealt with defection in particular.
- 9 Such were the events that took place on 29 March 1997, when a collision between an Italian coastguard vessel and a boatful of Albanian migrants caused 87 Albanians, many of them women and children, to lose their lives. Many more have drowned crossing the Otranto Strait, also known in Albanian parlance as 'the Death Strait' or 'the Channel of Tears' (UNDP-Albania 2000: 37).
- 10 As of 2005, the Albanian Ministry of Labour was renamed the Albanian Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (MOLSAEO).
- 11 The NID is tasked to map the Albanian diaspora abroad.
- 12 These surveys took place in 2002, 2005 and 2008, with wave panels in 2003 and 2004. They have sophisticated migration modules, whose data have been analysed in a number of studies that I refer to in this book as well. See also my discussion of data on internal migration later on in this chapter. More recently, the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) of 2008-2009, also of INSTAT, contained a number of questions on migration.
- 13 There has been much controversy surrounding census questions on religion and ethnicity, linked to Albanian migration to Greece and related questions of identity; more on this comes later in this chapter.
- 14 The figures for 2010 are estimates calculated from data collected by Albanian embassies and consular offices abroad, as well as local sources (for regular migrants) and Albanian migrant organisations in the relevant host countries. This is more or less the same methodology used for the 1999 and 2005 data. However, the 2010 figures for the US and Greece seem somewhat high when compared with sources from destination countries, as we shall see. I am grateful to NID deputy director Thimi Nika for supplying me with this data.
- 15 These were large-scale police operations during which Albanian migrants were picked up off the street or from their workplace and simply deported to Albania without due legal process.
- 16 Repeat migrants would have been included in this counting.
- 17 There is also a separate register for asylum applications and decisions held at the Ministry of Public Order, but since the figures for Albanians are next to zero, I omit this from my analysis. Furthermore, the LFS has been criticised for undersampling migrants (see Maroukis 2009). I will use this data source only selectively for some analysis of migrants' profiles later on in this section.
- 18 Personal communication with Martin Baldwin-Edwards (June 2011).
- 19 This figure was confirmed by Greek authorities before a Parliamentary Committee in the summer of 2006 (Baldwin-Edwards & Apostolatos 2009). The authors further suggest that this data includes an unknown number of Albanian Vlachs, and I would add an unknown number of ethnic Albanians who presented themselves as ethnic Greeks.

- 20 I am indebted to Russell King for his contribution to updating most of the data in this section.
- 21 This table is structured in the model of Table 3.6 in King and Mai (2008: 85), which presents data for 1990–2003. Data from this source for 2004 by nationality are unavailable.
- 22 Data sources: US Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*: 2011, Population, p. 49, Table 50; from [www.census.gov/compendia/statab/2011/tables//11s0050.pdf](http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/2011/tables//11s0050.pdf); accessed May 2011. U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics; from [www.dhs.gov/files/statistics/data](http://www.dhs.gov/files/statistics/data); accessed May 2011.
- 23 Known in Albanian parlance as ‘the US lottery’, this programme run by the American government gives out 55,000 green cards every year for citizens of countries with low emigration rates in the US. The first selection takes place in a lottery-like manner, whereby applicants’ names are randomly picked by a computerised system. Qualification for an immigration visa in the second stage, however, is only possible for individuals who possess a minimum level of twelve years of schooling or the equivalent in work experience. The programme gives the possibility for the principal applicant to emigrate together with their spouse and children under 21 years of age.
- 24 Nearly 36,000 Albania-born immigrants naturalised as US citizens during 1990–2010, with a record number of over 5,000 in 2010 alone.
- 25 This has wider implications for theoretical conceptualisations of refugees and economic migrants, a division that is often blurred and artificial, as many situations in countries around the world have shown.
- 26 Some insights into the typologies and patterns of such migration are given by Orgocka (2005) in her study on the emigration of professional Albanian women to the US.
- 27 Family has been one of the strongest elements of continuity over many decades in Albanian culture and society. Its importance increased as various forms of state support present during communism collapsed immediately thereafter.
- 28 The key features of this model are: 1) heterogeneity of migrants’ nationality; 2) highly gender-specific flows from various countries; 3) migrants originating from urban as well as rural areas and a proportion being highly educated; and 4) high levels of clandestinity and irregularity. The model is based on specific characteristics of Southern European economies and societies, notably: a demand for cheap, flexible workers in the secondary and informal labour markets; a concentration of such labour (also by nationality) in segmented and niche areas such as agriculture and domestic services; manual labour being increasingly rejected by indigenous workers; a high demand for manual labour, especially as the young stay longer in education and birth rates become lower; increased female employment not being matched with increased gendered sharing of domestic work; as well as a rapidly ageing population, leading to domestic and care sector demands, filled by immigrant female labour (King 2000: 18; see also King & Zontini 2000).
- 29 Figure 3.2 courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries; from [www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/europe/greece\\_div96.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/europe/greece_div96.jpg); accessed April 2010.
- 30 Two reasons are suggested for this treatment of ethnic-Greek Albanians. First, to encourage them to settle in Greece by giving them full citizenship would be to facilitate further depopulation of the North Epirus region (Southern Albania), which Greece traditionally had irredentist claims on. Second, the divide between ethnic-Greek and ethnic-Albanian Albanians has become blurred (through marriage, name change, false documents and tactical religious conversion), so that it is increasingly difficult for the Greek authorities to determine who is a ‘true’ ethnic-Greek Albanian (King & Vullnetari 2003). The last column of Table 3.2 shows how citizenship awards for this group increased substantially only from 2007.

- 31 The status and treatment of ethnic-Greek Albanians by the Albanian government has been a source of considerable tension between Greek and Albanian authorities over the years, not least the size of the community. The 1989 Albanian census counted 58,758 ethnic Greeks, but the Greek government claims the community numbers 300,000. An impartial estimate, according to Hall (1994: 86), would be about 120,000. However, these estimates all refer to the pre-emigration period; since 1990, the rate of emigration of Southern Albania's ethnic-Greek population has been very high, as evidenced by large-scale population losses recorded in these districts in the 1989-2001 intercensal period (King 2004; King & Vullnetari 2003). The 2011 census is the latest spark to enflame these sensitive debates in the Albanian public discourse. I will come back to these population dynamics later on in this chapter.
- 32 Recent research shows that Albanian women exercise a significant degree of agency in shaping their place in Greek society and acting as bridges between their families and local communities (Vaiou & Stratigaki 2008).
- 33 For an in-depth analysis of these data sources and a critique of their reliability, see Lerch and Wanner (2008); for the 2001 census data only, see Agorastakis and Sidiropoulos (2007).
- 34 According to the current administrative structure, Albania consists of twelve prefectures (Kukës, Dibër, Shkodër, Lezhë, Durrës, Tiranë, Elbasan, Fier, Vlorë, Berat, Gjirokastrë, Korçë), 36 districts (*rrethe*), 65 municipalities, 309 communes and 3,020 villages. Each prefecture is composed of an average of three districts; each district is composed of an average of two municipalities corresponding to towns and eight or nine communes corresponding to a group of villages; each commune has an average of nine villages (INSTAT 2002: 14).
- 35 The process is highly complicated and bureaucratic even when entire families have moved. Some scholars (Tahiraj 2007) argue this was a subtle tool aimed at reducing the scale of rural-urban migration, especially to Tirana – perhaps even a longing for the communist days of strict population controls.
- 36 The ALSMS uses a division according to agro-ecological and socio-economic lines into four regions: Tirana, Coastal, Central, Mountain.
- 37 Using a different method of statistical computation, Agorastakis and Sidiropoulos (2007: 474) come to a figure of 295,870 individuals for inter-district moves.
- 38 One must also bear in mind that some of this increase resulted from yet another change in the country's administrative division, which brought the number of centres categorised as urban from 67 in 1989 to 74 in 2001 (Bërzholi 2000: 163; Heller et al. 2005).
- 39 However, it is unclear from the data whether they had already moved to these urban centres from surrounding villages in a step-wise migration.
- 40 This section is based on the 2001 census results, which record the characteristics of internal migrants over the 1989-2001 intercensal period, unless otherwise referenced.
- 41 Korovilas (1999: 109) argues that these figures are underestimates, suggesting instead that the most probable level of remittances during 1991 and 1996 was at least \$ 700 million per annum.

## Chapter 4 Leaving home: Migration patterns and dynamics

- 1 Strong alcoholic drink made from grapes.
- 2 As I was growing up, we drew images of Coca-Cola, blue jeans and forbidden 'Western life' from what was then Yugoslav and, to a lesser extent, Greek television. Many of the movies and programmes on these channels were American.

- 3 'Declassed' is my translation of the Albanian *të deklasuar*, literally meaning 'without class'. They were those considered to be the enemies of the regime and thus did not belong ideologically to the working class (*klasa punëtorë*) in urban areas, the agricultural peasantry (*fshatarësia kooperativiste*) or the professional elite (*inteligjenca*).
- 4 Apparently, those involved must have known of the specific provision from the 2005 immigration law in Greece, which 'prohibits the expulsion of women during the pregnancy period and six months after labour', if found without proper documentation (Kanellopoulos & Gregou 2006: 11).
- 5 Omonia is the main square in central Athens, the most important meeting place for Albanian migrants. It has served for years as the visible labour market where potential Greek employers come to find migrants for casual employment. Partizani Square in Tirana has the same function. It is named after the Unknown Soldier Statue situated in its middle, dedicated to those who fell during the war against Italian and German occupation.
- 6 For similar conclusions of Devoll's strong orientation towards Greece due to its geographical position and large-scale emigration there, see also De Rapper (2002a). Mai (2002: 213) found similar perceptions from Albanians living on the coast regarding their connection to Italy versus other parts of Albania, as reflected in the following quote from his research: '... it is much easier getting to Italy than getting to Pogradec from Durrës! (Holger, 16, Durrës)'.
- 7 Actually, there is a more complex social dynamic going on here. Albanians from the south-east who are not ethnic-Greeks do not consider themselves ethnic-Greeks even when they belong to the Orthodox Christian community or have claimed 'Greekness' through changes in name, religion or documents. However, many see themselves as rather similar to – and as having close, strong ties with – Greece and the Greek people, especially for those living in border areas such as Devoll. Such proximity is at times experienced as more significant when juxtaposed with the local population's feelings of cultural distance towards northern Albanians (see also De Rapper 2002a). The Greek reaction is equally complicated, as we saw in Chapter 3: Albanians are stigmatised because of their 'difference' and 'otherness'; but part of this stigmatisation is based on a kind of dangerous and unwelcome similarity – Albanians remind Greeks of their own history of poverty and emigration. Much the same has been noted for Albanians in Italy (King & Mai 2002, 2008; Mai 2005).
- 8 Here, there is an interesting congruence with Stark and Taylor's (1991) study of Mexican migration, which found that highly educated villagers were more likely to migrate to a Mexican city where their human capital qualifications would be 'recognised' and therefore 'capitalised' on, rather than go to the US, which would not recognise their school qualifications. For similar results, see Bohra and Massey's (2009) study of Nepal.
- 9 This quote brings to mind many aspects of life under the communist 'regime' in Albania. The experiences of oppression and the denial of human rights, resisted by people's search for individuality and freedom – through, for example, the subversive watching of foreign (including Greek) television in communist Albania – form a powerful analogy with Blerim's experiences as a migrant in 1990s' Greece. Although in two different countries, and belonging to two very distinct generations, Blerim's (and others') joy and excitement over newly gained freedoms as migrants in post-regularisation Greece resonate strongly with Mai's (2002) young respondents' feelings in the immediate years of the regime's collapse in Albania.
- 10 In Albanian: *ec e jakë*.
- 11 This is a classic example where education levels rise locally as higher returns are expected from migration abroad for educational purposes or to perform highly skilled work (see Clemens 2007; Docquier & Rapoport 2004; Fan & Stark 2007). Note here

that the 'creation' of the 'brain' that will later leave the country is mostly financed by external funds, not the Albanian government. I shall come back to this developmental issue in the following chapters.

## Chapter 5 Across the border: Migrants in Thessaloniki

- 1 All the interview excerpts I use in this chapter are from migrants in Thessaloniki. Therefore, I will not repeatedly specify the place after each quote.
- 2 De Rapper (2004: 164) also found such situations of joking about the claimed 'Northern Epirote' identity among returnees from Greece in other Devoll villages of a Muslim population.
- 3 First, the tobacco leaves needed to be picked early in the morning – between six and nine o'clock – as the heat of the latter part of the day felt among the tobacco plants became unbearable. The heavy wicker baskets, containing around 30 kilograms of tobacco leaves, had to be transported on one's back from one side of the field to near the main road for the horse-cart to take them to the village. In the afternoon, these leaves had to be line-dried, a process that required sitting for many hours, delicately though quickly pushing each leaf through a long, flat needle onto a string. Only in the late afternoon, after having prepared the requisite number of lines and hung them to dry, was the working day over.
- 4 In Albanian: '*Ja zoga, i shikon zoçkat o? Shqiptarët direkt, dallohen. Ne jemi të djegur nga puna o i varfrë. Ne na i morrë shpirtin këta o.*' To elaborate, this quote suggests that it is no wonder a woman does not even look at him or them.
- 5 In Albanian: *na bënë me zemër.*
- 6 Other researchers who have analysed the Greek immigration legislation, including the regularisation procedures, have emphasised how application fees are disproportionate to the processing cost of permits. See especially Baldwin-Edwards (2009: 62), who argues that, with fees ranging from € 147 to € 900 per application, 'immigrants have emerged as a money-making venture for the Greek state'.
- 7 The 2001 immigration law required an income equivalent to an unskilled worker's minimum wage, calculated at € 30 daily. This threshold was subsequently raised in 2004 and 2005. A ministerial circular by the Ministry of Interior in July 2004 stipulated that the income was to be a worker's yearly minimum wage adjusted with an additional 15 per cent (of this wage) to support the spouse and 10 per cent for each child. The 2005 immigration law raised the bar higher, with the percentages for spouse and children reaching 20 and 15 per cent respectively (Kanellopoulos & Gregou 2006: 13; Maroukis 2009: 11).
- 8 This may show an improved situation, but may also be due to better data collection. I have discussed such issues, including the validity of the LSF as a data source, in Chapter 3.
- 9 Based on information collected from migrant families in the villages cross-checked with information collected from migrants I spoke to during my fieldwork in Thessaloniki, I mapped the entire population of those from these villages living in Thessaloniki with as much accuracy as was possible. I had some difficulties with one of the villages, for which I was able to collect less-than-accurate data.
- 10 This refers to places where Albanian migrants (men, in particular) socialise or 'hang out', but do not necessarily live, although one would presume that a number reside nearby.
- 11 A notarised and translated Albanian birth certificate is needed almost every time an Albanian migrant applies for a document in Greece.

- 12 The only exception was the Devoll association created in the early 1990s in Tirana by older émigrés there. A branch of this was opened in the US in 2006. Both entities had a folk and cultural nature, aiming to preserve Albanian traditions in the internal and international Devolli diasporas.

## Chapter 6 Family, migration and socio-economic change

- 1 'Modern' as perceived by the respondents. Aspiring towards 'European modernity' is part of everyday discourse in Albanian families and the society at large, particularly regarding material culture (see also Mai 2002). Not unique to Albania, this aspiration towards modernity – often equated with a 'normal' life (as opposed to the 'ab-normal' one of communist times) – can be found in many other post-socialist societies. See, for example, Fehérváry (2002) on material culture and aspirations in post-socialist Hungary, particularly the place the kitchen and the bathroom occupy in shaping modern aspirations.
- 2 In some rare cases the roles are reversed: women 'wear the trousers' in the family. For instance, when I was doing my fieldwork in the villages, I was introduced to a potential interviewee in his mid-60s whose son worked in Greece. When I gave him an information sheet, he replied that I needed to check with 'the commander-in-chief' – his wife – if we could go ahead with the interview. Later on, during the interview it was the wife who dominated the conversation, shushing her husband several times for wanting to express his views. It seemed she made most decisions in the household regarding migration as well. For instance, their son and daughter-in-law wanted to move to Tirana once they accumulated enough capital from migration in Greece. The woman is very keen to follow them, whereas her husband wants to stay in the village. However, he does not have much choice because, for a change, the power balance does not pull his way.
- 3 In Albanian: *Jam edhe burrë edhe grua*.
- 4 These foods are notable to mention, being particularly hard to make as they require some skills and experience.
- 5 I borrow the concept of 'culture of migration' from Cornelius and Martin (1993: 501), who describe it in the Mexican context as a 'set of interrelated perceptions, attitudes, socialization processes and social structures (including transnational social networks) that grow out of the international migration experience and which encourage, validate and facilitate such migration'. The term has also been widely applied in the migration literature to places with a long historical experience of emigration, such as Ireland and the Caribbean.
- 6 Jeans, especially, were highly desired in the 1990s as they were not allowed to be worn in Albania during communism, being condemned as a sign of bourgeois liberalism.
- 7 Papailias (2003) provides an excellent analysis of the 'masculinity' of Albanian migration through hard physical labour, 'sweating blood' and sacrifice. This reassertion of masculinity when back home in Albania is even more important against the background of a post-communist reclaiming of traditional gender roles (Mai 2001), as well as experiences of 'emasculat[i]on' that Albanian migrant men have gone through while working in Greece. See also my discussion on male migrants' masculinity and sexuality in Chapter 5.

## Chapter 7 Migration and Albania's dynamic transformation

- 1 This statistic is based on 9,382 apprehensions in the first eight months of 2008.
- 2 From 1958 until 1992, Devoll was administratively part of the Korçë district (De Rapper 2002a); data from this time was therefore not collected separately.
- 3 McCarthy, Carletto, Davis and Maltoglou (2006), using data from the 2002 and 2003 ALSMS, similarly conclude that migration in rural Albania has affected land reallocation towards less labour-intensive production, although their findings suggest that most of this diversion is towards the livestock sector.
- 4 This is not unique to Albania, although it is related to a certain extent to the communist legacy. A similar stigmatisation of agricultural labour among Greek youth in the neighbouring country has impacted the depopulation of rural areas there (Cavounidis 2006; Kasimis & Papadopoulos 2005: 108). This labour force is replaced by Albanian youth who accept work in farming in Greece, but loathe the same work in Albania. Explanatory factors include low social status accorded to such work, low income from it, the fact that the work is family employment in Albania in contrast to wage labour in Greece and a lack of other migratory options. This is an example of internal migration leading to international migration through replacement, this time in a destination country (see also Skeldon 2006).
- 5 The settlements in the eastern periphery of the map actually extend beyond what can be seen in Figure 7.1.
- 6 This fits with Todaro's (1969) model of rural-urban migration in developing countries, explaining that poor villagers continue to migrate to large urban centres where unemployment is still very high because of a *hope* or *anticipation* that eventually they *will* get a job and be better off. Indeed, recent data suggest that per capita income in Tirana is 50 per cent higher than the country's average, while unemployment, at almost 20 per cent of the workforce, is also higher than the country's average (World Bank 2007a: 18).
- 7 Arif was the only interviewee who insisted he be identified by his real name, which I have done.
- 8 See Vaiou and Stratigaki (2008: 127) for examples of the use of *fakellaki* (φακελάκι, Greek for 'little envelope'; in other words, bribery) in health care provision in Greece.
- 9 The bride comes from a large coastal city, marrying a man who is from the village but lives with his family in North America. The wedding took place in Albania – this photo taken during the groom's celebrations in his village – but the young couple will live in North America. Residence in such 'preferred' migration destinations empowers village men to marry urban women, thus bridging the rural-urban gap by residing abroad.
- 10 In some cases, migrant families have even been penalised for actively seeking to take control of their lives through migration. For instance, as of 2002, poor families cannot benefit from economic aid (i.e. welfare benefits) if they have a migrant family member abroad. Whether the migrant sends remittances at all is deemed irrelevant (Tahiraj 2007: 184, 223). See Tahiraj (2007) for a scathing critique of poverty reduction policies and practice in Albania.
- 11 It was approved by the Council of Ministers on 7 November 2007, more than two years after its endorsement.

## Chapter 8 Conclusions and recommendations

- 1 My conclusion about the segmented channelling of migration types derives essentially from my analysis of the south-east Albanian rural context. Emphatically, this is not to say there is no highly skilled emigration from Albania. Indeed, as pointed out in Chapter 3, Albania has suffered a dramatic loss of its most highly educated persons (Gedeshi, Mara, Dhimitri & Krisafi 1999).
- 2 From Tahiraj (2007: 108, 114), this quote jokingly captures the essence of the government's labour market policy during the early to mid-1990s. It speaks volumes about its migration policy, too. The motor boats in Vlorë have, since the early 1990s, traditionally been used to smuggle migrants to Italy.





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