

**The Impact of Albanian Transnational Migration to Greece on Socio-
Economic Development in Fier, Albania: A Case Study**

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to my husband, Kostas, who has been a constant source of support, patience, love and encouragement during all the challenges of graduate school and life, and to my daughters Fedhra, and baby girl Elektra, who was born a couple of hours after I submitted the last revisions that the second reader had asked. They mean the world to me!!

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Abstract.

“The Impact of Albanian Transnational Migration to Greece on Socio-Economic Development in Fier, Albania: A Case Study”.

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This study attempts to assess the impact of Albanian transnational migration to Greece on the socioeconomic development of post-communist Albania focusing on the town of Fier. Adopting a gender-based perspective and a qualitative research design of semi-structured interviews on eighteen Albanian transnational migrants in Fier, Albania and Athens, Greece, I found that Albanian migrants, settled in Greece and returnees to Albania, contributed through economic and social remittances to the survival of their families and well-being of their communities in Fier. Such contributions hold the potential of fostering socio-economic transformation for both the municipality of Fier and Albania. Moreover, transnational migration encompassed family strategies and relationships between Albanian immigrants in Athens and their families in Albania, which most likely generated development and increased well-being in Fier. Finally, transnational care was mutually shown, between Albanians in Athens and their families in Fier. Such care involved financial, emotional and symbolic dimensions.

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Acronyms

CESS: Centre for Economic and Social Studies

EU: European Union

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

IMF: International Monetary Fund

INSTAT: National Institute of Statistics in Albania

IOM: International Organization for Migration

ISF: Synthetic Fertility Index

NBER: The National Bureau of Economic Research

ODA: Official Development Assistance

TFR: Total Fertility Rate

UK: United Kingdom

UN: United Nations

UN DESA: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

USA: United States of America

WTO: World Trade Organization

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Albanian immigrants and the Albanian Diaspora in the broader Mediterranean Basin have played an active and catalytic role in the socio-economic reconstruction of post-communist Albania in the 1990s. Despite the small population, Albania has witnessed massive emigration in the 1990s with the collapse of communism. The country with one of the most totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe, for 45 years under the rule of Enver Hoxha, and completely isolated from other countries, enticed me to do this study to explore the impact of migration on the socio-economic and political transformation that has taken place since the collapse of communism. My own family is among the hundreds of thousands who left Albania in search of a better future in the turbulent post-communist era.

It is well documented in the literature that migration brings about a socio-economic and political transformation in both the sending and receiving societies. As research elsewhere has shown, there is a migration-development nexus, and transnational communities and diasporas can and do contribute to the socio-economic and political transformation of the country of origin. Other scholars perceive migration as a winning process for the host countries and as a losing one for the sending countries. The theory that migrants are ‘agents of development’ has been debated and innumerable scholarly studies have been undertaken to define and assess the evidence for the

existence of the controversial migration-development nexus. Over the last ten years, migration has generated considerable interest among academics and policy-makers, giving rise to what is known as transnational migration. Besides, development policy-makers have focused on concepts such as connections, and transmission and circulation of ideas, knowledge, skills, economic resources, networks as well as people that take place among the sending and the host countries. Concepts and theoretical approaches such as the migration-development nexus, the notion of development under a transnational perspective, the concepts of economic and social remittances, as well as transnational care, and migration with a gender perspective are some of the key concepts and theories that will be utilized in this paper.

This study records and interprets the massive flows of migration and assesses the impact of Albanian immigrants and Albanian transnational communities -established in Greece since the late 1990s- on post-communist Albania, and specifically the socio-economic development in the town of Fier. My research locations are Athens, Greece, and Fier, Albania. Athens is the capital of Greece, a member-state of the European Union since 1981, with a metropolitan area population surpassing three million and the city where Western civilization was born. Fier is a medium-size city, industrial and rich in historic monuments, located in southwest Albania. The archaeological park in Apollonia, an ancient Greek colony in the Fier region, near the village of Pojani (Polina) attracts a great number of tourists every year.

This paper is divided into eight chapters. Following this introduction, in chapter two, I present the theoretical approaches which are relevant to this research, and which I have used in the analysis of my findings. In the third chapter, I describe Albania's current socio-demographic and economic profile highlighting Albania's post-communist economic transformation and

development. In the fourth chapter, I examine migration and diasporic communities, globally, and from Albania to Greece in particular. In the fifth chapter, I explain the research methodology used in collecting data and the qualitative methods that I followed. In chapters six and seven I present the findings of the case study of Albanian immigrants from Fier to Albania and Returnees to Fier from Athens, respectively. Finally, in chapter eight, I summarize the key findings of this study and identify a possible research agenda for the future.

1.2 Thesis Statement and Research Objectives

I contend that Albanian migrants, settled in Greece and Albanian migrants returning to Albania, contribute through economic and social remittances to the survival of their families and well-being of their communities back in Fier. Such contributions appear to foster potential socio-economic change to the neighborhood but also carry an important transformative potential for the municipality and the country. I argue that transnational migration encompasses family strategies and ongoing relationships between the Albanian immigrants in Athens and the extended family in the country of origin, which has the potential to lead to economic growth and increased well-being in Fier..

My first objective is to explore the social, economic, and emotional ties of Albanian immigrant men and women in Athens with families, and communities back in Albania. I look at the gendered nature of connections, contributions, and exchanges between migrants/ diasporas and families/communities in the city of Fier and the significance of transnational links to the survival and well-being of their families back in the community of Fier. Moreover, I explore the impact of financial and social remittances as a ‘survival’ and/or ‘development’ strategy, the provision of

‘gifts’ and transnational care as a social remittance potentially contributing to the social and economic development of the town of Fier.

The second objective is to investigate the impact of Albanian returnees to Fier with a gendered-based perspective. I explore the contributions of the returnees, and I discuss the consequences of return migration on the city of Fier, the significance of the family, and the economic capital they bring and use in the hometown for their families’ well-being.

1.3 Methodology

This is a qualitative research project. My methodology in collecting primary data consists of semi-structured interviews in two research sites (Athens, Greece, and Fier, Albania) with questions that cover the basic study topic and themes. I conducted 10 interviews with male and female adult migrants from Fier in Athens, and 8 interviews with migrant men and women who have returned to Fier.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study validates the importance of a “migration-development nexus” and diasporas in development adding further evidence to the literature on migration. My findings provide a knowledge basis for assessing the theory of the migration-development nexus using Albania and its immigrants and diasporas in Greece as a case study. Moreover, this study indicates that transnational family bonds are strong between Albanian immigrants and their family members in

Fier. Economic and social remittances and transnational communities contribute to the survival and well-being of the community of Fier. However, I cannot prove that Albanian returnees have contributed to the socio-economic transformation of Fier. In sum, this thesis chronicles the transnational migration-development link and the remittances-development relationship that underlie the potential for the socio-economic transformation of Albania focusing on Fier as a case study.

1.5 Summary

To sum up, this thesis argues that Albanian transnational migration to Greece carries a transformative potential for the socio-economic development of Albania and presents Fier as a case study. In the process, I illustrate the positive relationship of the transnational ties that Albanian immigrants strive to forge and maintain with their family members and other relatives in their hometown to facilitate the transmission and circulation of new ideas, skills, and economic resources. I have attempted to highlight the significance of economic and social remittances in the socio-economic survival and well-being of Albania as well as the provision of transnational care in all its dimensions which demonstrates the social and economic transformation of the town of Fier. Regarding gendered perspectives, there are assigned roles for men and women in the Albanian case. In the traditional family model, men were expected to send financial remittances and women remittances in kind. I also contend that this thesis cannot “prove” that Albanian returnees contributed to the socio-economic transformation of Fier. Although they applied their knowledge, expertise and skills (i.e. human development) they had gained in Athens to the new businesses they opened upon their return to Fier, some development had already taken place before they arrived.

However, it is important to note that some changes are observed in Fier related to the knowledge that was utilized in their investment initiatives.

CHAPTER TWO

TOWARD A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

I will present the main concepts and theories that I have utilized in framing this study and analyzing its findings. First, I will start with the theories of international migration, introducing theories and concepts of gender and migration. I will continue with the definition of transnational migration, development, and the notion of gendered development. In this context, I will present the much-debated migration-development nexus and the role of remittances, economic and social, in the socio-economic transformation of the sending societies. Lastly, I will end by examining transnational care, using a gender perspective, and theories of return migration and their impacts.

2.2 Background: Concepts and theories

There is a flourishing literature of international migration studies in which scholars have emphasized theories and concepts of migration, migration and development, transnational migration, immigrant remittances as a vehicle to development, transnational care, return migration, and gender and migration. Furthermore, the notion of development has been central in this debate, as theorists have debated the meaning of ‘development’. Does development encompass only economic growth and eradication of poverty? Or does it encompass social, economic, human, and political transformation as well? These have been some of the key questions. Development has

also been linked to return migration which is perhaps one stage in a transnational migration process. De Haas (2005) argues that we cannot refer to “permanent”, “temporary,” and “return” migration in a world where migrants maintain ties with their families in two or more societies (p. 1273). Thus, this last argument may have significant theoretical consequences because it indicates that integration in destination countries and engagement with the country of origin can complement each other. Empirical studies show that transnational ties can be maintained through temporary visits, monetary and social remittances, and other migration patterns (De Haas, 2010, p. 248).

The significance of migration has been extensively researched and it has been shown that migration is important for socio-economic and political transformation in both sending and receiving countries (Massey *et al*, 1998). Scholars have argued that migration leads to development in the countries of origin through remittances, investments, and entrepreneurship; in addition, it leads to social change, particularly in South-European countries (Massey *et al*, 1998). Moreover, social remittances (ideas, behaviours, skills, knowledge, identities, and social capital that flow from the receiving to the sending countries’ communities) have attracted the attention of scholars because they may have a potential contribution to the growth of the receiving community (Levitt, 1998, p. 927). Very little is known about the gender dimension of remittances and the consequences it has on development (Vullnetari and King, 2011, p. 2). King and Vullnetari (2011) contend that most of the studies around gender and remittances focus on who is a better remitter. In order to gain a better picture of gendered remittances in migration, Vullnetari and King suggest a transnational perspective analysis that conceptualizes remittances as an activity that takes place between migrants’ countries of origin and host societies. They also suggest a gendered approach that recognizes gendered power relations in both sending and destination countries, and the impact that migration and remittances have on gender power relations (p. 41). Moreover, they suggest

that remittances and gender should be approached methodologically by conducting ethnographic research (following Marcus 1995), and they should include social, technological, and in-kind remittances (Vullentari and King, 2011, p. 4). Transnational care has also received significant attention over the last few decades. Research has shown that care is provided by both women and men, and it is a multi-faceted activity: transnational care can be financial, emotional, and symbolic (Baldassar 2007; Evergeti and Ryan 2011; Zontini and Reynolds 2007).

2.3 International Migration: Concepts and Theories

Earlier kinds of migration movements have been conceptualized as linear, well defined, cross border movements where immigrants move permanently to the destination country (Tastsoglou, 2019, p.3). Migration has generally been explored as a male modeled movement and gender has been approached as an “add-on” to male-centered migration models in migration studies (Tastsoglou, 2019, p.5). Essentially, gender and migration were developed at the end of the 20th century and since then they have been subjected to important shifts. From the beginning of the 1970s, migration studies have focused on gender as a relational concept as a main category in the whole migration process, influencing choices, conditions, and consequences of migration. Lastly, gender has been conceptualized intersectionally in the last two decades where transnational migration outcomes, processes, and their institutional contexts are the main focus of the field of gender and migration (Tastsoglou, 2019, p. 5).

In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, migration was re-conceptualized under a transnational perspective. According to Faist, Fauser, and Reisenauer (2013), the movements across borders and the repeated economic, political, and familial transactions (transnational

practices) define contemporary migration. These movements and transactions or transnational practices across borders consist of migrants, communities, non-migrants, and their associations (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004), but also involve ideas, capital goods, transnational families, and services (Faist *et al.* 2013). Transnational spaces are developed by transnational practices. Based on Faist *et al.* 2013, transnational spaces encompass ties, movements, networks of organizations, and transactions that occur across borders. Transnational migration, which emerged in the 1990s, examines the spatial mobility of transnational movements and ties and the implications of those practices in the community.

Albanian migration to Greece started as a classic economic one-way migration with the collapse of communism (Petrinioti, 1993, p.27) and evolved into a transnational migration movement, with on-going back and forth movements of migrants in the transnational social space of the Southern Balkans. As migration became transnational, families were transformed into transnational families. Those transnational families and their impact on development are explored and analyzed in this thesis.

2.4 Transnationalism and Transnational Migration

In simple terms, the ties that immigrants maintain with their own family, friends, and community (in their country of origin) are their transnational linkages. Since the 1990s, scholars have argued that transnational bonds evolve between the host and sending countries when social, economic, religious and cultural activities are transmitted (Basch *et al.* 1994, Faist 2000, Glick Schiller *et al.* 1992, Grasmuck & Pessar 1991, Guarnizo 1997, Itzigsohn *et al.* 1999, Jacoby 2004,

Kivisto 2001, Kyle 2000, Levitt 2001, Mahler 1998, Portes *et al.* 1999, Smith & Guarnizo 1998) (as cited in Levitt, 1998, p. 928).

According to Faist, Fauser, and Reisenaver (2013), the term transnational is multi-faceted. First, transnational communities are the communities where an exchange of ideas takes place but also, goods, capital, migrants, and non-migrants are engaged across the borders. Second, the transactions of migrants across borders lead to the creation of social relations, and transnational social spaces (p.2). Those symbolic and social ties among migrants and non-migrants defined by social cohesion and mutual emotional responsibilities, form transnational communities (Faist, Fauser and Reisenaver, 2013, p.14). Third, transnationality characterizes the direct relationship among migrants and non-migrants across borders who are involved in ongoing transactions of services, goods, ideas, practices, and circulation of remittances (Faist, Fauser, and Reisenaver 2013, p. 2).

For the last two decades, many scholars have attempted to address transnational migration by providing a trans-local view (Levitt & Nadya Jaworsky, 2007, p. 130). Lucassen (2006) argues that transnationalism does not only connect communities across borders (Levitt and Nadya Jaworsky, 2007, p.131). Notably, he identifies three forms of transnationalism: bi-local, bi-national, or pan-ethnic. Essentially, transnationalism connects communities not only between two countries but also at a national or ethnic level. Transnational communities extend over borders. Many scholars argue that migrants always preserved their links with their hometown (Levitt and Nadya Jaworsky, 2007, p.131). Notwithstanding, what is important to stress is that a transnational perspective is looking not only at social formations but also at the process of cross-border nation-state transactions.

In contrast, circular migration is defined as a type of temporary migration where immigrants stay temporarily in the receiving society, moving back and forth between sending and hosting country. Circular migration and return migration are overlapping concepts as return is part of the circular movement. (European Migration Network, 2011). The circular nature allows the migrants to look for employment opportunities in both sending and receiving societies. On the other hand, transnational migration indicates that migrants settle in the destination country but also maintain or forge multiple ties and networks connecting them to their country of origin in an ongoing way.

In sum, many scholars have discussed the notion of transnationalism but it is important to stress that the circulation of economic and social remittances from one country to another enables transnational communities to develop and transform socially, economically, and politically in the receiving country (Levitt, 1996). In the case study of Fier, the broader research problem is about understanding the migration-development nexus in the case of Albanian migration to Greece. To understand the relationship between migration and development and the articulation of social remittances, the impact they may have on the country of origin needs to be addressed. Remittances represent the powerful links that unfold transnationally with the intention to enhance the well-being of those who live in the home country (De Haas, 2010, p. 248-249). To address the ongoing transnational links of Albanian transnational immigrants in Athens I need to look at socio-economic remittances and transnational care.

2.5 Theories of Development

The notion of ‘development’ has been examined in three phases. In the first wave, during the 1950s and 1960s, development related to remittances and return migration. Specifically, in the 1950s researchers and policy-makers looked at the impactful contribution of financial and social remittances to the economic growth in the South, an argument which stemmed from modernization theory and the view that state capacity could bring development and address migration based on national needs (Faist and Fauser. 2011, p.5).

The 1970s and 1980s brought phase two with ‘dependency’ as the new term for ‘development’. The modernization theory about the impact of migration to development was replaced by migration creating underdevelopment. Dependency theory led to the belief that migration created underdevelopment and brain drain, as many well-educated individuals left their countries of origin and moved to industrialized countries for the benefit of developed countries (Faist and Fauser. 2011, p.6).

Finally, in phase three, since the 1990s new theories described migration and development as giving rise to the transnational circulation. ‘Globalization’, network society’, and ‘world society’ reflected the importance of the migrant in the development of both sending and receiving countries. In particular, due to migration, development may increase through the circulation of people, ideas, and remittances but also through temporary migration and return which can reduce brain drain (Faist and Fauser. 2011, p.7).

The meaning of development has been changing over time. Scholars, economists, and policymakers have made efforts to define the term development from different perspectives. I

argue that development is a complex and multi-faceted process that encompasses economic, political, social, and human transformation. It has a broader meaning which is not restricted only to the economic growth, eradication of poverty, and political change. It involves human and social change, enhancement in education, health standards, and equity in our society. Part of the developmental process is equity among men and women as well.

2.6 The Development-Migration Nexus Discourse

The development-migration nexus has acquired high importance in the 21st century for policy-makers and social scientists (De Haas 2005, Piper 2009, de Haas 2010, Faist, Fauser, and Kivisto, 2011). According to Bastia (2013), migration and development relationships can not only be conceptualized in economic terms; development cannot be seen as a purposive intervention. Bastia (2013) argues that development in the above relationship does not recognize the social change which is linked to migration (p.464). Besides, Piper (2009) argues that development is often perceived as economic growth in the migration-development nexus, and social dimensions of development are denigrated (p. 97).

Another fundamental factor that the migration-development nexus ignores is the gender perspective in migration (King, Dalipaj and Mai, 2006, Kunz 2008), where women are invisible in the migration process (in the 1960s and 1970s). Women were seen as secondary migrants who usually accompanied their husbands as primary migrants abroad. However, in the 1980s, women migrants became more visible in the migration literature when feminist literacy theorists disapproved of the male-dominated literature (Morokvasic, 1983). In the 1990s, attention was

brought to the impact of gender in the migration journey, which in turn launched a new beginning in the gender migration literature (Willis and Yeoh 2000). It is noteworthy to add that research was conducted mainly with women migrants from Asia to the North where women have marked a considerable interest in migration for many decades (Piper, 2004, p. 217).

In sum, it can be concluded that the migration-development nexus approach a) understands development as mostly economic growth, b) neglects gender in migration and development, and c) ignores contemporary transnational communities that allow for more circularity.

2.7 Diaspora and Diaspora-Development Nexus

Diaspora is a large group of people, communities, or even trans-nationalized individuals who share a similar heritage or homeland, identity characteristics, nationality, and religion, who have since moved out of their country. These people preserve socioeconomic and cultural bonds with their homeland (Cohen, 2008). The word diaspora derives from the Greek word ‘διασπορά’ (diaspeirein ‘disperse’, from dia ‘across + speirein ‘scatter’) which indicates scattering of seeds (Cohen, 2008). Apart from the Jewish Diaspora, the Albanian Diaspora comprises one of the largest in the world, as percentage of the population of Albania (Leka, 2013; Pustina 2016).

According to Faist and Fauser (2011), the migration-development nexus shapes and transforms the politics, culture, and economics within and across the borders of nation-states (p.22). Diaspora and development are connected in the sense that organizations, networks, and other local and international associations formed in the sending and destination countries may promote socio-economic and political transformation in the sending country. New initiatives take

place by development agencies, national, and local governments to cooperate and foster migrant communities during their transnational relationships and engagements with their hometowns (Faist and Fauser, 2011, p.19). All these initiatives are urged by immigration states for the benefit of development of the sending countries. Numerous international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Bank, in cooperation with governments in sending countries, have emphasized the contribution of Diasporas and remittances for the sustainability and post-conflict reconstruction of developing countries (Sørensen, Van Hear and Engberg-Pedersen, 2003, p. 294).

Interestingly, the Albanian Diaspora is one of the largest diasporas compared to Albania's population. Its contributions to the socio-economic and political evolution of the country have shaped conditions for favourable development outcomes in the country of origin. Furthermore, the formation of transnational links has promoted a positive relationship between the migrants and their compatriots in the sending country. It should be noted that the difference between transnational communities and diasporas is that diasporas extend over generations. In other words, historical continuity across generations characterizes diaspora. Transnational communities have emerged recently and do not extend beyond one generation (Bauböck & Faist, 2010). Cohen (1997) suggests that 'time has to pass' before a migration can be conceptualized as a diaspora. In terms of contributions to development, diasporas and transnational communities work in similar ways and their impacts are important for the sending countries.

I conducted my research in Fier and Athens and focused on the strong transnational family bonds between the Albanian transnational families on both sides of the border, in Greece and Albania as well.

2.8 Remittances as Vehicles of Development

‘Remittances as an agent of development’ is a notion that has been widely debated in migration studies, with scholars such as Raúl Delgado-Wise, Humberto Márquez, and Selene Gaspar arguing that remittances do not promote sustainability and local development initiatives in the sending country. Instead, remittances create a dependency on family members, leisure, and comfort (Delgado Wise, Márquez & Gaspar, 2015). Many scholars, political leaders, and policymakers have attempted to demystify the migration-development nexus, and whether remittances contribute to the socio-economic transformation of the sending country. It is argued that receiving countries benefit most from migration and cheap labor. However, there are advocates of the remittances-development link theory who believe that remitting is a way of making some contributions to the country of origin promoting local development through self-help initiatives and other investment initiatives. According to the economist Kapur (2003), remittances form the new “development mantra”. Based on his theory, monetary transfers can generate development in developing countries and can initiate new investments (Massey *et al*, 1998). Looking at the development-migration nexus (Castles, de Haas & Miller, 2013) and based on some empirical data that can prove that linkage, remittances may have a positive impact on national development as new development initiatives and investments take place. Research has shown that immigrants have made major contributions to their countries of origin, drastically impacting the socio-economic transformation of the country through monetary transfers and particular investments (De Haas, 2010, p. 255).

Another advocate of the development-migration-remittances relationship is Airola (2007) who argues that remittances may be considered ‘an agent of development’. For example, Airola

(2007) supports that remittances may have a favourable impact on the sending country because of their use in healthcare, housing, and investment goods. With regard to the latter theory, this study confirms the significance of remittances on the sending country in terms of healthcare contributions (p.852).

2.9 Types of Remittances: Economic and Social

Immigrants' contribution to the sending countries through monetary support is crucial, but the transfer of knowledge is valuable as well in the development of the sending country. The contributions of economic transfers to the sending countries have been significant and beneficial for survival but also for the economic transformation of the countries of origin. Levitt and Nyberg-Sørensen (2004) highlight the importance of social remittances in transforming the sending country's social and political life. According to Levitt (1998), social remittances are the ideas, identities, practices, behaviours, and social capital that emigrants bring back to their countries of origin, investing in entrepreneurship and enhancing the quality of life of the sending society (p.927). Therefore, social remittances contribute to the development of transnational collectivity, or in other words, the diaspora develops the interactive relationship of migrants and non-migrants in the sending country (Levitt, 1998, p.927). Besides, Faist and Fauser (2011) argue that social transfers have a positive impact on the promotion of development because they are affiliated with the modern world and express fundamental freedoms and rights such as human rights, gender equity, and democracy (p.3).

2.10 Transnational Care with a Gender-Based Perspective

Transnational care is multi-faceted and multi-directional: it can involve physical, financial, in-kind services, and emotional, social, and symbolic transfers (Baldassar 2007; Evergeti and Ryan 2011; Zontini and Reynolds 2007). Care can also operate in many directions. For example, it can be provided from immigrants to family in the country of origin but also from family in the sending country to the immigrants in the destination society. Furthermore, care may stem from cultural customs such as feelings of ‘obligation’ or ‘respect’. Remittances can be financial and social and are sent to individuals in the country of origin while care which is directed toward individuals in both the destination society as well as the country of origin. Neither transnational care nor remittances are an exclusively female activity. Both men and women provide transnational care in their families and send remittances. Not all remittances are expressing “care” and not all “care” takes the form of remittances. Transnational caregiving can be provided by members of the family who come as visitors to look after their grandchildren, cousins, or nieces/nephews, but it can also be seen across the borders when migrant men and women play the role of a caregiver to their children or other family members who become caregivers for their family members or friends, back in the country of origin. In any case, the provision of care can be a paid or unpaid activity across the borders. Moreover, transnational care is observed through monetary transfers when they are sent for the purchase of medications or other needed items. Remittances that are sent to families for medications and needed items are forms of care provision.

In the last decades, there has been an increasing interest in transnational care across borders and significant work has been carried out (Tastsoglou and Dobrowolsky, 2017). Rhacel Salazar Parreñas (2000) began her work focusing on reproductive labour during the migration process and

‘the international transfer of caregiving’, which are known as “care chains” (Hochschild 2000). Essentially, “global chains of care” indicate that women from developing countries (from the “South”) migrate to the “North” and are employed as nannies and domestic workers for wealthy families. According to Yeates (2005), however, those migrant women have left behind their own families and probably their children who are taken care of by other family members who are not being paid (p. 229). The role of transnational families, caring responsibilities, and gender dimensions, and the implications of these global chains seem to receive the attention of scholars in the care literature (Evergeti and Ryan, 2011, p. 361).

In this study, transnational care among migrants’ families involves emotional, psychological, and financial support. That kind of transnational care does not entail caregiving for pay or emphasis on power relations and social divisions. With respect to the gender perspective, both male and female migrants seem to be engaged in providing transnational care both from Athens to family members back in Fier, or by migrants upon returning to Fier. The types and frequency of care provided appear to be similar by both men and women, regardless of gender expectations.

2.11 Return Migration

Research has shown that migrants who return contribute to the socio-economic development of their countries of origin (De Haas, Fokkema & Fihri, 2015, p. 416).

Based on neoclassical migration theory (NE), return migration is considered as a failure of immigrants to integrate into the host country; migration is viewed as an individual’s personal

choice to move to a country where they can increase their income or utility. Return migration is undertheorized and is often poorly understood. The reason behind this statement is that returnees do not have to report to any government agency. Return migration is often linked to migration process which leads to another migration. According to Batistella (2018), return migration should be approached as a diversified process. In particular, scholars should understand return migration based on the time it takes place, the accomplishment of the migration activity, the migrants' experience, and the preparedness of the migrants, their families, and the associated institutions. Indeed, migration has a significant role in the development process, and because of that importance, return migration should take place in an environment where return migration policies are applied for the reintegration of returnees to the country of origin providing the returnees with opportunities and knowledge on the labour market in the country of origin. Finally, there should be mutual cooperation among the origin and destination countries that could support the preparedness of the returnees and their families to their hometown (Center for Migration Studies, 2018).

The new economics of labour migration (NELM) emerging in the 1980s and 1990s, criticized neo-classical migration theory (Massey *et al*, 1993:436), arguing that return migration is a successful process where migrants have been able to gain sufficient experience, knowledge, and skills to return to their origin countries and start a new life. According to NELM, the neo-classical migration theory does not focus on constraints in the migration-development relationships. The NELM theory is based on the belief that people, families, and households do not only try to increase family income but also try to decrease and spread risk by selecting those family members who will be most "successful" at migrating. Thus, internal, and international migration can be seen as a household response as migrant remittances assure income security for the family households

in the sending countries. Hence, the role of households is important in the migration process as new investments take place and a better welfare is accomplished (Stark, 1980), (as cited in De Haas, 2010, p. 243). Stark (1978, 1991) also focused on humans in a broader context in society by saying that there is a collective effort among people, families, and households that all should contribute to the increase of income and reduction of the risks (as cited in De Haas, 2010, p. 243).

However, de Haas, Fokkema & Fihri (2015) argue that more research is required, based on more representative data, to understand the reasons behind migrants' return. They suggest that researchers should investigate the heterogeneity of migrants. A more holistic and complementary theory is needed to explain return migration intentions (p. 427).

Other than permanent return, temporary returns or visits have received scholars' attention. Essentially, return migration can be promising because migrants focus on the potential that implementing investment and other business initiatives have. Furthermore, the formation of hometown associations, or 'diaspora knowledge networks' can lead to the development of the country (Faist and Fauser, 2011, p. 19). Hence, their permanent and temporary return can be beneficial for the sending country because migrants have acquired all the knowledge to transfer to the diasporic communities and hometown associations upon their return.

2.12 Conclusion

The literature that has been reviewed fleshes out key concepts in transnational migration, development, diaspora, remittances, transnational care, and return migration that can provide us with a more comprehensive approach to migration studies. Approaching development with a

transnational lens enables us to gain a deeper understanding of the development-migration nexus. The new era of development involves cross-border engagements among migrant communities (Faist and Fauser. 2011, p.8). Regarding gender perspectives, both men and women are engaged with transnational care and articulate a positive relationship among the families across the borders. In this chapter, I also discussed the role of remittances and transnational care. Remittances and transnational care may be overlapping concepts and they both encompass financial and social support to the immigrants across borders. Ultimately, transnational care is multi-faceted and multi-directional and stems from cultural ethics and customs such as ‘respect’, ‘obligation’ and a sense of ‘fulfillment’ towards the parents of the immigrants.

Gaining a deeper understanding of the migration process and its outcomes in both the destination and sending countries allows us to explore the significance of transnational migration and social remittances for the socio-economic development of the country of origin. In the current study, I will focus on evaluating the significance of transnational migration and remittances of Albanian migrants in Athens on the hometown of Fier, and on Albania.

CHAPTER THREE

SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PROFILE OF ALBANIA

3.1 Introduction

Social and political analysts consider Albania a ‘unique’ case because it has been oppressed, socially, politically, and economically under the totalitarian regime of Enver Hoxha for 45 years, isolated from the rest of the world. With the collapse of the old regime, in 1989, Albania witnessed large emigration flows with the opening of the borders in the 1990s. Albanian migration can be seen as ‘unique’ because of the sudden, massive and explosive manner in which Albanian migration took place, upon the collapse of communism. In the midst of poverty and political chaos, those who could leave, left ‘running’ to escape poverty, seek employment, and gain the freedom they had been deprived of under communism. However, Albanian transnational migration to Greece overall cannot be viewed as a unique case because quite often people migrate to neighbouring countries that have cultural similarities with, especially in South to South migration. Such migrants are faced with similar issues as the Albanian transnational migrants to Greece. During the last two decades, Albania has been undergoing social, economic, and political transformation displaying considerable progress in many sectors. This chapter is divided into three sections: a) the current socio-demographic and economic profile of Albania, which is important to this study as it illustrates the socio-economic and political transitions of the country and the role of migration and of transnational communities in these transformations, b) a brief economic history of Albania, and c) a brief historical overview of political regimes, regime changes and reforms in Albania from 1912 to 1990, with emphasis on the totalitarian regime of the dictator Enver Hoxha.

3.2 Albania's Socio-Demographic and Economic Profile

3.2.1 Location and population profile

Albania is a small country located on the Balkan Peninsula in Southeast Europe. It shares borders with Montenegro to the northwest, Kosovo to the northeast, North Macedonia to the east, and Greece to the south. Also, Albania shares maritime borders with Italy and Croatia. According to the National Institute of Statistics in Albania (INSTAT) (Instituti Shqiptar I Statistikës), Albania's population was estimated to be 2.86 million in 2019 (INSTAT, 2019).

The following map shows the geographic location of Albania and the neighbouring countries.



Map 1. Map of Albania (Retrieved from Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc.)

Albania is divided into 12 prefectures: Berat, Diber, Durres, Elbasan, Fier, Gjirokaster, Korce, Kukes, Lezhe, Shkoder, Tiranë, and Vlorë. It also has 60 municipalities. The capital of the country is Tiranë, the largest city where most economic and commercial activities take place. The majority of the population are Albanians (82.6 per cent). Greeks residing in Albania constitute 0.9 per cent, Roma mark 0.3 per cent and the undeclared or unknown are 15.5 per cent of the population (Census, 2011). Thus, nearly all speak Albanian (98.8 per cent), the official language of Albania, and the rest 0.5 per cent speak Greek, 0.6 per cent other languages and 0.1 per cent are undeclared (Census, 2011). Regarding religion, 56.7 per cent are Muslims, 10.0 per cent of the population are Catholics, 6.8 per cent are Orthodox, and 5.5 per cent are Agnostics, Atheist mark 2.5 per cent, Bektashi amount to 2.1 per cent, Other 0.2 per cent and the undeclared or unknown mark 16.2 per cent of the population (Census, 2011).

3.2.2 Social Profile of Albania

The socio-demographic profile of a country is revealing Albania's stage of development and potential. Fertility and mortality rates, life expectancy and educational profile, marriage and divorces rates and flows of foreigners and refugees in the host country are some of the features examined in this chapter.

3.2.3 Births and deaths in Albania in 2019

During the year 2019, 28,561 births were recorded, posting a decline by 1.3% compared to 2018. Infant mortality was about 9.7 deaths per 1,000 births for boys and 8.0 for girls (INSTAT, 2019).

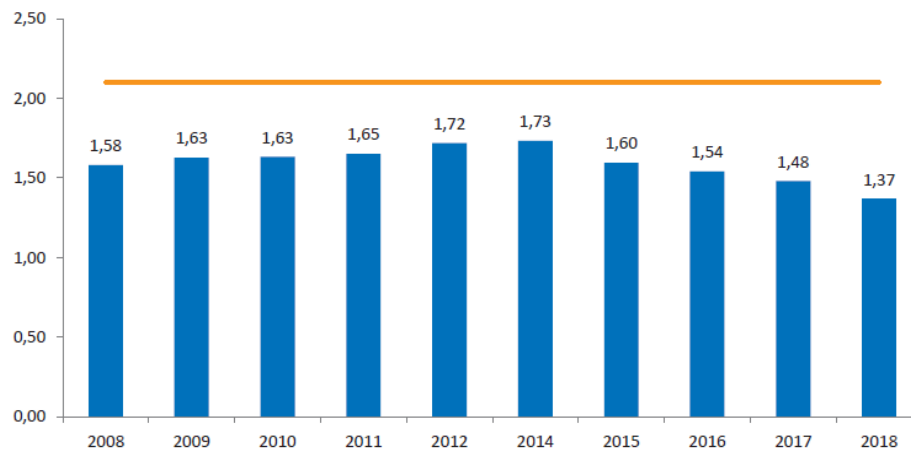
The number of deaths that were reported in 2019 was 21,937, showing a decrease by 0.6% compared to 2018. Regarding the natural population, an increase was recorded in the fourth quarter of 2019 marking 2,489 births more than deaths and reporting an increase by 33.7 % compared to the fourth quarter of the year 2018 (INSTAT, 2019).

The gender ratio by age group showed that men prevailed in the age group 35-39 years over women. In 2018, life expectancy at birth for women was 80.5 years and for men was estimated at 77.4 years. For women, the median age was 37 years and for men, it was 35 in 2018 (INSTAT, 2019).

3.2.4 Fertility Rates

According to the synthetic fertility index (ISF) in 2018, the average number of births that a woman was expected to give was 1.37 children, indicating that out of 100 women 138 children were born. The average age at birth was 28.6 years. As displayed on the below figure (Fig.1), the fertility rate in 2018 indicated a decrease compared to the previous years (2008-2019) (INSTAT, 2019).

Figure 1. Total fertility rate



Source: Retrieved from INSTAT, 2019.

The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has shown a decline from about 5 children per woman in 1950–55 to around 2.5 children per woman in 2010–15 globally (United Nations, 2015). Europe had the lowest fertility worldwide in 2010-15 with a TFR of 1.6. The causes and implications vary for each country and fertility decline may have diverse consequences.

Albania's fertility rate declined to 1.37 children per woman in 2018 (INSTAT, 2019) when in 1960 women used to have around 6 children. Fertility decline may bring socio-economic development to the country as women can invest in their education or their children's education, and infant and mortality rates may decline as well (United Nations, 2013). Thus, women can enter the labor force and contribute to the economic growth of the country. This statement might indicate a short-term win-to-win situation as per capita income might be increased. However, in the long term, these low birth rates may become associated with a negative potential for human capital development and a loss of labor force. Researchers David Bloom, David Canning, Gunther Fink, and Jocelyn Finlay argue that after a few years the working-age will be an old-age generation and

there will be a shift in new young working-age as cited in Laurent Belsie in nber.org (National Bureau of Economic Research).

Albania is facing a rapidly ageing population as the birth rate remains low, and labour productivity is lower than in any other country in Eastern Europe, measured as GDP output per worker. (Tirana Times, 2018), The GDP output per worker in Albania in 2016 was about US\$31,000, while it was US\$60,000 per worker in Lithuania, US\$57,000 in Estonia, and US\$48,000 in Romania," World Bank (2017).

3.2.5 Marriages and Divorces

According to the Ministry of Justice, the number of marriages recorded in 2018 was 23,104, while divorces during the same period were 4,846. The divorce rate in 2018 was 21.6 per 100 marriages (INSTAT, 2019), showing an increase compared to the years 2014-2018 (Table 1).

Table 1. Marriages and divorces, 2014-2018

Marriages and divorces, 2014 - 2018

Years	Total marriages	*Total divorces	Divorces per 100 marriages
2014	23,769	4,240	17.8
2015	24,997	3,761	15.0
2016	22,562	4,345	19.3
2017	22,641	4,508	19.9
2018	23,104	4,846	21.0

**Source: Ministry of Justice*

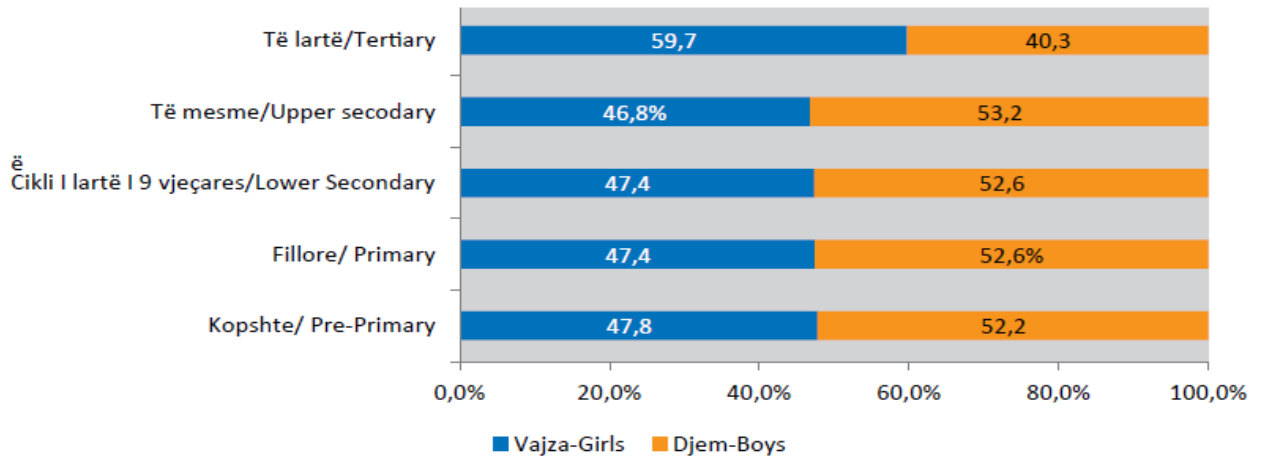
Note: Data Adapted from INSTAT, 2019, by the author

53.0 per cent of women got married up to the age of 24, and up to 80.5 per cent of them when they were 29 years old. 54.6 per cent of men got married up to the age of 29, and 82.4 per cent got married by the age of 34. Thus, the average age for marriage was 29 years for women and 30.2 for men respectively (INSTAT, 2019).

3.2.6 Educational Profile

Albanians are well-educated. According to INSTAT (2019), 88.4 % of women and 92.2% of men over 25 years have completed secondary or higher education, respectively. (Labor Force Survey, INSTAT, 2019). As the following figure (Fig. 2) indicates, the percentage of those who have graduated from a University is 59.7 % for girls and 40.3 % for boys. 46.8% of girls and 53.2 % boys graduated from High School, 47.4 % boys and 52.6% completed the lower secondary school respectively as shown below. Last, 47.4% of boys and 52.6% of girls completed primary education, and 47.8% of boys and 52.2% of girls completed Pre-Primary school.

Figure 2. Pupils and students by level of education and sex 2017-18 in %



Note: Adapted from “Burrat Dhe Gratë Në Shqipëri, 2019, Women and Men in Albania”, INSTAT 2019 by the author.

In 2017-2018, those students who attained upper secondary education is 93.9 %. Pupils who graduated with basic education from a public school account for 92.7 % while 7.3 % are enrolled in private institutions. Furthermore, it should be noted that 88.4% of total upper secondary school pupils attend public institutions and 81.9% of the students are enrolled in public education in tertiary level. The fields that the Albanian student population is mostly engaged in are business sciences, administration, and law (INSTAT, 2019).

3.2.7 Foreigners and Refugees in Albania in 2018

Apart from the emigration flows that Albania has experienced since the 1990s, the country has been hosting numerous foreigners. 14,162 foreigners with permanent residence live in Albania presenting a 9.7 % increase compared to 2017. Foreigners who came from Europe in 2018 were 8,212 and accounted for 58.0% of the total resident foreign compared with 59.2 % in 2017. 345

people have become Albanian citizens showing an increase of 9.2 % compared to 2017. The recorded “irregular” foreigners were 6,893, with the majority of them originating from Syria and making up 44.8 % of the total foreign population. Last, 4,386 asylum seekers were identified in Albania in 2018, mainly coming from Syria.

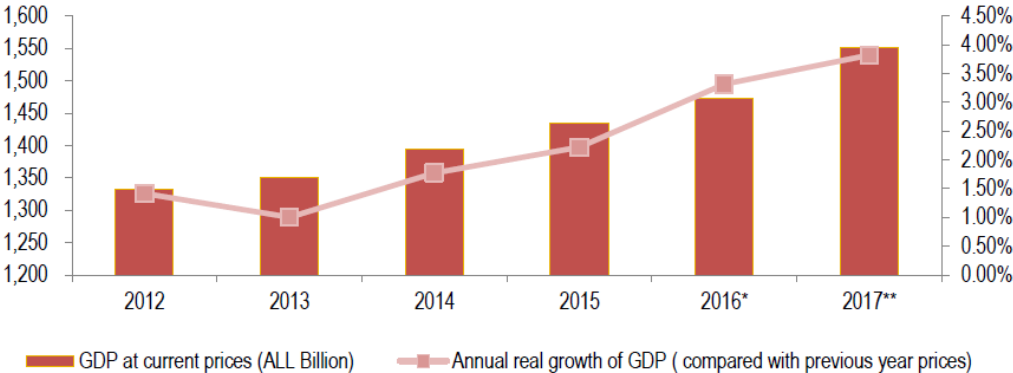
The fact that Albania has been receiving many foreigners and has been supporting them during the period of adjustment and settlement may generate an economic stimulus in the host country. Albania has made progress allowing important sectors of the economy to expand, and refugees and asylum seekers may benefit the country by being active members in the labour force. All foreigners who settle in a receiving country bring with them skills and knowledge and can contribute to the human capital development of the host country in many sectors. It is also important to note that with the fall of communism in Albania mass emigration flows were seen and Albania’s population decreased. It is estimated that great number of the Albanian productive workforce that resides worldwide is associated with the most educated population of the country. This may indicate a brain drain for Albania as the most productive labour force has migrated abroad transferring skills and knowledge to the destination countries. While this statement may create brain drain for Albania, the welcoming of new immigrants might make a significant contribution to the economy of Albania.

3.3 Economic Profile of Albania

According to INSTAT (2019), the Albanian economy recorded a real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate in 2017 of 3.82% compared with 2016 when the growth rate amounted to 3.31% compared with 2015. This growth rate indicates that the Albanian economy has

demonstrated a steady rise in the last five years which is promising for the economy of Albania which has experienced massive migrant outflows in the 1990s (Fig.3).

Figure 3. GDP and real growth rate



Note: Adapted from INSTAT, 2019, by the author.

3.3.1 Employment

According to the labour force survey, men were more actively engaged in the labour market. 67.6 percent of men participated in the labour market compared to 51.4 per cent of women (INSTAT, 2019). However, women’s participation in the labour market has been increasing since 2013, while the employment rate for men has remained the same. This is a notable achievement for women.

Regarding the employment sectors, (Table.2), the majority of Albanians were employed in the agricultural sector marking 37.4 % of the labour force in 2018 and showing a decrease

compared to the previous years (2013-2017). Trade, Transportation, Accommodation, and Food, and Business and Administrative Services follow with 25.7 % marking an incline compared to the years 2013-2017 when the average for those sectors was 20.0% of the active participants in Albania. The third highest employment sector for both men and women was public administration, community, social and other services, and activities accounting for 17.2 % of the Albanian labour force. The latter sector, as indicated in the following table (Table 2), has been in a constant fluctuation over the years 2013-2017 (INSTAT, 2019).

Table 2. Employment structure by economic activity in %

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	
Gjithsej	1.023.688	1.037.061	1.086.612	1.157.177	1.194.969	1.230.852	Total
Bujqësi	44,2	42,7	41,3	40,2	38,2	37,4	Agriculture
Prodhim	7,5	8,6	9,3	10,1	10,1	10,6	Manufacturing
Ndërtim	7,1	6,4	6,9	6,6	6,9	7,0	Construction
Industri nxjerrëse, Energji, gaz dhe furnizimi me ujë	2,2	2,4	2,4	2,6	2,4	2,2	Mining and quarrying; Electricity, gas and water supply
Tregti, Transport, Hoteleri, Shërbime të biznesit dhe administrative	21,9	22,6	22,9	24,3	25,0	25,7	Trade, Transportation, Accommodation and Food, and Business and Administrative Services
Administrim publik, Shërbimet Sociale, dhe aktivitete e shërbime të tjera	17,0	16,8	17,0	16,2	17,4	17,2	Public Administration, Community, Social and other Services and Activities

Source: *Labour Force Surveys*Note: Adapted from the “Burrat Dhe Gratë Në Shqipëri 2019, Women and Men in Albania Report”, (INSTAT, 2019), by the author.

3.3.2 Unemployment

The unemployment rate has decreased from 2015-2019 for both men and women aged 15-64 and marks 13.2 % and 12.3 % respectively. Compared to previous years, the unemployment rate has shown a decline and more jobs have been created. According to the labour market survey,

the unemployment rate has decreased by almost percentage 1.9 points, while for women only by 0.5 percentage points in 2019 (INSTAT, 2019).

3.3.3 Gender pay gap (GPG)

The manufacturing sector was estimated to be the sector with the highest pay gap in 2018, marking 24.4% of wage difference between men and women. The economic sector where GPG was the lowest was the commerce, transport, hospitality sector, as well as business and administrative services amounting to 3.0%. Regarding occupations such as craftsmen and equipment and machinery operators, the gender pay gap was the highest 27.1%. The lowest GPG was reported by the employees of the armed forces, by 2.3%. Based on the data of the General Tax Directorate, the average gender pay gap grew to 10.7 % compared to 10.5 % in 2017 (INSTAT, 2019).

3.3.4 Income and Living Conditions in Albania

The at-risk of poverty rate in Albania for the year 2018 was reported to be 23.4% showing a decline by 0.3% compared to 2017 which the level of poverty reached 23.7%. Employed individuals accounted for 16.5 % in 2018, marking a decline by 1.4% compared to 2017 when the employed aged 18 and above amounted to 17.9% of the population. The unemployed category amounted to 37.1% in 2018, compared to 38.8 % in 2017, showing a decrease by 1.7 percentage points. Regarding the retired and non-active population, an increase was recorded in 2018 compared to 2017. The percentage of retired individuals at risk of poverty was 14.2% while the

percentage for the non-active population was estimated to be 27.9% (population aged 18 and above), as indicated below (Table 3) (INSTAT, 2019).

Table 3. At-risk of poverty rate by activity status (in %)

	2017	2018
Employed (18 years old and above)	17.9	16.5
Not employed	25.3	25.7
Unemployed	38.8	37.1
Retired	13.4	14.2
Inactive population - Other	25.6	27.9

Note: Retrieved from INSTAT, 2019.

Regarding the pensions, women benefitted from the pension program marking 47.0 % of the total urban pensioners in Albania. In the rural areas, 64.7 % of pension beneficiaries were women (INSTAT, 2019).

3.4 A Political History of Albania from 1912 to the Present

Albania had been under the Ottoman rule for 500 years until it became an independent country in 1912 (Olsen, 2000, p.18). After the First World War, Albania's first parliament was elected in 1920 and the first two constitutions were approved in 1920 and 1922 respectively (Olsen, 2000, p.18). Two political parties were established; one was the advocate of the land-owning classes and feudalism, and the other was oriented toward a Western democratic political system.

Both political parties through their antagonisms gave rise to the revolution of 1924 by which Albania adopted a new democratic government. In 1925, Albania was declared a Parliamentary Republic by the Constitutional Assembly, and Ahmet Zog was appointed President of Albania. However, Zog did not represent democracy. In 1928 Zog declared himself King of Albania and imposed an authoritarian, government on the country. He consolidated his power for 11 years as a monarch, receiving the title of “Zog 1”. In 1939, his reign came to an end as the country was occupied by Mussolini’s forces (Olsen, 2000. p.18).

During the Second World War, not a single political party operated in Albania. On the contrary, many unorganized communist groups, anti-communist groups, and advocates of King Zog became active. New parties emerged, such as the Communist Party, the National Front Party, and the Legality movement each of which intended to consolidate power for themselves in Albania (Koçiaj & Kutrolli, 2017, p.32). Enver Hoxha avoided being involved in any opposition party and was supported by members of the Yugoslavian Communist Party. In particular, the Yugoslavs appointed Enver Hoxha as the secretary of the Albanian Communist Party which was formed on November 8, 1941.

During the Second World War all these communist and anti-communist parties were supporters of different principles. Although Ahmet Zog did not like any of them, he supported their leaders financially upon their arrival in Albania and ensured they were appointed crucial public administration positions, based on their professional qualifications. Regarding the leader of the Communist Party, Enver Hoxha, he was hired as professor in the Korca Lyceum and he was also “*one of the members of the Albania Consulate in Belgium, in the Secret Services Department, and in the role of Secretary of the Counsel*” (Koçiaj & Kutrolli, 2017, p.33). He was already teaching in Korca Lyceum when he was appointed Secretary of the Communist Party in 1941.

According to Krasniqi (2006), a law was enforced on December 22, 1944, and those who did not obey the new regime of the Communism would be punished with 30 years imprisonment, life imprisonment, or death. It should be noted that the allure of the Communist party was that it represented the voice of the people, freedom, and rights. Thus, the Communist party gained power in November 1944 with the end of the Second World War. Everyone who was against the Communist party, all ministers between 1939-1944 and their immediate family, would not be given the right to vote at the Elections of December 1945 (Koçiaj and Kutrolli, 2017).

Several opposition groups formed by the Resistance Group, Monarchist Group, Social-Democratic Group, Nation Association Group, National-Democratic Committee, and Independent Intellectuals Groups. These groups joined in opposition to the Communist Party which took part in the elections under the name “Democratic Front”. In addition, the Communist Party used the newspaper “Voice of People” (*Zëri i Popullit*), an Albanian daily which favoured Enver Hoxha and the Communist Party he was leading, to indoctrinate the Albanian population to be supportive of the Communist Party. The first elections were not carried out democratically. Enver Hoxha with the “Democratic Front” won 93% of the votes and he was appointed Prime Minister of Albania by the communist party.

Enver Hoxha manipulated people by spreading the propaganda of a government where citizens would be allowed the freedoms of expression, religion, and engagement in political parties (Instituti I Studimeve "Marksiste-Leniniste", 1981). However, in 1950 opposition parties were banned. Enver Hoxha was determined to remain in power, and he wooed people with no political experience, labourers, and peasants to support the communist party (Koçiaj & Kutrolli, 2017, p.10) gaining absolute control over them. Hoxha formed alliances with different governments to remain in authority. More specifically, in 1948 Hoxha collaborated with Tito in Yugoslavia, while in 1960

Hoxha broke from the Soviet Union. Enver Hoxha joined in an alliance with Mao Tse Tung's China and remained until 1978 in close association with China. Chinese economic aid was terminated once Albania's ties with China ceased in 1978 (Olsen, 2000, p. 19, Panagiotou, 2011, p. 358).

Ultimately, in 1967 Albania became the first atheist country in the world and any kind of religious practice was prohibited (Muco, 1997, p. 50). According to Aron (2005), religion was an antagonistic "prophet" to Enver Hoxha and because it was not consistent with the ideology of Marxism & Leninism, religion was forbidden. In this case, Marx and Lenin represented the prophets, the church represented the Labor Party, and the religion in Hoxha's perspective indicated that people had to believe in what the Communist Party and "Hoxha God" ruled. Thus, many people saw Hoxha as their "God" (Kociaj & Kutrolli, 2017, p. 40).

Years of tyranny followed for the population of Albania which suffered in silence from the brutal dictatorship (Olsen, 2000, p. 19). According to Olsen (2000), Hoxha executed thousands of Albanians; he sent many others to labour camps where people did not survive, and displaced internally many Albanians by sending them to work in rural areas, totally isolated from their families (p. 20). Enver Hoxha would not accept any protest or opposition against his centralized planned economy. Furthermore, the state secret police, SIGURIMI, compelled everyone to report friends, colleagues, neighbours who opposed the system. (Olsen, 2000, p. 20).

By the late 1980s, the most authoritarian regime in Eastern Europe began to fail. Enver Hoxha started to protect his country from potential invasion by building more than 700,000 concrete bunkers where conventional weapons were accumulated (Olsen, 2000, p.19). Citizens started training from the age of 12 and had as a base the nearest bunker while they were gathered

for military training. Enver Hoxha was fearful of foreign intrigue and conspiracies (Koçiaj & Kutrolli, 2017, p.32). This led to complete isolation of the country at an international level.

After Hoxha's death in 1985, Ramiz Alia won the elections allowing the rise of independent political parties until 1992. Alia's successor, Sali Berisha remained in power for several years. From 1992-1997 Sali Berisha governed as the President of Albania. In the years 1997-2005, he became the leader of the opposition party. Other leaders, such as Fatos Nano and Panteli Majko, dominated the political scene, both of whom did not have any positive impact on Albania. The country was left again in poverty and turmoil. Berisha failed to bring economic growth and prosperity in the country. His efforts to promote democratic governance to Albania were unsuccessful, and organized crime, poverty, and corruption remained even while he served as the Prime Minister of Albania from 2005-2013 (BBC News, 2018 "*Albania Country Profile*").

Berisha's successor, Edi Rama, became the Prime Minister of Albania in 2013 and continues to remain in power since then. Before his election, Edi Rama was the Mayor of the capital, Tiranë, for 11 years before the elections of 2013. Edi Rama's political reforms have made progress in decreasing the level of poverty, improving public service delivery, and establishing a social system where human rights and property rights are protected promoting social inclusion for all marginalized groups and empowering women (UN DESA, 2018, p.10). Significant progress has been noticed in the last years under Rama's governance, but more reforms need to be implemented according to the Agenda 2030 in the context of the National Strategy for Development and Integration Process (UN DESA, 2018, p.10). More specifically, the "Albania-Voluntary National Review on Sustainable Development Goals" report (2018) stresses the importance on promoting a more competitive and resilient economy, speeding up the integration of Albania into the European Union by strengthening the public administration sector and judicial

institutions, tackling corruption and organized crime, and promoting social inclusion (UN DESA, 2018, p.10).

According to the Constitution of 1998, Albania is a Parliamentary constitutional Republic, a unitary and indivisible state (Carlson, 1998, p.1).

3.5 Economic History

Up to the end of the Second World War, Albania relied on an agriculture-centred economy, while after 1945 industrial development begun. However, the technology used in the industrial development of Albania was very limited as it was based on the obsolete technology of the Soviet Union. Albania became part of the European communist bloc after the Second World War (Muco, 1997, p. 9). The rigid autocratic rule of Albania, economic inequalities, and lack of investment in the country restricted if not prevented entry of new foreign technology (Muco, 1997, p. 9).

With the breakdown of communism in the late 1980s the transition to ‘democracy’ has been challenging. Certainly, there has been important progress in many sectors, and migration has made contributions to the socio-economic development of Albania. Enver Hoxha passed away in 1985 and left political and economic chaos in Albania. Hoxha’s successor, Ramiz Alia, proceeded with some reforms in 1989, but social and political uncertainty prevailed. In 1991 the first Opposition party (the Democratic Party) was created after enormous protests by students which took place in the capital city Tiranë. Albania remained one of the poorest countries in Europe (Olsen, 2000, p. 23). In March 1991, the first multi-party elections (free-democratic elections) were set up after many decades, and a parliamentary democracy was established in Albania. The elections in 1991 brought Fatos Nano as the new leader of the country. He encountered a great

deal of economic and political instability. He had to resign after one year, as the Albanian population opposed him and new elections took place on March 22, 1992, when the Democratic Party won the majority of votes. The leader of the new government was Sali Berisha who remained in power until 1997 when the financial crisis and “pyramid saving schemes” collapsed (Olsen, 2000, p. 23).

The pyramid saving schemes were informal investment schemes which emerged in 1993 and millions of Albanians invested all their savings anticipating major profits. There were signs of failure of the pyramid savings schemes but the government did not do anything to prevent the financial crisis. Thus, in 1997 the fall of the pyramid investment firms arose, and millions of people lost all their financial assets. According to the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and the World Bank, there was a loss of \$1.2 billion from the savings that Albanians had deposited in the pyramid savings schemes. Many violent protests and even a civil war burst out in several cities of Albania and hundreds of people were equipped with weapons (almost one million Kalashnikovs automatic rifles were stolen from army depots and military bases). Two thousand people were killed, property was destroyed, and fear spread. This period of anarchy led to an emigration surge of Albanians and the withdrawal of foreign direct investment (Panagiotou, 2011, p. 363, 364). On March 2, 1997, the government of Albania declared a “state of emergency” as the pyramid savings schemes collapsed.

Berisha’s political strategy included economic reforms that would overcome the economic crisis and create grounds for a free market economy. Essentially, Albania implemented structural reform programs by promoting privatization and trade liberalization. The measures Sali Berisha launched stimulated progress and transformed former communist Albania to one of the countries with the highest rate of economic growth among communist countries. In almost three years, from

1993–1996, Albania recorded 10 percent annual GDP growth rate: 70 percent of the economy was involved in privatization; prices and trade triggered liberalization; and Albania’s currency, the Lek, stabilized (Panagiotou, 2011, p. 363). Furthermore, with the agreement of a consortium of 41 Western banks in 1995, Albania was able to deal with the US\$500 million debt that the country was left with during the centralized regime of Enver Hoxha. In 1996, former communist Albania witnessed an increase in wages, and private markets were boosted in many cities. It is significant that Albania, a pariah state, joined the Council of Europe, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (Panagiotou, 2011, p. 363) and became an actor in multilateral international relations. With the aid and support of those international institutions, former communist Albania was able to record remarkable economic growth during the transition period.

However, the governance of Sali Berisha started to deteriorate in 1996 as structural reforms were failing. His governance was associated with corruption and authoritarian power; political and economic measures were not applied effectively; and the structural reforms were not based on substantial economic fundamentals and principles.

Hence, privatization as an economic reform was promising, but was not based on institutional reforms. A five-year effort of economic reforms with the aid of international institutions aimed at short term success. Institutional change was signaled by the formation of a new Constitution, with a new tax system, market regulation, and a central bank, under which long-term transformation and development of the country could take off. Yet, this transformation did not materialize in Albania, since the market economy and democratic legal framework were not

cultivated. Institutional reform did not have the time to be completed in only five years and this led to inflation and budget deficits (Muco, 1997, p. 42).

In 1998 Panteli Majko became the Prime Minister of Albania. He had to start governing in a chaotic state, facing increased poverty, a higher rate of unemployment, and a 50 percent devaluation of the Lek (Panagiotou, 2011, p. 364). As Albania began to recover, the Kosovo crisis erupted in 1998 which resulted in the bombing of Yugoslavia by NATO in March 1999. That meant that thousands of ethnic Albanian refugees from Kosovo were hosted in Albania, from March to May 1999, at a time of recovery for the former socialist country with very few resources and poor health services. However, Albania's support of Kosovars proved to be effective. Albanians protected their neighbours accommodating them in their homes and avoided getting involved in a regional conflict.

Albania was able to demonstrate a sustainable development eventually in many sectors, more specifically in trade liberalization and privatization (Panagiotou, 2011, p. 364). The privatization process improved the telecommunications, power, and banking industries, and foreign direct investment started to increase. It is estimated that investment increased to US\$143 million in 2000 compared to US\$41 million in 1999. In 2000 Albania joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) and began exporting most of its products to Europe, after the EU allowed duty-free access to Albania. In 2001 the investment flows reached US\$207 million and that is considered a key step towards economic development (Panagiotou, 2011, p. 366).

In the last three decades, the Albanian economy is characterized as an upper-middle-income economy, where the service and manufacturing sectors dominate and poverty has been cut by half. Subsequently, the implementation of ongoing reforms has created business confidence

and an increase of investment initiatives and export-led economy building a more competitive and resilient Albania (World Bank, 2019). While the country continues to be in economic transformation during the last three decades, there is an enormous potential and many opportunities for Albania to boost its economy by focusing on the improvement of sectors such as energy, water, health and social assistance, transport, and irrigation (World Bank, 2019). The current socio-demographic and economic profile of Albania will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

3.6 Conclusion

Since 1990, Albania has experienced significant economic transformation and development in many sectors. The Albanian case is a ‘remarkable’ and complex case because of the long-lasting totalitarian and oppressive regime of Enver Hoxha. Yet, it has grown from one of the poorest countries in Europe to a middle-income country (World Bank, 2019). Albania has recorded sustainable economic growth in the past three decades, has tried to adopt a new democratic form of government with respect of the rule of law and developed the market economy by focusing on privatization and trade liberalization in the post-communist years since 1990 (World Bank, 2019). Unemployment and poverty rates have decreased, and more employment opportunities have been created. Besides, the fertility rate has shown a gradual decline over the entire decade (2008-2018, INSTAT, 2019) which points to a growth dynamic for Albania and potential for its development and a labour force with high productivity rates in the short term. However, low rates of fertility will result in a rapidly ageing population and eventually a decrease in the working-age population. Furthermore, the increasing emigration flows from Albania may pose an adverse impact on the economic sustainability of the country. Thus, Albania needs to

continue developing economically and strengthening public service delivery and most importantly, building and enhancing long term effective governance. Albania's development may be attained by creating more job opportunities and reinforcing the investment and private sector promoting an export-led rather than a consumption-fueled economy (World Bank, 2019). It might be time-consuming but looking back 30 years where turmoil, political and economic unrest dominated with the collapse of Communism, or even earlier during the ferocious totalitarian regime, Albania has taken crucial steps to reach sustainable economic development. Because of the challenging journey to establish a resilient economy and to follow European standards regarding reforms, Albania is on the way to becoming a serious candidate for joining the European Union (Muco, 1997, p. 4; World Bank, 2019).

CHAPTER FOUR

ALBANIAN MIGRATION AND DIASPORA AROUND THE WORLD AND ALBANIAN MIGRATION TO GREECE

4.1 Introduction

It is well documented that migration is not a novel trend. People have always been on the move seeking better employment or advanced educational opportunities, and to escape poverty and/or political instability. There is no single cause that can answer why people migrate from one country to another (Van Hear, 2010, p.1535). Albania is a country that has witnessed massive migration flows in the post-1990 period. With the fall of communism, the Albanian people had the freedom to emigrate in order to escape poverty and unemployment. First, I will address the issue of the Global Albanian Migration and Global Albanian Diaspora. A chronology will be presented starting from the 14th century, to gain a better understanding of the Albanian population movements worldwide. The Old and New Diaspora will be explored illustrating the countries where these diasporic communities have been established. Second, I will explore the migration waves of Albanian migrants to Greece. Third, I will examine the impact of remittances sent to Albania from the global destination, and the remittances Albanian immigrants have sent to their country of origin. Finally, internal and international migration will be discussed highlighting the local or regional moves of the Albanian population and the interconnection between domestic and external migration from a gender perspective.

4.2 Global Albanian Migration and Global Albanian Diaspora

According to the United Nations (2015), approximately 1.2 million Albanians are residing worldwide as of 2015, which is almost half of the current population in Albania (IOM, 2015). Scholars confirm that the majority of the Albanian Diaspora members are well-educated (Barjaba, 2015). It is calculated that every year, between 2,000 to 4,000 Albanian students are enrolled in universities abroad to pursue educational goals. Some of the countries that Albanian students decide to move to are Italy, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Greece, and the United States. Interestingly, Italian universities attract the majority of Albanian students annually reaching 12,000 Albanian students. Based on a survey conducted by CESS (Centre for Economic and Social Studies) and the Soros Foundation in 2004 with 181 Albanian Ph.D. holders and Ph.D. candidates, only 56 % of those who reside abroad would like to return to Albania (IOM, 2008, p. 39).

The case of the Albanian diaspora represents almost 40% of Albanians who have settled out of their country of origin (Leka, 2013, p. 204). Based on the migration systems (migration networks) theory, people move from one country to another because of linkages they might have in those particular places. Those links between the sending and receiving countries might be rooted in cultural links but also political or economic (De Haas & Miller, 2013, p. 27, Ch. 2). Depending on the institutional reception, integration and settlement can have either a positive or a negative impact on the lives of the immigrants. Migrants, nonetheless, adapt to the new environment and make efforts to integrate socially, economically, culturally, and politically, in the destination country.

Table 4 shows the number of Albanian immigrants who resided worldwide according to INSTAT (2017) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Tirana, 2017). The majority of Albanian immigrants lived in Italy and Greece accounting for 467,687 and 354,456 citizens, respectively, in 2016. The U.S.A, United Kingdom, and Germany followed with 250,000, 50,000, and 48,538 of the Albanian population abroad, accordingly.

Table 4. List of 20 countries with the highest number of the Albanian emigrants 2016

No.	State	Albanian Nationals
1	Italy	467,687
2	Greece	354,456
3	U.S.A	250,000
4	United Kingdom	50,000
5	Germany	48,538
6	Canada	28,270
7	Australia	2,000
8	Turkey	6,000
9	France	5,588
10	Belgium	5,000
11	Sweden	4,100
12	Austria	4,000
13	Netherlands	2,569
14	Montenegro	2,060
15	Kosovo	2,000
16	United Arab Emirates	2,000
17	Switzerland	1,581
18	Spain	1,300
19	Romania	1,000
20	Norway	956

Source: Instat, 2017, and Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tirana, 2017. Adapted from “The Migration Profile of the Republic of Albania report, Tiranë, 2017.

According to the “National Employment Service” (2017), a significant number of Albanian citizens seem to have returned to their country. The following table (Table, 5) reports all Albanian citizens by age group who have resettled in their home country from European Union countries. As indicated it is estimated that 21,681 Albanians have returned to Albania in 2016 compared to 20,632 in 2017. It is interesting to note that men (above 18 years) make up the majority of returning Albanians in 2016 and 2017. On the contrary, fewer women make the return journey.

Table 5. Albanian citizens returned from the EU by age group (2016-2017)

		Male		Female	
YEAR	TOTAL	Above 18 years	Under 18 years	Above 18 years	Under 18 years
2016	21,681	18,443	978	2,259	222
2017	20,632	18,569	382	1,620	34

Note: Adapted from the “2017 Migration Profile, Ministry of Interior, Republic of Albania”.

The largest group of Albanian immigrants who have settled abroad are economic emigrants, family members who have accompanied their spouse/partner/parents, and students. There is a smaller category of the Albanian community worldwide who consists of asylum-seekers and refugees, and unaccompanied minors (Albanian Government, 2017). The push-pull factors remain the main reason for Albanian migratory flows toward the European Union (EU) countries. Certainly, there is more economic and political stability in Albania, better living conditions, public safety has been enhanced and the Albanian economy has grown. However, Albanian citizens continue to move. Based on INSTAT, five reasons determine the emigration pull factors; job opportunities (84 percent), family reunification (4.6 percent), lower unemployment rates which reach 4.2 percent, study opportunities abroad (4.5 percent), and other factors (4.6 percent) (INSTAT, 2017).

The Albanian migration is divided into three phases: before 1944, between 1945-1990 and 1990 onwards. The latter is best described as mass migration. Regarding the Albanian Diaspora, it should be analyzed as two groups appearing at different times: The Old Diaspora and the New Diaspora.

4.2.1 The Old Diaspora

The Old Diaspora originated back in the Middle Ages and continued from the mid-nineteenth to the end of World War II. Tirta (1999) states that the first phase of Albanian migration took place after 1468 when the Albanian national hero Skanderbeg passed. The second part of the Old Diaspora pertained to the migration surge during the communist system. A small number of Albanians were able to escape the totalitarian regime of Enver Hoxha and crossed the borders even

though the borders were closed (Barjaba, 2015, p. 174). The Old Diaspora resided in the United States, Canada, Latin America, Australia, a few countries in Western Europe, and some Eastern European countries, such as Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria, Russia, Ukraine, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Turkey, Egypt, and Syria (Barjaba, 2015, p. 175).

Regarding the historical context, the Old Albanian Diaspora started with the Ottoman Empire. The Albanian Diaspora which currently lives in Turkey is the largest. In the middle of the 20th century, over 400 thousand Albanians were displaced involuntarily to leave the authoritarian Yugoslav state and their former territories in Kosovo and other Yugoslav republics and settled in Turkey (Leka, 2013, p. 205). Essentially, the Albanian diasporic communities who reside in Turkey nowadays belong both to the Old and New Diaspora and are divided into three categories: Ottoman Albanians, Balkan Albanians, and twentieth-century Albanians (Genis & Maynard, 2009, p. 543). The third category of those ethnic groups migrated from the Balkans in the twentieth century, left the Republic of Albania after 1992, and settled in the western parts of Turkey forming the Albanian Diaspora (Genis & Maynard, 2009, p. 554). Finally, the Old Diaspora can be seen in the Former Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Ukraine but in smaller numbers (Leka, 2013, p. 205), as mentioned above.

Albanians who are known as ‘Arvanites’ by the Greeks, moved to Greece and settled in Peloponnese, Athens, several Greek islands, and on the Ionian coastline in the 14th century. Nowadays, those groups of people can still speak Albanian (Leka, 2013, p. 204), perhaps in a different dialect, but Albanians can still understand the language (I also support that opinion based on my personal experience, as I have met and have had a conversation with several Arvanites in the past, in Athens and surrounding area). In the second case, Albanians migrated to Southern Italy (Calabria and Sicily) in the 15th century and called themselves “Arberësh” forming the “old”

Diaspora (Derhemi, 2003; Leka, 2013; Pustina, 2016). The “Arberësh” community has been able to maintain that sense of belonging, cultural ties, and language for five centuries making that group one of the most important groups of the Albanian Diaspora (Pustina, 2016, p. 24).

Albanian communities have been formed in Romania, the United States of America, and Egypt since the 18th century. The Albanian community in Romania emerged in the 17th- 20th centuries and is a well-integrated community. Its impact on the Albanian independence has been important, and it is represented by a deputy in the Chamber of Deputies in Romania as an ethnic minority (Barjaba, 2019, p. 176).

Another large Albanian diaspora worth noting is the Diaspora in Argentina which was formed in the early 20th with the majority of Albanians settling in Buenos Aires. The Albanian diaspora in Argentina is created by the Arberësh community.

Finally, the Diaspora in the United States was formed in four stages. The first group that arrived in the US was formed by the Arberësh community and the second migration flow consisted of economic migrants between the First World War and the Second World War. The third group arrived during the communist regime and the migrants were mainly political emigrants. Kosovar migrants and from other parts of the former Yugoslavia were the fourth migrant stream who settled in the US from 1971 onwards (Barjaba, 2019, p. 177).

4.2.2 The New Diaspora

The New Diaspora has settled mainly in Greece, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, Austria, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States and Canada. It is linked to the new

migration flows that arose with the breakdown of communism in 1989 when the borders opened, and internal and international migration were permitted again. These migrant streams were mostly irregular migrants who simply defied both the Albanian government by exiting and the destination countries' migration regime by simply entering these countries without documents or seeking asylum.

Because of geographic proximity and the irregular migration modes, nearly all migrants emigrated to Greece and Italy in the post-1990 migration wave (Mai & Schwandner-Sievers, 2003, p. 939). However, their choice of the country of settlement is explained by links with older emigration waves that formed the old Albanian diasporic communities. In connection with the above migration hypothesis, Albanians settled in countries that had formed ties before. Greece and Italy are two examples in this case, and Albanian migrants living in the above countries represent the largest communities of Albanians. The Albanian Diaspora both in Italy and Greece have successfully settled and integrated into these destination countries in the past three decades. They are active in the labour force and have assimilated into the new culture and language. Besides, there is a group of artists and athletes who are distinguished abroad as well. Their strong links with families and friends who live in Albania contribute to the socio-economic and political development of the country of origin (Barjaba, 2019, p. 178).

The Albanian Diaspora in the United Kingdom took place in the late 1990s. Albanian migrants moved to the UK after the collapse of the pyramid savings schemes in 1997 and the Kosovo war in 1999. Several Albanian migrants moved from Greece and Italy to look for better employment opportunities (King and Mai, 2009, p. 124). The UK attracted mostly refugees during the War in Kosovo who settled mainly in London and its surrounding area (Vathi and King, 2013, p. 1833).

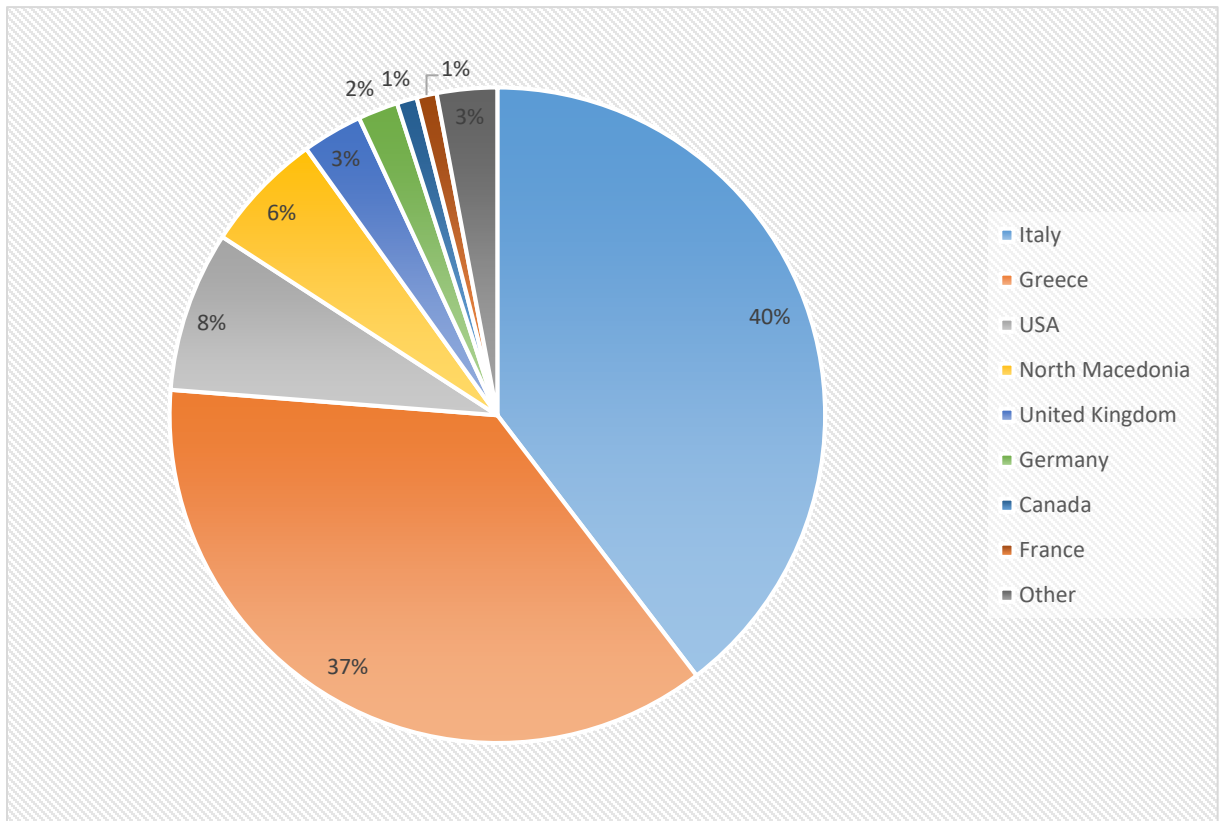
Another large Albanian community is concentrated in the United States and Canada. Interestingly, the Albanian community in the United States includes members of both the Old and New Diasporas. In the case of the New Diaspora in the US, the Albanian community is actively engaged in the establishment of democracy in Albania and Kosovo and is supported by the US Government in this respect. Canada is hosting a sizable number of Albanians who, likewise, are integrated into the labour force and Canadian society (Barjaba, 2019, p. 179). These migration flows arose in the late 1990s and consisted mostly of high-skilled and educated migrants who satisfied the receiving countries' strict immigrant selection policies. It is estimated that the USA received approximately 82,000 and Canada around 13,000 Albanian migrants by 2015, (United Nations, 2015).

The Albanian Diaspora in Switzerland is worth mentioning because a great number of migrants have settled in Switzerland. Migrant flows arrived from Kosovo and Albania in 1990 onwards, and many Albanians from the Former Yugoslavia who moved to Germany after 1971. This Diaspora has always had an impactful activity on national and entrepreneurial initiatives in Albania.

Unfortunately, there exist no exact numbers regarding the Albanian Old and New Diaspora but the following figure (Fig. 4) can provide an indication. It appears that Italy hosts the highest percentage of Albanian migrants (40%) followed by Greece (37%). The USA accounts for 8%, North Macedonia 6%, the United Kingdom 6%, Germany, Canada, and France 2%, 1% and 1% respectively. It is estimated that 1.15 million of Albanian Immigrants have settled abroad (United Nations, 2017). It is also estimated that about 90% of the Albanian migrant population reside in Europe and the remaining 10% in North America. 99.5% (1,142,748 individuals) have moved to

more developed countries and only 0.5% (5,396 individuals) in less developed regions (Bank of Albania, 2018, p. 10).

Figure 4. Countries hosting the highest number of Albanian migrants



Note: Retrieved from United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2017). Adjusted by the author.

4.2.3 Significance of Old Diaspora vs New Diaspora

Barjaba (2019) argues that the Old Albanian diaspora is keen on supporting Albania's and Kosovo's independence, maintaining national identity and culture by teaching the Albanian language and promoting religious practices in the host countries (p. 181). According to Barjaba,

the impact of the Old Diaspora is important in nation-building. On the other hand, the New Albanian diaspora is seeking to help build the private sector in Albania by investing in entrepreneurial initiatives. The New Diaspora continues to preserve strong links with Albania, however, because of the recent nature of their emigration and higher technological aptitudes, they are more likely to engage with business initiatives (Barjaba, 2019, p. 181). In sum, the Albanian diaspora has managed to maintain Albanian culture, traditions, identity, and language through online resources (Pustina, 2016, p. 35).

4.3 Albanian Migration flows to Greece post-1990

The corruption and violence that prevailed in post-communist Albania in the 1990s as well as the poor living conditions, generated large migrant flows to Greece. (King 2003, Albanian Government, 2015). According to Barjaba and King (2005), Albanian migration is characterized as a recent and intense phenomenon; it is dynamic and expeditiously accelerating, and it is mostly characterized as irregular as many immigrants do not hold work and residence permits.

The influx of Albanian immigrants in the neighbouring country Greece, found the Greek government unprepared as the last legal framework about migration policy was implemented in 1929 (Law 4310). A new law (Law no. 1975 of 1991) was introduced in Greece by the “New Democracy Party” replacing the old legal framework and legalizing some immigrants but leaving most of them under precarious status. Therefore, most Albanian immigrants were living under exploitative conditions working overtime, with low wages and not being recognized by employers (Hatziprokopiou, 2003, p. 1045). As a result, the Albanian population was stigmatized, and a

negative image of them was created representing them as a threat to society (Hatziprokopiou, 2003, p. 1036).

Moreover, it is estimated that more than 550.000 irregular migrants were employed in Greece by the late 1990s. The majority of these migrant groups were working in seasonal jobs (Reyneri, 2001).

The first programs that regularized Albanians in Greece took place in 1998 and gave them access to formal jobs and the health care system (Gropas & Triandafyllidou 2005, p .3). Nonetheless, the main employment of Albanian migrants was in the low-skilled and informal economy sectors. It is estimated that the majority of men were employed in construction as builders and painters (30.3 per cent of the men), and in the manufacturing sector (24.2 per cent). Fewer Albanians were assistant technicians (9 per cent) and workers in transport companies (6.5 per cent) (Labrianidis *et al.* 2001). Those who faced insecurity in their employment constituted about 18.9 per cent. The main occupation for women was domestic labor (27.1 per cent). A substantial percentage of women were occupied as housewives (28 percent) (Labrianidis *et al.*, 2001) (as cited in Hatziprokopiou, 2003, p. 1040). What needs to be stressed is that those ‘informal’ jobs where women were employed provided no social security. In a more recent survey, in 2005 49% of Albanian immigrants in Greece were engaged in construction and 21% in agriculture (IOM, 2008).

However, despite Albanians’ precarious economic status at the beginning of the 1990s in Greece, they gradually improved their daily life in the host country. They overcame some of the obstacles they faced learning the language, creating friendships with natives, and taking on jobs that they had never performed before. Overall, Albanians were able to build strategies and

interpersonal relationships with their co-workers or employers and obtain better jobs over time (Hatziprokopiou, 2003, p. 1053).

It should be stressed that most of these irregular migrants became permanent residents in the early 2000. Since 2010, an important drop has been noticed in irregular migration. The reason behind this decline is that Albanian residents do not need any visa to enter Greece since 2010, which allows them to move back and forth to the neighbouring country (Gemi, 2017, p. 13). Nevertheless, many irregular Albanian migrants continue to reside in Greece. This irregularity is associated with different kinds of entry, stay, or informal employment (Triandafyllidou, 2016).

Due to the geographic proximity of Albania to Greece, it is estimated that about 450,000 Albanians live in Greece. Of those, 346,000 individuals were born in Albania (INSTAT, 2014). Yet, it is important to note that immigrants recorded are those who have been documented. Apart from the geographical proximity, there are low migration costs and cultural and linguistic familiarity which might contribute to the surge of Albanian immigrants seeking opportunities in neighbouring countries such as Greece. Probably, there is a significant number of other (non-documented) Albanian immigrants who might reside in Athens and have not been reported because of lack of documents. Certainly, there is a considerable number of Albanians who crossed borders without having the proper documentation; they were involved into irregular migration crossing mountains and walking for days until they settled in a Greek village or city.

Compared to the number of Albanian immigrants residing in Greece in the early 1990s, and the first decade of the new millennium a decline has taken place in the last decade. This drop in numbers reflects the effects of the financial crisis of 2008 in Greece, which led Albanian

immigrants to move back to Albania after many years of living in Greece. According to UN DESA (2018), the number of Albanian citizens residing in Greece by 2017 was 429,428.

Between 2009-2013 more than 94% of returnees decided to return voluntarily (Table, 6). As stated above, the economic crisis of 2008 in Greece led many Albanian immigrants return home on their free will because of a lack of job in Greece. The other 5.7 % of them were forced to leave Greece for lack of proper documents. It is crucial to note that forced returnees were younger than those who decided to return on their free will (IOM, 2013). The majority of the Albanians returnees to Fier settled back to their hometown of Fier because of the financial crisis in Greece, as it will be argued in Chapter seven.

Table 6. Albanian returnees by type of return and mean age, (%)

	Percentage	Mean age
Voluntary return	94,3	38,6
Forced return by circumstances	5,7	34,2
Total	100	38,3

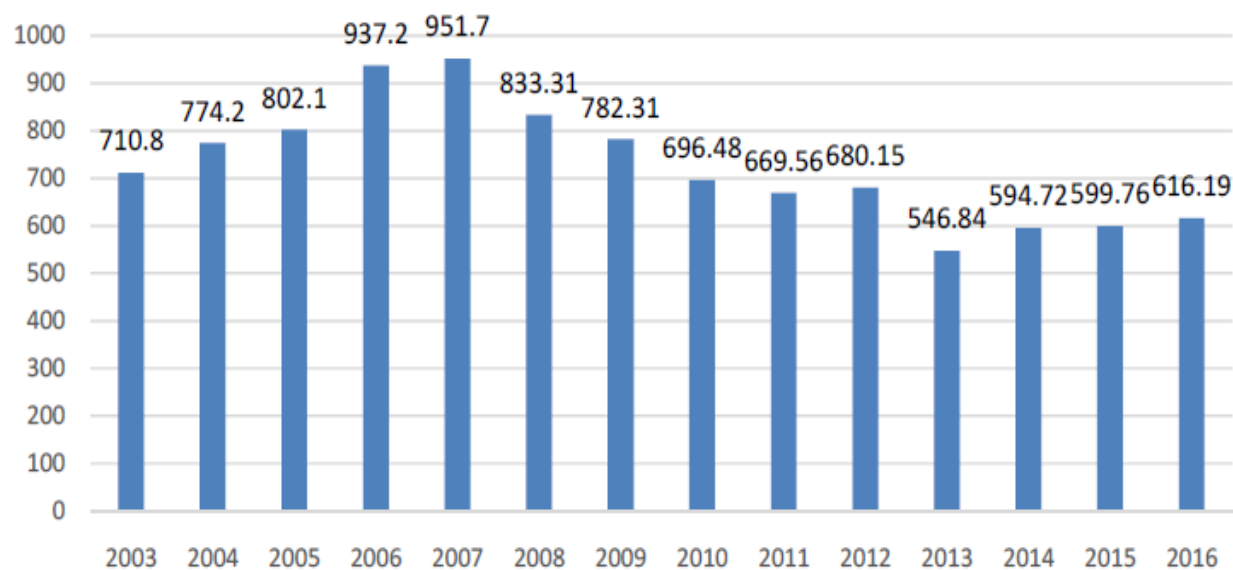
Note: Retrieved from “Return Migration and Reintegration in Albania”, IOM, 2013.

4.4 The Impact of Remittances on Albania

4.4.1 Global Financial Transfers to Albania

Remittances have become a substantial income for Albanians during the transition period's economic and political instability. The following figure (Figure 5) shows the remittances of Albanian emigrants from 2003-2016. Interestingly, global transfers reached the highest level in 2007 amounting to EUR 951.7 million. As of 2013, remittances declined to EUR 546.84 million, reaching the lowest rate. Similarly, remittances have increased since then amounting to EUR 616.19 million. The accelerating value of the transfers since 2013 demonstrate a positive effect on the economy of Albania.

Figure 5. Dynamics of remittances of Albanian emigrants, 2003-2016



Note: Retrieved from the Bank of Albania 2017

According to Bank of Albania (2018), the high flux of migrants has brought about substantial remittances over the years showing an average 1.15€ billion per year in 2017 and 2018, or approximately 12% of Albania's GDP. It can be argued that these financial flows have been a steady source of economic support for Albania, and Bankers expect these economic transfers to accelerate in the future noticing the progress that the economy has made in the destination countries (Bank of Albania, 2018). Moreover, it should be added that immigrants who spent a long time abroad, or those who were single, display a higher probability for remitting. It is estimated that during 2017 the remittances made up for 1.158€ million, in total. Of those, 286€ million were sent by seasonal workers and EUR 872 million came by personal transfers, remittances that were sent by workers (Bank of Albania, 2018).

In summary, it is worth noting that remittances, as it will be presented chapters six and seven, have improved the economy of Albania during the times of socio-economic and political transformation contributing importantly to the survival of Albania.

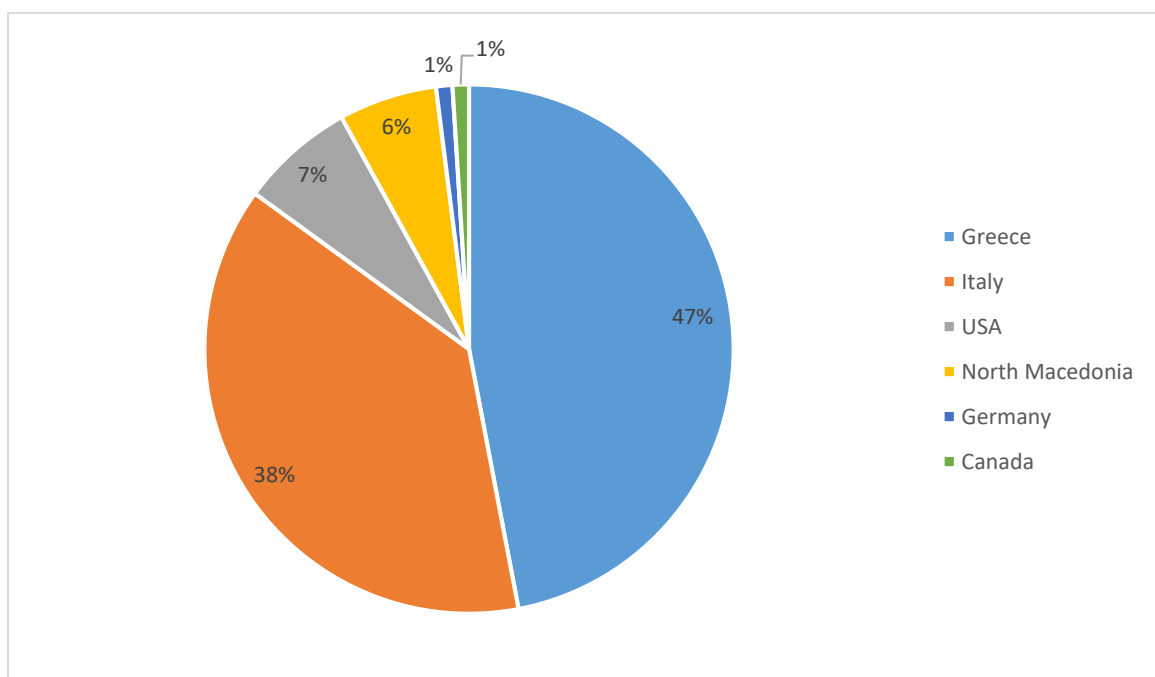
4.4.2 Monetary transfers from Greece to Albania

Most of the financial transfers from Greece sent by seasonal workers (Bank of Albania, 2018) were used for consumption and not so much for investments (King, Castaldo & Vullnetari, 2011, p. 400). Taking into consideration that migration has been a survival strategy in the Albanian case, most of the remittances were used for household needs such are the purchase of food, clothing, furniture, and other goods (King, Castaldo & Vullnetari, 2011, p. 401). Furthermore, people utilized them for the enlargement and enhancement of their home residence and conditions.

For example, they fixed their roof, they piped water inside or brought the outdoor bathroom indoors. (King, Castaldo & Vullnetari, 2011, p. 401).

The following figure (Fig. 6) illustrates that the largest shares of all remittances were sent from Greece to Albania making up of 47% of the total. Italy follows with 38%, USA with 7% and North Macedonia with 6% (INSTAT, 2014).

Figure 6. Remittances in 2011 by country of origin, in (%)



Note: Retrieved from United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2017). World Bank. Adjusted by the author.

According to www.countryeconomy.com, the flows of remittances that were sent to Albania from Greece were estimated to be \$608.4M in 2016. The following table (Table.7) shows the monetary remittances that were sent to Albania from other countries as well, such as Italy with \$501.5M, the United States with \$101.7M, and Germany with \$49.1M.

Table 7. Remittances received by country of origin

Countries Albania: Remittances received by country of origin (2017)

Greece	608.4M.\$
Italy	501.5M.\$
United States	101.7M.\$
Germany	49.1M.\$

Retrieved on May 15, 2020, from

<https://countryeconomy.com/demography/migration/remittance/albania?anio=2016#geo1>

Upon return, migrants invested in small businesses, micro-enterprises, one-person, or small family businesses, and had a better knowledge of how to deal with corruption in their home country. Having acquired the necessary knowledge, skills, and capital abroad, they could perform productively on their investments in Albania (Nicholson, 2004, p. 94). Most of the savings of the Albanians who migrated to Greece or even elsewhere were used to build a house or do some renovations. Unfortunately, return migration is under researched in the Albanian case (King & Vullnetari, 2011, p. 216). Even those who have decided to return to rural areas, they continue migrating seasonally to Greece due to the proximity (King & Vullnetari, 2011, p. 211). Another essential reason is poor infrastructure, lack of credit facilities, lack of reliable utilities and limited long-term credit that may discourage Albanians' return to invest in their country (King &

Vullnetari, 2003, p. 50). The shift in the amounts of remittances has decreased over the years because of the financial crisis in Greece in 2008 onwards, and a great number of immigrants have returned as well to Albania. Consequently, the number of Albanians living in Greece (those who are reported documented) has been decreased. As stated above, there is a great number of irregular immigrants who continue to reside in Greece and remit to their country. That explains the fact that remittances sent from Italy to Albania are less than these sent by Greece, despite the fact that the figure 5 shows a greater number of Albanians who live in Italy.

4.5 Internal and International Migration: A Gender Lens

Internal migration from rural areas to the cities, is connected to international migration. Internal migration is characterized by two specific patterns. In the first pattern, the head of the family{the man} moves first to the capital city (Tiranë) from northern Albania, rents or buys a place by managing the remittances that are sent from the son who is a worker remitter abroad. In the end, the whole family joins him including the emigrant son who returns. In the second pattern, the family settles in the city by purchasing a house and utilizing the remittances that the son sends from the destination country who re-unites with them, eventually (Labrianidis & Kazazi, 2006, p. 70-71). It could thus be suggested that domestic and international migration are interconnected. Essentially, the internal move would not be feasible without the financial transfers of the family member who resides abroad. Furthermore, one significant gender parameter is that women decide to move from rural to urban areas compared to the international movement where men decide to settle to a different country (Lerch, 2016, p. 870). Albania had been a traditional society where patriarchy and the extended family unit dominated. Women were subordinated by patriarchal principles and had no choice but to obey their husbands. With the collapse of communism, internal

migration from north to central and south Albania was a huge step challenging the backwardness and subordination of women (King, Castaldo & Vullnetari, 2011, p. 401). Women had the freedom of choice and became actively involved in family economic decisions. Nonetheless, Çaro *et al.* (2012) argue that women did not decide to move, although women suggested the place, and they challenged patriarchy and their subordination by using negotiating strategies for survival in the city. Yet, men had the main authority in the family and the final word in every decision that was taken.

Albania's internal migration led to a major demographic transformation of the country in the early 1990s. People moved from rural to urban, and from the North Eastern Mountains to the districts of the Coast and Tirana. Tirana, as the capital city of Albania appears to have attracted the majority of Albanians who could not move abroad for a variety of reasons, and it also appears that internal migration to the capital has increased in the second of the 1990s (Carletto *et al.*, 2004, p.18). Therefore, internal and international migration appear to have taken place at the same time in the post-communist Albania as people were engaged in massive migrants flows with the fall of Communism. This is in contrast to the 'typical' sequel of international migration following urbanization and internal migration in other countries (Goodall, 2004). The only possible explanation of why the two migrations happened in tandem here is the political situation in Albania with prohibition of movement during communism. Thus, once the borders opened, international migration happened in an explosive way. The Albanian case can be considered a 'unique' case as migration happened 'overnight'. Being oppressed and deprived of human rights for more than four decades, the Albanian population sought to escape poverty that the legacy the authoritarian government of Enver Hoxha had left over the years, and to look for new employment opportunities.

Of special interest is the highly gendered profile of Albanian migration. More specifically, Albanian migration started as a male-dominated migration movement, particularly in the early 1990s. As a patriarchal society, Albanian men emigrated first abroad and women followed their husbands at a later stage once the family sponsorship had been accomplished (King, Dalipaj, and Mai, 2006, p. 418). However, migration patterns have changed in the last decades and single women make the decision to migrate as individuals, or married women might move first abroad, seeking a better job or educational opportunities. These changes in gender patterns in migration may reflect changes in labour market needs in Greece as well.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I outlined the historic phases of Albania emigration which make up the Global Albanian Diaspora presenting the destination countries, and then stressing the significance of the Old and New Albanian Diaspora which have merged in some host countries. I presented the migrant flows to Greece in the post-1990 period, discussed their integration process and the sectors that Albanians were employed in. Moreover, I looked at the remittances that were sent to Albania from global destinations and from Greece. Finally, I described a migration process whereby the family rural-urban migration was facilitated by the family member -most likely a young male- who embarked on an international migration project and made possible the family move to the city by remitting his earnings from abroad. In the first type of (internal) migration women played a role whereas international migrants were predominantly male, but the two moves were interconnected as the domestic move could not take place without the financial support of the remitter who resides abroad. Women challenged patriarchy and influenced the family decisions related to internal

movements, from rural to urban places in Albania. Their active engagement in the family consolidated some improvement in their subordinate social status.

CHAPTER FIVE

METHODOLOGY

5.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research methodology that I followed in this study. First, I present the research objectives and the research questions that led me to adopting the particular research methods. I further explain the process of Research Ethics Approval. Second, I describe the participants' recruitment and a socio-demographic, educational, and occupation profile for the Albanian Immigrants in Athens, Greece, and Albanian returnees in Fier, Albania, respectively. Third, I introduce the study locations and the techniques I used to gather the data. Finally, I present the data analysis and discuss the limitations of the study.

5.2 Research Objectives and Research Approach

This study attempts to understand the impact of Albanian transnational migration to Greece on the socioeconomic development of Albania. I am examining this issue by focusing on post communism Albanian transnational migration to Athens and its impact on the socio-economic development of Fier, Albania. The broader research problem is about understanding the migration-development nexus in the case of Albanian migration to Greece.

The first objective of my thesis has been to investigate the social, economic, political, and emotional ties of Albanian immigrant men and women from Fier in Athens with families, and communities back in their hometown in Albania. My focus has been on the connections between

migrants/diasporas and families/communities in the city of Fier; and the gendered nature of contributions and impacts. I have looked at the role of remittances as a ‘survival’ and development strategy, at the impact of ‘gifts’ and social remittances, and at the notion of care as a social remittance.

The second objective has been to examine the return and impact of the Albanian returnees (men and women) to Fier. I have aimed at presenting the economic capital Albanian immigrants bring back upon returning and at how they utilize that capital for their families and in their community. I have also aimed at examining the role of the family in return and reintegration as well.

To accomplish my research objectives, I deployed a qualitative research approach that provided me with in-depth knowledge and understanding by interviewing (Berg & Lune, 2012) migrants in Athens and Fier. Qualitative research is an approach that does not follow a linear process, a fixed sequence of steps, and concentrates on personal narratives as provided by respondents (Newman, 2006, Ch. 13, p. 329). I conducted 18 semi-structured interviews in two research sites (10 interviews in Athens and 8 in Fier) using two different interview guides with questions that covered the basic study themes. An equal number of men and women participants were included. By conducting these in-depth interviews, I was able to acquire data on the gendered nature of connections between migrants/diasporas and families/communities in the city of Fier, and on the impact of the Albanian returnees on the survival and well-being of the hometown of Fier. Last, I interpreted and analyzed the data collected in the context of secondary literature on transnational migration, migration and development, gender and migration and the political economy and political history of Albania.

5.3 Research Ethics Board Approval

Before conducting the fieldwork, I applied for ethics clearance from the Saint Mary's University Research Ethics Board, which was granted to me. I provided all of the participants of the study with a consent form to read through and consent to their participation and explained all the objectives of the study describing potential contributions. Nearly all the participants consented verbally except for one who agreed on to sign the consent form. There were a few who consented to be contacted for the findings of the study and all the contact information was provided to me. Participation was voluntary and I ensured the participants were aware of that. Participants were encouraged to ask questions. They all chose a pseudonym and it is by this pseudonym they are quoted in this thesis.

5.4 Recruitment of Participants

In both courses of interviews, the snowball method was followed. The method of snowball sampling (also called as chain-referral) is the process of selecting a sample using networks (Laws, 2013; Newman, 2013). In the first site, Athens, I conducted fieldwork by interviewing 10 Albanian immigrants who had been living in the capital city for over 10 years. I started with one or two acquaintances who showed interest in participating in the study after I explained the objectives of the study. The first participants made suggestions for other potential interviewees whom I contacted and asked whether they would be willing to be involved in the study. In the second site, in Fier, I reached out again to one participant who agreed to be interviewed. Then, I looked for

potential participants by asking everyone who was an owner of a business and had lived in Greece for at least 7 years (the selection was made by going from one store to another and asking them if they were interested in the study). The city of Fier is small and as a small community, many people know who has been abroad and where, before returning to Fier. Thus, recruitment was neither complicated nor time-consuming. Several individuals, however, refused to participate in the study either because they were not interested, or they had no time for the interview.

5.5 Socio-Demographic, Educational, and Occupational Profile of Albanians Immigrants in Athens

All participants were between the ages of 32-49. In this group of interviewees, there were five men and five women who participated in the study. Regarding their educational profile, all participants had a high school diploma, two had an undergraduate degree, one interviewee had a Community College diploma, and another one a certificate in film directing. Two participants had started an undergraduate degree but did only two years out of a four-year program.

All participants had family both in Fier and in Athens, immediate and extended family as well. Eight out of the 10 respondents were married with children; only one participant had two children and the other seven had only one child. One female participant was single and one was in a relationship with someone. From the ten Albanian Immigrants who lived in Athens, six reported that their parents lived in Fier, one said that his parents had passed away, two mentioned that their parents lived in Athens and one had no family in Fier but a neighbour. They all had siblings who lived either in Fier or Athens except for the one participant who had no family in Fier or Athens but the neighbour who lived in her country of origin. Last, one participant had a sister who lived

in the United States and another one had a brother who lived in the United States. They all had relatives such as uncles, aunts, and cousins who resided in Fier and Athens. All participants stressed that their relationship with their immediate family was exceptional. One participant has been living in Athens for 12 years, another one for 16, and all the rest from 20-28 years.

Regarding the occupation profile of Albanian immigrants in Athens, it should be noted that very few participants (four out of ten Albanian Immigrants) were working as skilled workers in Athens. More particularly, one was a baker (owner of a bakery shop), another one worked in a company where they mounted doors and windows and another one was a carpenter (partner with another one). Moreover, one of the respondents was a grocery clerk, two of the three women participants were providing housekeeping and childcare services and one female interviewee was a clerk in the winter and a cast member in an open-air cinema during the summer seasonal period. One male participant owned a children's furniture company in Albania although he resided in Athens. Ultimately, one female participant was employed in the retail sector where they rented costumes to live shows theatres but also to actors (wardrobe assistant), and another interviewee was not working. In fact, the latter participant used to provide elderly care and housekeeping services for a short time and after the old couple passed away, she never worked again.

5.6 Socio-Demographic, Educational, and Occupational Profile of Albanian Returnees to Fier

In this group of interviewees, there were five men and three women who participated in the study aged from 37 to 72. They were all married and had two children each, except for one participant who had only one child. It should be noted that all the participants had a high school

diploma and five had an undergraduate degree. Of those five participants, three respondents had an undergraduate degree, one a two-year diploma from a College, and a couple of certificates, and the other two had diplomas from Community College. All the participants had acquired those credentials in Albania except for one female participant who had graduated from a college in Athens and had received a certificates.

Regarding their previous occupational background, different jobs were reported by the participants and most of them were similar to the business they decided to start upon their return. In particular, two worked in construction, one was a hairstylist, one was a cook/chef, one a butcher, one was a baker and one was an athlete (a professional basketball player) while residing in Athens. There was also one respondent who mentioned that she had worked as a housekeeper before she returned to Fier. All participants had acquired the skills in Athens before returning and launching their businesses.

Upon their return, all the eight Albanians settled again in their hometown and opened their businesses. However, almost everyone utilized the knowledge gained in Athens. For example, one participant who was the owner of a bakery shop in Fier had learned the skills of baking while he was residing in Athens, and that was one of the reasons he opened a bakery shop upon his return. Similarly, another participant who owned a meat store in Fier had worked as a meat man in Athens for many years and because of his experience, he remained in the same business. Furthermore, one participant opened a hair salon in the hometown of Fier bringing back all the expertise, experience, and professional qualifications she had gained in Greece. The participant who was the owner of a business where they exchanged foreign currency chose a different profession upon his return, and another one decided to open her business, a mini-market *although* she had a different job in Athens.

Also, there was one participant who was an owner of some apartments that he rented them in Fier which he had designed and built based on the construction skills he had acquired while residing in Athens. Another interviewee was a teacher but her husband opened a café-bar since he was managing a café-bar during their residence to Athens. Finally, another respondent is currently retired but had launched a business in a beer and a fuel industry, and a marble company as well. He had also started a business in the construction industry but he didn't continue with that as his son passed away and he got ill as well. His occupation in Athens was in the construction industry.

5.7 Locations of Study

The two locations that were chosen for the study were my hometown of Fier, in Albania, and the city of Athens, in Greece. Fier is a typical Albanian (medium-size) city, hard hit by economic conditions with high levels of emigration toward Greece, mainly settled to Athens. Geographically, Fier is in southwest Albania and its connection with the Greek society is strong as the ruins of an ancient Greek city of Apollonia are located in Fier, attracting many visitors during the year. The ancient ruins pave the way for “strong” connections to Greek society as we can still see evidence of Greek influence in architecture, literature, language, and law in Albania. On a personal level, Fier is my hometown where I spent nine years until I moved to Athens with my family in the early 1990s. Athens is the city where I grew up and spent 20 years of my life; I was educated and had my own family. I still maintain a lot of connections in Fier and Athens, and I have members of my family living in both places.

It is crucial to note that Albanians make up the largest immigrant group in Greece (Census, 2011). All the participants of this study were from Fier and all of their linkages and contributions

were tied to their hometown of Fier. In the following chapter, those transnational links between the Albanian immigrants/communities, and returnees will be examined and analyzed in-depth for having a better understanding of the role of transnational migration and transnational spaces.

5.8 Data Collection: In-Depth, Semi-Structured Interviews

An interview guide was used for this study which consisted of topics that enabled me to draw information from the participants and answer my research question. Some of the topics that were part of the interviews included types of family links, care provisions, perceptions of life style in Fier, material and financial contributions and their frequency, use of contributions by relatives, gifts they might receive from relatives in Albania, transfer of skills, social remittances, the intention of sending gifts, the importance of connections and exchanges with family, relationship with family and frequency of communication with them, visits to Albania, use of capital in Fier, kind of business they started, the support they received if any and their occupation in Fier and Athens. I decided to conduct semi-structured interviews because this method allowed the interviewees to share stories and experiences. A typical semi-structured interview is a conversation between the researcher and the interviewee who answers the questions but also allows ad hoc probes by the interviewer. However, it is important to note that the interviewer does not follow a rigorous script but provides the freedom to the participant to elaborate on the topic and explore ideas during the interview (Berg and Lune, 2012).

All of the interviews were conducted in Albanian and recorded by using a well-equipped mobile phone. I translated and transcribed the interviews into English. The transcribed data were coded and analyzed.

Interviews were conducted at the respondents' location of preference. Most of the interviews in Fier were conducted in the workplace of the participants, in a noisy, busy, and warm environment in the summer of 2019 with many interruptions as the participants had to pause a few times to assist their clients. Others took place at cafes and one interview was recorded at the beach upon the request of the participant.

In Athens, all the participants were interviewed after their work in public spaces, like cafes. Hence, I conducted the interviews according to the participants' availability and convenience. I ensured all the participants felt comfortable during the interview and provided the option to ask for a break, if they felt they needed one.

5.9 Data Analysis

All of the interviews were recorded after the consent was given by the participants. In a first step, I read the interviews, translated and transcribed them verbatim. This gave me the time to familiarize myself with the data collected. In the second step, I grouped the data into codes. Categorizing the data into codes and naming each category enabled me to begin the process at analysis by introducing them in the QDA Miner Lite software, where I could separate the interview 'pieces' each in the right category/code.

The data collected through the interviews were analyzed using the QDA Miner Lite program. By using QDA Miner Lite, I was able to introduce the categories/ “codes” in the program and start analyzing the content. A code describes the content that is transcribed from the interviews.

In the third step, I produced a report based on a preliminary analysis of the data. Introducing the codes to the QDA Miner program allowed me to illustrate the findings. It should be noted that some codes were not included because they were found to be repetitive (i.e. the information had already been categorized under a different code). The preliminary report of the data was subsequently refined while data were analyzed in the context of my theoretical approach and secondary literature.

5.10 Limitations of the Method

One of the limitations in this study is the risk of bias that exists in theory if the researcher is an insider to the group she is studying. In this study, as an immigrant myself coming from Fier and living in Athens for many years, I can claim that I am both an insider and an outsider to my group. Furthermore, living now in North America for a few years, my angle of looking at the group as a researcher is different. In general, it is not uncommon that those who have lived experience of a group to conduct research in the group/ field / location that both feels familiar and acts as an incentive for them to further their understanding.

The choice of Fier and Athens was one of convenience to me as a researcher, but also Athens is the area where the majority of migrants end up and the city with most working and educational opportunities for migrants. There are also many of my compatriots who are from Fier

who have moved to Athens. However, in all probability, the results might have been different if I had interviewed Albanians living in smaller towns and working in agricultural labour. I ended up with 18 participants, which is a good number for a qualitative study, not too few and not too many. As this is a qualitative study the goal is not to generalize but produce detail and nuances of the experience. Because of the qualitative approach, there is no possibility of systematically generalizing the findings of the study in a quantitative way. What I aim is to present the results of the study of the particular areas and tie them with some of the theories related to transnationalism and the migration-development nexus. I conducted my study in the town of Fier which is a typical Albanian city, where families maintain links with compatriots in Athens. According to Thomson (1995), there is no generalization when individual voices are heard. All those individuals who shared personal narratives represent the whole community. In other words, they represent personal stories of other 'hidden' groups, as well, which may not be heard but they can be similar to those individuals' shared narratives (Thomson, 1995, Ch. 1, p. 7). Based on Thomson's thesis, my findings of the contributions of transnational communities and social remittances in the local well-being in the hometown of Fier could be generalized, in a qualitative way, ideal-typical way, for other cities in Albania. My findings can represent the substantial role of transnational migration and social remittances to the survival and well-being of their families in Albania if immigrants communicate frequently with their relatives in Athens. In a similar vein, knowledge, skills, ideas, and practices may be transmitted to other cities in Albania, and links may be consolidated as well among Albanian communities across borders. Thus, I could generalize in this case based on Thomson's theory about individuals' shared experiences which might represent the other 'hidden' stories of the whole community.

Another way of generalizing my findings could stem from Max Weber's "ideal type" theory and methodology which is based on the classification and systematic definition of social reality under objective appraisals. Essentially, according to Weber, ideal types are constructs or concepts which can be observed as methodological tools in understanding and analyzing any social problem without subjective bias (Eiaeson, 2000). Thus, the themes of my findings may represent "key themes" of the experiences of returnees and migrants from other Albanian cities.

CHAPTER SIX

FINDINGS: ALBANIAN IMMIGRANTS FROM FIER IN ATHENS

6.1 Introduction

I begin this chapter with transnational families and explore the relationships and links among them. The role of remittances as a ‘survival’ and/or development strategy, the impact of ‘gifts’ and social remittances, and the notion of care as a social remittance will be discussed and analyzed based on the interviewees’ responses. Ultimately, I will present the contributions that family and relatives from Albania make to their families in Greece.

6.2 Transnational Family Links

The notion of a transnational community focuses on human beings, and particularly on the relationships and links that are formed and maintained among individuals across borders and among transnational families. According to the literature (Portes, 1999: 464), such links have a positive impact on the socio-economic and potential transformation of the country of origin.

In my study, all the participants had family, immediate and extended, both in Fier and Athens. The majority of respondents were married with children in Athens and had their parents in Fier. Most of them also had siblings who resided either in Fier or Athens except for one participant who had family neither in Fier nor Athens but had a neighbour friend who lived in Fier. The neighbour was considered a family member for this participant, as she grew up with her in Albania before she migrated to Athens. Furthermore, they all had relatives, such as uncles, aunties, and cousins who resided in their hometown and Athens. Surprisingly, all the respondents agreed

that their relationship with their immediate family was exceptional and they communicated on a daily basis.

Tani: a middle-aged man, married, having High School education, living in Athens for 26 years and working full time as a carpenter stated:

I have a very good relationship with my close family such are my parents and my sister. I talk once in a while to my aunties who live in Fier. We see them usually when we visit. I am more in touch with cousins who live out of Albania. We do talk every day. Our communication with my parents and my sister is daily.

(Tani, Athens, 2019)

The impression I had from their responses was that these people were very attached to their family, and they were trying to maintain strong links by communicating regularly with family members across the border. Besides, nearly all of these interviewees indicated that they travel to Albania with their family once a year, and they visit additionally individually for other personal reasons or special occasions about 2-3 times annually. Interestingly, most Albanian immigrants who were interviewed had been living in Athens for more than 20 years and insisted on preserving ties to their homelands.

Ledi: a woman in her early 40s, married, University educated, living in Athens for 20 years and working full time as a wardrobe assistant stated:

My husband and I have decided to visit our family in Albania at least once a year. We might visit individually as well another time for other reasons or to see family, but once a year we visit as a

family. We are far and our daughter needs to see her grandparents. Another reason to visit is because of other family problems we might have and need to go, individually.

(Ledi, Athens, 2019)

There are enabling factors and causes that can explain better the maintenance of those transnational bonds among Albanian immigrants in Athens and their families in Fier. The first enabling factor would be the geographical proximity. In particular, proximity may strengthen the links among the immigrants. I argue that the proximity between the two countries may make it possible to maintain and foster these relationships. According to Michail (2009), proximity with Albania had promoted the transnational investment practices and strengthened the links with family in the country of origin (p. 552). Due to proximity, Albanian immigrants in Athens had consolidated their robust links with their loved ones in Fier but also, the economic crisis in which begun in 2008 in Greece encouraged transnational mobility and return migration as the employment opportunities decreased in Athens. Proximity might stimulate Albanian immigrants to foster and maintain the bonds with their families in Albania by facilitating communication and frequent visits to Albania. Albanian immigrants travelled to Fier, on average 2-3 times a year.

Another explanation is that Greece and Albania are constituted as a “transnational space” due to ongoing and numerous movements of Albanians back and forth in the post-communist period. Vullnetari and King (2009) also implied that the growth of Albanian transnational practices among the families in Greece was connected to developing transnational social spaces. Moreover, Robert Smith (2001) argues that the transnational practices and relationships tie homeland and destination country as a “life-world”.

The history of an authoritarian communism may be another reason for this intimate relationship. Living for so many decades and being isolated from everyone but their family during communism, Albanian immigrants had the need to stay in touch and connected to their families left behind.

Another plausible explanation for the maintenance of those transnational connections might be the need for more communication because the Albanian immigrants were away and facing daily ‘the unfamiliar’. They did not know what it looked like being away from your family and settling to another country.

Ultimately, Albanian immigrants are likely to need to feel ‘at home’ when they forge and maintain their bonds with their families. They may need to consolidate that sense of ‘belonging’ so they don’t feel excluded from their family in the country of origin.

6.3 Financial Transfers

6.3.1 Remittances as a Survival and/or ‘Development’ Strategy

De Haas and Miller (2013) argue that remittances have a positive impact on national development of the sending country as new development initiatives and new investments take place. Immigrants have made significant contributions to their countries bringing social and economic growth in the country, mainly through monetary transfers.

In this study, the majority of the respondents sent remittances to their families but seemed to be reluctant to disclose any specific figures. Three participants stated that they used to send

financial contributions when they were single. However, if their family needed any financial support, the participants supported them financially. Three participants send a symbolic amount, whenever their families needed it, or whenever they visited their country, or for, special occasions. The frequency of financial contributions varied from once a year, during their visit to their hometown, to multiple times during the year, without revealing exactly how many times though. One participant stated that she would not remit; she just would send gifts to her family and friends. Last but not least, one respondent used to support financially her parents when they were alive for 10 years and now she would remit to her neighbour and her children as they were the only 'family' she had left in Albania. She was usually sending contributions about 2-3 times a year, however, she avoided disclosing exact figures. In response to the question about contributing to their friends, most participants did not send anything to their friends. Few respondents indicated that they would send gifts to their friends whenever they visited (usually once a year) or for special occasions.

Another respondent reported, essentially the only one who disclosed information around money issues, that he used to remit for eight years, when his parents were alive, and the amount was approximately 400 euros a month.

Kristaq: a young man in his early '40, married, having High School education, owner of a bakery shop, and living in Athens for 27 years stated:

Well, where my parents were alive I used to send a critical amount of funds to them. In addition to that, I had hired a lady who was looking after them and I used to pay her 250 euros a month. I had to buy the medications/drugs for them as well so, the total amount for the month reached up to 400

euros. As you may see, I had a significant financial contribution to make every month. For about 8 years, every month.

(Kristaq, Athens, 2019)

It is critical to stress that all the participants would send gifts to their family when they travelled to their hometown or for special social events. The action of “offering a gift” indicates a traditional custom for the Albanian society and all the participants seemed to be engaged with this tradition. Those symbolic gifts or material stuff included clothing, household appliances, and medicine as they were believed to be of better quality compared to what was offered in Albania.

Mikel-Angelo: a middle-aged man, married, University-educated, owner of a children’s furniture company in Albania and living in Athens for 25 years stated:

Albanians usually buy furniture or household items for their houses/apartments. They might purchase couches, rugs, or different appliances. Useful things. Now that my contributions are less, the financial contributions that I make cover smaller expenses. They use the funds for medical treatment and drugs.

(Mikel-Angelo, Athens, 2019)

According to the World Bank (2006), many developing countries, (at least 36 countries, including Albania), depended financially mainly on remittances which were seen as a survival strategy. In 2004, the Bank of Albania assessed that the remittances that Albanian migrants sent

comprised 13.5% of the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) of the country. Compared to ODA (Official Development Assistance), the flow of remittances increased three times more than foreign direct net investments in 2004 (Bank of Albania, 2005). King and Vullnetari (2009) argue that remittances contribute to the migrants' well-being of the families and eradication of poverty in Albania. Monetary transfers are crucial in the hometown of Fier because they are used on a needs basis for consumption, household goods, and most importantly, for healthcare services. The practice of financial assistance may indicate a form of a development strategy for the Albanian households in Fier, as Albanians in the hometown rely on that economic aid. Although a few Albanian immigrants refused to reveal the financial sums they send to their families in Fier their practice indicated an important financial aid for their family, in Fier. Transfers also instilled a sense of 'responsibility' to assist their families.

Another purposeful use of funds was to assist the family to pay the bills. Also, family in Fier could save the funds that immigrants sent them and use them when needed. That purposeful use can possibly be considered a form of development strategy. One respondent argued that since the income had been decreased, with the financial crisis in Greece in 2008, the financial support to their families in Fier was limited to covering medical treatment only. Finally, one participant reported that other than the warm-hearted connection that she felt toward her neighbour and her family, she also remitted for investing in her apartments, and for legal paperwork purposes related to the house the participant owned.

Finally, it is also important to stress that Albania was isolated for four decades and defined as the poorest country in Europe. The Albanian population lived in extreme poverty for a few decades experiencing repression and isolation, thus, when the borders opened, Albanians felt that

they had the freedom to shape their life from scratch. The provision of remittances may have constituted a development and survival strategy, but also implied an action of freedom and independence for the immigrants, particularly for women who pressured for changing the gender roles in the traditional patriarchal society of Albania. Women became active members of the male-dominated family and made contributions to the country of origin providing transnational care for their families. The flow of remittances, either in kind or cash, might be one of the implications of the beginning of Albanian immigrants' new life in the post-communist country. Being oppressed for years and fearful of their community's mistrust, Albanians had the opportunity to show love and care towards their families by making contributions from abroad.

6.3.2 The Intention for Gifts or Funds as a 'Cultural' Custom

Reflecting on the purpose of gifts/funds, participants would send gifts/funds to their families because they felt pleasure in doing that. Leaving aside the practical use of gifts/funds, this practice of sending them stemmed from cultural practices such as the 'obligation' or 'respect' or even 'a sense of satisfaction' that Albanian immigrants felt when they supported their family.

Tani: a middle-aged man, married, having High School education, living in Athens for 26 years, and working full time as a carpenter stated:

Well, to be honest, my parents have never required anything. They have sent us more gifts than we have sent them. However, I used to send money to my father. Or when we visited we used to bring gifts, mostly symbolic gifts as they didn't need anything from us, just to give that content to them

that I thought of them. I used to send them 200-300 euros once in a while, not every month. He used to give me back those funds when we visited them. My father would say that they didn't need that money (laughs). It was mostly to give him the pleasure that their son thought of him. It was a sign of respect towards him.

(Tani, Athens, 2019)

Interestingly, two interviewees claimed that bringing gifts with them when they visited their family was part of their culture. As they explained, "*you cannot go with empty hands*" when you *go* for a visit to your family.

Nikos: a young man in his early 40s, married, having a High School Diploma, a grocery clerk and living in Athens for 26 years stated:

It is a traditional custom. Even if you visit a family member or a friend in Albania, you cannot go with empty hands. You will bring something, and this happens regularly when you live there. When you live abroad and visit family, in my case my in-laws, definitely you have one more reason to bring more valuable gifts. My wife and I both work so we make contributions in her family. There is no obligation on that exchange. You don't expect to receive back anything. I don't expect anything from anyone. I do it because I want to do it and I can afford to do it.

(Nikos, Athens, 2019)

Spitzer *et al.* 2003, have also found that the provision of care stemmed from a sense of ‘fulfillment’ and satisfaction. As interviewees claimed, they had that desire to support their family so their parents knew that “*their children were thinking of them*”. Similarly, one participant claimed that she felt that obligation towards her parents to remit for what they did for her during her studies in Albania. That contribution indicated an act of appreciation and kindness towards her parents and it arose from cultural expectations as well. According to Tastsoglou (2017), the sense of ‘obligation’ and ‘respect’ is culturally embedded and evidence of ‘care’ in supporting one’s family (p. 120-121).

Regarding the gendered aspect of financial assistance, male participants referred mostly to funds sent to their parents or sums to cover medical expenses. In contrast, female participants explained that they usually brought gifts with them when they travelled to Albania. When women were asked about financial contributions, they talked about material contributions they made to their family or friends, and about the delight, they experienced in that practice by letting their parents know how much they were thinking of them. Although that symbolic gift might be a household appliance or a piece of clothing, the fact that their daughters were thinking of parents/grandparents made the latter appreciate those material gifts thoroughly.

Monetary transfers or transfers in kind stemmed from expected traditional gender roles in the Albanian community. In Albanian society, young male immigrants usually send monetary remittances to the family, mainly to their father and other siblings in the family (King and Vullnetari, 2009, p.28). The fact that men used to send mostly financial transfers explained the breadwinner role of men who had usually the responsibility to support the family. On the other hand, women made contributions in kind. King and Vullnetari (2011) have highlighted the

patriarchal gender relations in Albania, where men are the principal remitters and women send mainly remittances in kind (p. 47). Moreover, women deployed remittances in kind because this practice made them feel happy, but also, as they explained, it was a cultural tradition. What is important to stress here is that both men and women contributed to their parents/grandparents to show ‘respect’ and (symbolically) the love they nurture for their family. There was no difference in terms of the expectations of the Albanian community. The sense of “obligation” and respect was viewed as a cultural practice for both men and women.

The purpose of remittances (in cash or kind) was multi-sited and multi-faceted. It was multi-sited because it took place in Fier and Athens as Albanian immigrants sent remittances both in cash and kind to their families in the hometown of Fier but also, Albanian used to send gifts and other traditional food to their families in Athens. Remittances were multi-faceted because they had economic, social and emotional dimensions and indicated strong relationships between Albanian immigrants and their families in Fier. The social dimension was connected to the circulation of social remittances which is a significant contribution to the hometown of Fier, and may indicate the potential for social change for the community of Fier.

This transnational relationship may promote dependency and comfort, as well, as families back in Albania learn to rely on these funds and not look for a job, but the point is that remittances have become an integral aspect of the Albanian economy and many local investments have taken place, particularly by returnees who have invested in Fier by opening up businesses there.

In sum, Albanian immigrants engaged in cultural practices and supported their families in their country of origin emotionally and financially, ensuring family and community survival in their hometown of Fier.

6.3.3 The Significance of Transnational Care

In the case of Albanian immigrants in Athens, the practice of care pertained to both financial and emotional dimensions. The care was provided mostly to family members. The participants mentioned that they provided emotional, financial, or material care to their parents and siblings every time their family in Fier sought support. It could be once a month, but it could also be a couple of times during the year. There was one participant who underscored his relationship and strong connection with his father and sister and how actively he was involved in their lives in Albania even if his residence was in Athens. Also, there was a respondent who stressed the importance of providing care to her grandparents, as she stated, “*they need mostly our support*” and they need to know that “*their grandkids are thinking of them*”. There was one participant who cared not only about her friend/neighbor but also about her neighbor’s family, and on a regular basis, a few times during the year, she would send remittances to them.

Entela is a middle-aged lady who had worked as a housekeeper/caregiver for only three years in her life, inheriting her husband’s apartment and now lives on her husband’s pension. She has a High School Diploma and lives in Athens for 22 years. Entela stated:

I have met my neighbor’s parents and have made some contributions in the past. I still provide some financial support to her mother as her father has passed away. My financial contributions have been even stronger when my parents used to live. They passed away 10 years ago. Taking into consideration the fact that I have been living in Greece for the last 20 years, I was supporting them financially for 10 years. I am still providing support to my neighbor as our links are strong. Even when my husband was alive, we used to remit every month a critical amount of funds to my parents.

(Entela, Athens, 2019)

The majority of participants in this study reported that they made great efforts of supporting their parents or other members of the family by providing them with medicines or anything else they might require assistance with. Of those, two participants supported their parents by sending medications every month.

Arben is a middle-aged man, married, having High School education and a one-year certificate in film directing, living in Athens for 28 years, and working full time in a company where they mount windows and doors. He stated:

As much as we can, we look after my parents. There is a lady who is taking care of their daily basis, I sent her all the monthly medication or anything else they might need at a time I am sending to them. Should any other cousin ask for any contribution, we are trying to help them providing them with anything they might need. We are not providing them any care but if they ask for something, we are doing our best to assist them by sending things that cannot be found in Albania.

(Arben, Athens, 2019)

Only three respondents mentioned that they did not provide any care. However, if needed, they were willing to support as much as they could manage. Finally, one participant mentioned that she had supported financially her sister when needed, but now, she continued to assist her by sending remittances in kind, such as clothing, or medication. Another respondent had supported his mother for the last 5 months as she had been in a critical condition, and he had visited Albania regularly. The notion of care as a social remittance is important in the Albanian case as it is multi-

faceted. It has economic and emotional dimensions as it is provided to the families in Fier by Albanian immigrants in Athens. Furthermore, care is multi-directional as it is offered by both Albanian immigrants who reside in Athens toward their families in Fier but also, Albanian relatives and friends make contributions to their families in Athens as will be discussed below. The provision of care which involves financial aid and emotional support indicates an action of love toward family members in Fier every time they sought assistance. Thus, care can be emotional other than financial, and encompasses emotional, material, and symbolic support (Baldassar 2007; Evergeti and Ryan 2011; Zontini and Reynolds 2007).

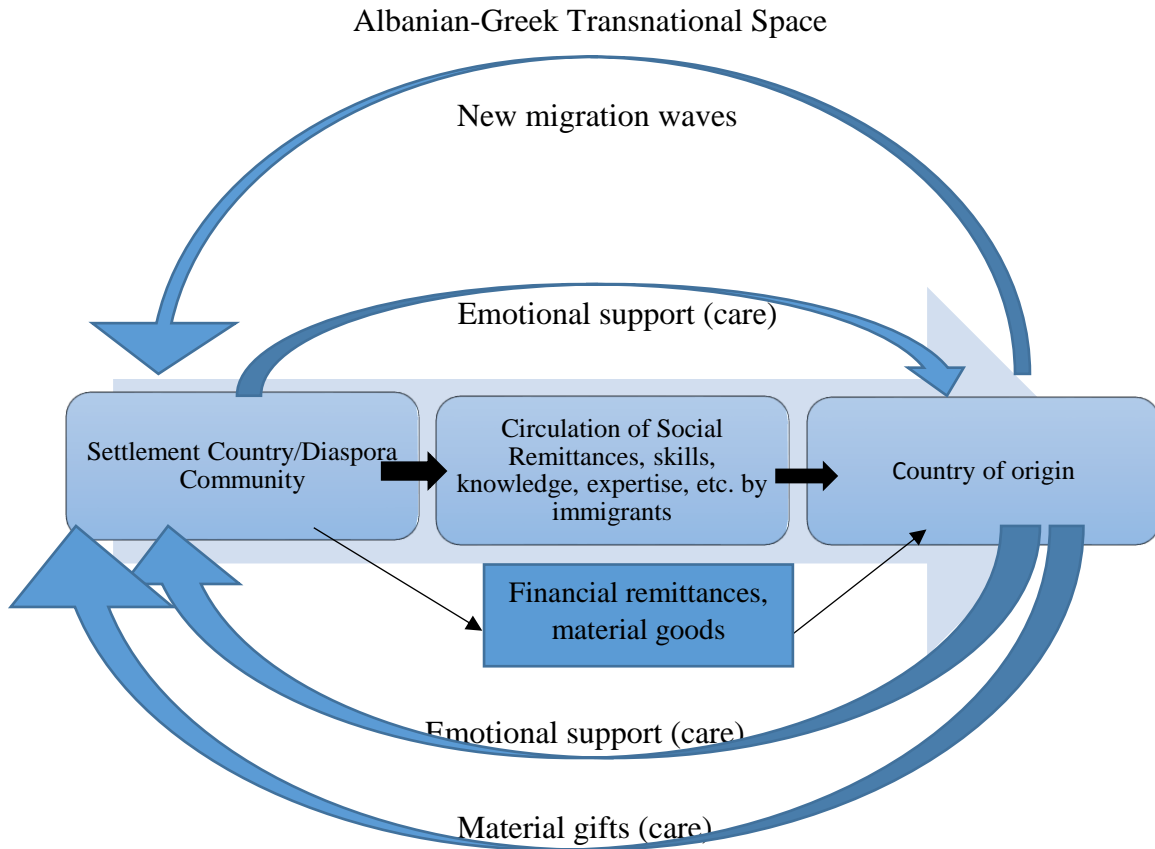
6.3.4 The Outcome of Social Remittances to Fier

To understand the significance of social remittances in the case of Fier, I asked the question if these Albanian immigrants shared the skills they learned in Athens with their fellows in Fier. That was a very stimulating question as the majority of participants shared skills with their relatives/friends in Albania. As they stressed, they shared their perceptions and observations of the way of life and the mentality in Greece compared to that in Albania; they shared the work ethic or knowledge of available medical treatment that they learned in Greece, or they talked about services one received in both countries. A few participants spoke about manners and respect that Greek showed to their fellows. Another participant talked about freedom and tolerance of people in Greece.

Consequently, in the case of Albanian immigrants who lived in Athens, sharing the knowledge, and the skills they learned in the receiving county with their compatriots in Fier indicated a potential for social and economic transformation in the town of Fier. Levitt (1998)

argues that social remittances such as the flow of ideas, practices, skills, knowledge, and expertise contribute to the social and economic transformation of the country (p. 927). The transmission of new ideas and knowledge may have a positive impact on the community of Fier, as Albanians, in all likelihood, put these ideas into practice. The acquisition of skills and knowledge in Greece indicates human development.

The following map (Map 2) demonstrates the chain of development circulation. All the knowledge, skills, arts, entrepreneurship were being circulated by the diaspora. Immigrants who resided in Athens shared their knowledge and all the skills they had gained in the receiving country with their compatriots in Fier and these skills, knowledge and expertise could influence the community, and potentially contribute to social and economic transformation in Fier. Migrant transnational bonds contributed to transnational circulation of knowledge and skills and this may have a potential contribution to the social and economic transformation of Fier.



Map 2. Albanian-Greek Transnational Space studied by the author.

The insight I gained from my field research in Athens is that Albanian immigrants did share their knowledge and skills they had acquired in the destination country and this indicates an important step potentially leading to social and economic development in Fier. The transfer of ideas and practices can be considered a significant indicator in the socio-economic development of Fier as Albanian compatriots could put these ideas into practice. Although I did not hear that from their family members in Fier, the transnational bonds among Albanian immigrants and their families were so strong that the implementation of any new idea, practice or knowledge could be feasible.

6.3.5 Receiving

Albanian immigrants did not remit only to their families in their hometown but they also received gifts from their relatives while they resided in Athens. In response to the question “*if they receive anything back from their family in Fier while they reside in Athens*”, all the participants agreed that they were receiving traditional products from their parents or even friends very frequently. Those products were fresh fruits or vegetables, cheese, desserts such as “loukoumi”, “baklava”, the traditional drink “Raki”, or the Traditional “Turkey” that Albanians have as a tradition for the New Year Eve celebration. Everyone claimed that they received them 1-3 times during the year; usually for Christmas or Easter or, they received these goods whenever they visited their hometown in the summer. When they were asked about the importance of those material exchanges, they all stressed their significance and for the strong relationship between family members, no matter how far they were. The gifts also revived their memories from their town, or they even reminded them where they came from, and that made them proud. Finally, two respondents reflected on a feeling of contentment that both sides felt when the one side sent goods and the other one received them.

Ori: a woman in her 40s, married, having High School education, living in Athens for 16 years, and working full time as a housekeeper stated:

In my opinion, it is very important to exchange gifts with your family. It makes your relationship stronger. Exchanging gifts means that you think of each other. It is not that your family requires that financial support but the fact that you are thinking of your family makes that gift special. Or

when I receive a gift or that treats from my family makes that exchange even more important for our connection.

(Ori, Athens, 2019)

The mutually shared transnational material exchanges and exchange of ideas, skills, knowledge, and practices confirmed the robust relationship among Albanian immigrants with their relatives in Fier. They all strived to maintain these ties because they derived a sense of contentment and emotional and physical wellbeing.

6.4 Conclusion

I conclude this chapter by highlighting the importance of transnational links between families across borders and the significance of monetary, material, and social remittances, as well as transnational care as a social remittance, to the hometown of Fier. The role of care is multi-faceted and multi directed; it can encompass financial and emotional dimensions, and it can be provided by both Albanians who live in Athens toward their compatriots in Fier and Albanians in Fier toward their families in Athens. Remittances are financial and social. The Albanian community in Athens is a strong community where Albanian immigrants had been living in Greece for many years (on average 22 years); all of them had an exceptional relationship with their immediate families as well as frequent communication. They cared for each other and supported family members in Fier financially and emotionally, when needed. Their visits and remittances sent to Albania were frequent, from once a month to a few times a year, which indicated their love for their family and persistence in maintaining the bonds. The financial support to their family

indicated a cultural practice as Albanian immigrants remitted to show 'respect' to their parents. Besides, sending funds to their relatives to cover daily consumption expenses and pay bills, they contributed to the survival and well-being of families and communities. Albanian immigrants provided financial support to their family but also they offered care to them by making contributions for treatments and medications, all forms of transnational care, showing compassion and devotion towards their family. Ultimately, regarding gendered perspectives, there are expected roles for men and women in the Albanian case. As a traditional patriarchal family structure characterizes Albanian society where men dominated in Albania, men were expected to send financial remittances and women remittances in kind. In the case of Fier, men contributed financial gifts and medications mainly to their father, and women usually sent material gifts to their parents and siblings. However, women would send medication to their parents as well, if needed. Also, both men and women would send contributions to their parents in order to show the culturally expected respect toward one's family of origin, and especially parents.

CHAPTER SEVEN

FINDINGS: RETURNEES FROM ATHENS TO FIER

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings on the Albanian returnees from Athens to Fier. The second objective of the study was to examine the impact of the Albanian returnees to Fier. More particularly, the emphasis will be placed on the economic capital that migrants bring back when they return to Albania and the ways they use that capital for their families and in their community. The chapter also discusses the outcome of return migration on the city of Fier. Overall, I will attempt to capture the potential development impact and contributions of Albanian returnees to Fier.

7.2 Migration Histories and Herstories

I will start by providing some background on the length of time spent in Greece and the participants' decision to return, i.e. their migration histories and herstories. First, it should be noted that none of these respondents had lived in any other countries beside Greece. The time that all the participants of this study spent in Athens varied. Two participants had stayed for seven years in Greece, one participant for eight years, and another one had lived for twelve years in Athens. Furthermore, one interviewee had resided in Athens for thirteen years and another one for eighteen years. Last, one participant spent nineteen years in Athens and another one twenty-seven years. Thus, the length of time spent out of Albania varied from 7-27 years. Apart from two participants who had spent from a few months to a few years out of Athens at the beginning of their migration

journey, all the rest had settled in Athens until they returned to Albania. In particular, one participant who had spent seven years in Athens had first stayed for a few months in a smaller town before he moved to Athens. Another participant had stayed for two years in another smaller city and one year in an island before he moved to Athens where he lived for sixteen years. Finally, it is important to add that the majority of participants had migrated with their own families to Greece.

7.3 Reasons for Return

First of all, the decision to return was a family decision for nearly all the participants who returned to Albania with their family. Only one respondent who migrated alone, returned alone, aiming to create his own family upon his return. The city of Fier was the hometown of all participants, the place where they were born and had left family behind.

Most of the interviewees had multiple reasons to return to Fier. For instance, three participants agreed that the economic crisis in Athens in 2009-2010 made them leave Athens and return to their hometown.

Lida: a woman in her mid '40, married, having her hair salon in Fier, and being educated in a Community College in Athens stated:

When the economy started to show a decline in Greece, we thought that it would be a perfect time to return but we also had at the back of our head that we could return to Greece as well. The Construction industry had started to fail so, we had no option but to leave Greece. Besides, because

we used to live in Fier in a detached house and our neighborhood was full of old detached houses, all the landowners decided to give the land to contractors to build high buildings giving us the apartments we had agreed on. So, we decided to start a business in the retail store upon our return in Fier.

(Lida, Fier, 2019)

Furthermore, two participants returned for their children's education, as they believed that their children could attain a better education in Albania. One of the latter, besides the education of her daughter, stressed two other reasons; her husband's job, and her desire to continue playing sports, as she was an athlete. One participant returned for his parents but he returned also because of his own health problems after his son's loss. Finally, two participants returned for their parents. In particular, one respondent returned to look after his mother, as she was sick and living alone.

Illirian: a young man in his mid '40, married, owner of a meat store in Fier and University educated stated:

The most important reason for returning was that my mother got sick. She was alone and I had nobody to look after her, so I returned to take care of her. That was the main reason.

(Illirian, Fier, 2019)

Returning to one's hometown where family members live illustrates the strong, family bonds among transnational family members. Participants decided to return to Fier to look after their parents and consider family paramount.

Although the majority argued that the economic crisis in 2009-2010 was the reason to return to their country of origin, family responsibilities and family ties were of critical significance, for their leaving Greece. Many returned because of their family left behind. Thus, family bonds were uppermost in their mind and in the decision to return.

7.4 The Provision of Care

The provision of care plays a vital role in transnational activities across borders. The notion of care has attracted attention in the social sciences fields and has been conceptualized as an important social remittance. According to Stalker (2000), different forms of consumption on food, education, and health care involve ways of investment that can show economic growth in a country. By saying this, investing in health care can be considered an important kind of social, if not economic, transformation for the country. However, this is not the case in Albania as many immigrants returned home to be united with their families and most importantly to provide care to their parents and thus contributed to the well-being of their families and communities.

In response to the question “*if they provided any care to family members and what kind of care*”, they stated that they cared about the well-being of their family members such as parents and parents-in-law. All the participants mentioned types of care: financial care but also emotional care was provided mostly to their parents, and if necessary, to other family members in Fier. Similarly, one participant stated that she frequently made other donations to the family, and

another one said that he has always cared about his family since he was single and had hosted his brother's children for eight years, while residing in Athens, assisting them with all the documents needed for their permanent residence. Upon his return, he is still providing care to his family.

Illirian: a young man in his mid '40, married, owner of a meat store in Fier and University educated, stated:

I have always cared about everyone (laughs). I have been caring about my brothers, sisters, and nephews and nieces. All the time. I remember myself supporting and helping my family since I was single and young. First of all, I have helped them financially. Besides, I have hosted my brother's children when I was in Greece and have helped them *get all* the paperwork done to become permanent residents in Greece. They stayed with me for 8 years. I still care for everyone upon my return to Fier. I also look after my mother.

(Illirian, Fier, 2019)

One respondent, as she explained, supported her mother both financially and emotionally as she shared the same roof with her.

Elona: a married lady in her late 40s, University-Educated, a teacher in her profession but owner with her husband of a Café-Bar stated:

I look after my mother and my husband provides financial care to his mother. I provide mostly financial care but she lives with me, so, I support her in all other ways. I provide her moral, emotional, and generally, all kind of support. I look after her medicines or I take her to doctor appointments, we entertain ourselves by going out to different places and the list goes on as we both share the same roof.

(Elona, Fier, 2019)

One of the main reasons for migrants to return to Fier was to look after their parents. That action may indicate family responsibility and duty towards their parents. When a participant stated that *“I returned mainly to look after my mother as she was sick”* it demonstrates a sense of family responsibility that is connected to family care. In this case, the provision of care has a dimension of symbolism which embraces a sense of “responsibility” and “obligation” towards the elderly. But it is primarily material and economic care. It is important to remember that care has a broader meaning or multiple facets: it can be physical, financial, social, and emotional. It can encompass emotional, material, and symbolic support (Baldassar 2007; Evergeti and Ryan 2011; Zontini and Reynolds 2007). Similarly, returnees provided physical, emotional, financial, and symbolic care to their parents and parents-in-law.

7.5 Re-patriating Capital

Return migration, investments, remittances, and transnational political involvement are all connected with the transnational nature of migrant communities. (De Haas, 2010, p. 248). It is well documented in the literature review that returnees bring back home financial capital and

accumulated savings that can be used on new investments upon their return. As Faist and Fauser stated (2011), migrants are keen on setting up new business and investment activities upon their return, with the potential of bringing some development in the country of origin (p. 19). Migrants might bring home human capital such as skills and professional experience (Germenjia & Milo, 2009, p. 497).

All the participants brought back financial capital and invested in their hometown of Fier. More specifically, they all opened their businesses or/and bought an apartment. One participant invested some capital in the house where he used to live by renovating it again, he bought a property with his father while he was living in Athens and invested capital in the foreign currency exchange store of which he is currently the owner. Another one bought a house as well and opened a meat market. The last two respondents bought all the equipment as well in Greece and brought it to Fier. One participant stated that she invested some capital in a hair salon. One interviewee invested his capital by building three apartments one of which was for commercial use. According to him, the building was rented and this was how he earned his living. He had also bought another apartment that he used as an Airbnb rental. One participant of this study who recently retired owned a beer company for many years in Fier which he recently closed. Besides, he owned a marble company from 1993-1994 until 2000 through which he was importing marble from Greece and selling it in Albania, and he also owned a fuel transportation business for about seven years, all in Fier. Finally, there was one participant who considered 'her family' as the biggest capital but she explained that upon their return they decided to open a café-bar because of her husband's working experience in Athens. Another interviewee was reluctant to reveal details of her capital, but she stated she opened a mini-market with her husband. At the end of our interview, she confessed that she had invested some capital on a three-floor building as well.

Another participant bought an apartment for his parents when he was still in Athens and when he came back, he opened a bakery shop.

Ervini: a young man in his late 30s married, having High School education and owner of a Bakery Shop stated:

My parents had lost their house in those Pyramid schemes in 1997 so, I migrated to work and save money to buy an apartment for them. I had already learned a skill working in a bakery shop so I had made up my mind what I wanted to do when I would return. Actually, at first, I wanted to open a PIZZA place but I changed my mind soon and decided to open a bakery shop (he stops for a minute as he has to go to the bakery shop to assist a client).

(Ervini, Fier, 2019)

Except for one participant, all the rest did not purchase anything in Athens. Only one participant was an owner of four properties in Athens which he rented, and he regularly visited Athens to administer those properties. The other property he owned was sold before he left Athens.

Albert: a middle-aged man, married, having a High School Diploma, owner of a foreign currency exchange shop stated:

One of my properties was sold and the rest four are rented. The one at the Island was sold and the other four are in Athens. I visit regularly and check on them, deal with documents and rent. I claim my earning from those properties as I also have a Greek Passport since I became a citizen of Greece.

(Albert, Fier, 2019)

It appears that migrants brought capital in kind such as equipment for their business, invested financial capital in the purchase of an apartment, and utilized their savings to launch a new business. The use of financial capital initiated a form of developmental transformation in the city of Fier as new investments took place with the migrants' return. All the participants who returned home opened a business based on the knowledge they had gained in Athens.

7.6 Family Links upon Return

All of the participants had family left behind in Greece. One participant stated that all of her family lived in Greece and other than her own family, no one else lived in Albania. Two respondents reported that their siblings lived in Athens with their own families, and another participant mentioned that his children resided in Athens. One participant had only friends in Athens. By and large, most of the cases had other relatives in Athens that were not in touch regularly. In response to the question "*What kind of relationship do you have with your extended family in Fier upon your return*", nearly all stated that their communication with the family was not frequent, and they saw each other only for special occasions. As they mentioned, once one created his own family, then communication became occasional.

Elona: a lady in her late '40, married, University-Educated, a teacher in her profession but owner with her husband of a Café-Bar stated:

I have no close family. My brother lives in Fier with his family. There are other family members, however, such as cousins who live in Athens. We see or talk to each other very rarely. When you get married and you create your own family, rarely you communicate with other relatives.

(Elona, Fier, 2019)

Only three cases stated that they were in touch with their family regularly.

Illirian: a young man in his mid '40, married, owner of a meat store in Fier and University educated stated:

I have a huge family. My mother lives in Fier. I have a brother and a sister in Fier. Another sister lives in Sarande and another sister lives in the United States. I am in constant contact with all of them. We talk on a regular basis. Every day.

(Illirian, Fier, 2019)

It appears that the transnational links indicated that the relationship with close family members, while they lived abroad, remained healthy and powerful among Albanian families. Albanian migrants boosted their ties and made great efforts to maintain those bonds. However, it also appears that upon their return, relationships changed; they became more remote. Albanian returnees were in touch with their families but mostly, as they stated, they saw each other only for special occasions. The rare communication of returnees with their loved ones might also signal that returnees have less need to connect with their relatives, as they feel 'at home' upon their return. The hypothesis here is that people feel more attached to their family when they migrate and

strive to maintain the bonds with their families, but once immigrants return to their home country, the need to connect fades as they do not face the daily ‘unfamiliar’ anymore.

7.7 Settlement upon Return

In response to the question “*How easy was the transition to Fier for the family*”, some participants found it challenging to adjust to Albanian culture and life and some were able to integrate easily into their hometown. Those who were looking forward to their return seemed content with their choice and were able to integrate into the community. The support of their families was crucial as well. On the other hand, it took a while for some participants to settle back in their hometown, and they felt nostalgic about the way of life in Greece. They also stated that their children had difficulty adjusting to the culture in Albania but they eventually were able to get used to it.

Ilirian: a young man in his mid ’40, married, owner of a meat store in Fier and University educated stated:

I returned because of my mother but as Albanians who have gone through communism, the transition couldn’t be difficult. Also, the Albanian mentality and the way we have grown up is to adjust to a new environment easy (Another customer enters in and our conversation stops until Ilirian assists him). It was hard for my family. I used to live in a beautiful community in Athens so my family was used to it. They miss Greece a lot. I miss Greece as well even though I don’t always express my feelings.

(Ilirian, Fier, 2019)

Among those who felt happy to return to their hometown, Thoma, a man in his early 70s, married, University-educated, recently retired but the owner of a beer business, fuel Transportation Company and marble company for several years in Albania stated:

Well, I was travelling back and forth because of the businesses as I said, so the transition wasn't very hard. I love my country and I am happy that I was able to make some investments in Albania. I think those investments were worthwhile trying them and gave us great profit. Now, as a retired person, I can enjoy my life. Well, my wife misses her children even if we visit them {in Greece} regularly and they visit us in Albania as well. I think she misses her grandchildren mostly but the good thing is that our grandchildren can come and stay with us in Fier.

(Thoma, Fier, 2019)

Upon their return, relationships started to change and become rare but yet, mutual respect remained among compatriots and families. Besides, Albanian returnees sought emotional support from their family members and not from social service providers when they moved back to Fier. The family supported them, mainly emotionally, during their reintegration process and that was mentioned by nearly all the returnees.

It is important to stress that returnees seem to have brought back a more responsible and mature attitude to life. More specifically, a few participants stated that they gained a sense of responsibility in life and the ability to create their own family while residing in Athens. This could be, of course, a function of simply growing older but the returnees argued that their experience in

Greece equipped them with that sense of responsibility. Another participant also credited migration for shaping new views and values, and for equipping her with professional qualifications and skills to build her future again in Albania upon her return. Having two children who did well in school/college and a successful business upon her return generated a satisfaction and fulfillment which was obvious during the interview. The sense of responsibility and the sense of accomplishment constituted cognitive/psychological advantages as well. These cognitive and psychological advantages have the potential of social transformation in Fier, as they can fuel more innovation and initiative.

7.8 Perceptions of Change

Indeed, everyone had noticed the changes in infrastructure such as new roads and the new high-rise buildings in Albania. However, those development projects in infrastructure could not be considered significant changes in Albania, according to the majority of the interviewers. Regarding changes in the mentality of Albanians in their home country, some returnees agreed that they had noticed a few improvements upon their resettlement to Fier. To begin with, in response to the question *“If the mentality of people in Fier has changed and in what ways”*, four out of eight participants claimed that education, communication, and culture have progressed. Notably, as they added, people seemed to be more open-minded and educated. They respected more each other and didn’t gossip about other people, as they used to do in the past. Another interviewee who found that the mentality had changed, argued that relationships between families were worse upon his return. He believed that *“they {Albanians} have become Europeans”* and didn’t embrace warm relationships anymore, and they saw each other only for special occasions.

One participant spoke about the freedom of women who could walk alone everywhere without being harassed by men, as that phenomenon was common years ago.

Ervini: a young man in his late '30, married, having High School education and owner of a Bakery Shop stated:

The mentality of people has changed. There is more freedom in society. Women have more freedom. They can go out by themselves and men do not harass them. In the past, women couldn't go out alone as men would have the opportunity to pick on them. This has changed now and women can go anywhere alone. Also, people do not gossip anymore. They are not interested in talking about other people's lives and focus on their own lives.

(Ervini, Fier, 2019)

One participant supported both opinions. She believed that the new generation hadn't changed at all: they didn't maintain daily traditions that people used to have when they shared their residence in the same building in post-communist Albania. The older generation, however, she added, continued to show respect to each other in the community and they greeted each other upon her return. One respondent mentioned that her son couldn't form friendships upon their return because of that low level of communication. Last, some participants argued that mentality hadn't changed at all: people continued to be rude, disrespectful, and less educated.

Arjani: a man in his late '60, married, having Community College Diplomas, renting apartments to earn his living in Fier, stated:

I would claim with confidence that the mentality hasn't changed at all in Albania. I will give you an example of that question; years ago, back in 1994, I went to a mini-market to buy some groceries. Once I paid in the end, I thanked the cashier lady and she just stared at me. She didn't expect me to thank her. She should have thanked me as well but instead, she ignored me. So, the same mentality remains now in 2019. There are just a few people who show respect for others. The majority will use no manners and will show no respect.

(Arjani, Fier, 2019)

However, all of these changes had taken place before migrants' return. They were not changes that were caused by migrants. What is important to note though is that some progress in terms of freedoms and human rights has taken place in Albania. Albania is not ruled by a communist regime anymore, and people are not oppressed, thus, people are trying to be more open-minded and tolerant. This is an important step for the Albanian population which was isolated from other countries for four decades. The progress seen on freedom and human rights in Albania is linked to the social transformation of Fier although this change didn't emerge from migrants who returned.

Regarding the actual changes brought by the immigrants who returned it can be argued that Albanians made concrete contributions in Fier. To begin with, returnees brought back financial capital that they invested in new businesses they opened in Fier. The decision and the initiative of

Albanian returnees in Fier to launch a new and successful business, indicate one form of economic transformation of Fier. Second, Albanian returnees anticipated new developments in their communities and as a matter of fact, their new initiatives in their investments in Fier were influenced by their working experience in Greece. Nearly all the participants agreed that their business in Albania was based on the skills they learned in Athens during their migration journey. The flow of social remittances has had an important contribution to the community of Fier because Albanian returnees had transmitted new ideas and expertise in their businesses. According to Faist and Fauser (2011), social transfers contribute to development since they are connected with the modern world expressing freedom and human rights (p.3). For example, the owners of a bakery and meat shop respectively (Ervin and Illirian, Fier, 2019) explained that they gained their professional experience in Athens. The hairstylist was educated and worked in a similar environment in Athens where she attained a diploma and a few training certificates, and was appreciative of her overall working experience in the host country (Lida, Fier, 2019). Another participant stated that her husband opened a café-bar in Fier because he acquired management skills while he was working in a restaurant in Athens (Elona, Fier, 2019). Ajani (Fier, 2019) credited the construction skills he had earned when he lived in Athens that enabled him to design and build the three-floor building that he was now renting. Finally, a few interviewees stated that they brought equipment to Fier from Athens as well. Among the participants, Illirian, Ervini, Thoma and Lida imported material from Greece to Fier.

All the above returnees took pride in their managing roles and seemed satisfied and content with the success of their businesses. Moreover, it is crucial to note that these occupations are common economic activities in Albania. For example, Ervini and Illirian (Fier, 2019) were working in the food industry which is the second employment sector and employs 25% of the

working population in Albania (INSAT, 2019). Also, Elona's husband (Elona, Fier, 2019) was occupied in the food industry as well. Lida, the hairstylist (Fier, 2019) and Elona (Fier, 2019), the teacher, have been working in the third highest employment sector, the services sector accounting for 17.2% of the Albanian employees (INSTAT, 2019). Last, Ajani (Fier, 2019) had worked in the construction sector in Athens which is a common economic activity in Albania accounting for 7 % of the Albanian labour force (INSTAT, 2019).

Therefore, I argue that there is potential for social and economic transformation of the community of Fier (and more broadly Albania), as many new ideas, behaviours, knowledge and skills were transferred by the returnees. The fact that participants utilized their knowledge to their businesses is a form of social change in the town of Fier and is linked to human development. As Illirian stated *“Albania has seen some crucial changes because of migration. Not only have the material products that have been imported from Greece by the migrants but also, in terms of intellectual aspect, many people transferred new ideas and knowledge they have acquired in Greece. Bringing myself as an example as a meat man who has graduated from University and learned about Human anatomy and all the surrounded theory, I have mastered my knowledge in meat while working in Greece. Like myself though many people worked abroad and mastered their skills. For example, someone who was working in contraction as labour was able to become a contractor after a while”*.

According to Massey *et al*, 1998, the migration-development nexus is important for the socio-economic transformation in both the sending and receiving countries. Scholars have argued that migration brings development in the countries of origin through remittances, investments, entrepreneurship as well as they have a positive impact on social change, particularly in south-European countries (De Haas, 2010, p. 240). In this study, I can't prove that returnees migrants

contributed to the socio-economic development of Fier but I can argue that migrants who returned to Fier applied their knowledge and skills (i.e. human development) they had gained during their residence in Athens. Some social and economic change was brought at the local level because of the new ideas and investments that took place by returnees.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that a few of the immigrants who had returned either because of the Greek economic downturn, or to look after their parents appeared to feel nostalgic about Greece, and to regret their decision to move back to Fier. In particular, they saw themselves as having failed in their migration project and had the desire to return back to Greece. Thus, Albanians re-evaluated and had second thoughts about their return to their homeland, regardless of the success of the business they were currently running in Fier. With reference to those immigrants who stayed in Athens, they seemed to be content with their lives in Greece despite the economic downturn, or the limited number of job vacancies they had encountered there. The quality of their lifestyle and the education of their children were of significant importance for them and a reason to stay in Greece. As they stated, they had no intentions to return home.

Both groups of Albanians of this study may have been caught perhaps at different stages in life in making these decisions. In all probability, Albanians, who returned for the reasons explained above, needed to return home to be close to their families and make investments anticipating great profits, or they had the intention to return to Albania from the first moment of their migration. Those who stayed in Athens may have been determined to stay in Greece and fully integrate in the Greek society regardless of the strong links they may have had with their families. These are all hypotheses but I would argue that there is not any significant qualitative difference between those who stayed in Athens and those who returned to Albania.

A very interesting approach to the migration journey was identified by one participant who talked about the loss of identity and the loss of a sense of belonging when someone migrates. As he stated he would like to be re-united with his own family as this is how he would feel that he speaks the same language, and shares in the same traditions and values.

7.9 Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings of Albanian returnees to Fier and their developmental impact in the community. More particularly, based on the findings, it appears that Albanian returnees contributed their skills, know-how and capital to the well-being and development of their families and communities potentially leading to socio-economic development. They were applying their knowledge, expertise and skills they had gained during their professional experience in Athens to the new businesses they launched upon their return to Fier. The flow of social remittances is crucial in this case as returnees were employed in sectors that they had worked in Greece before their settlement in Albania. Thus, some social change is observed in Fier regarding the knowledge that was applied to their investment initiatives. The provision of care was a significant contribution to the community of Fier as a few Albanians returned home to look after their parents. Care was both a reason for returning (for some) as well as a concrete contribution to family well-being upon returning. Nonetheless, the changes that returnees noticed in mentality, daily behaviours, freedom, and human rights were changes that have taken place over the years with the fall of communism and not because of migrants' return to Albania. Last but not least, it is important to note that a few participants found themselves having regrets about their return and conceptualized the migration process as a failure. This statement adds further evidence to the

literature that migration is not considered a win-to-win situation, but possibly one involving major losses.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Summary

This chapter presents a summary of the findings of this study and discusses some areas for further research. This study involves field work in Athens, Greece, and in Fier, Albania exploring the transnational linkages Albanian immigrants have created with their family members, relatives and friends in their hometown of Fier. Fier is a typical medium-sized city located in the west of Albania with cultural and historical links with Greek society. Fier is my hometown where I was born and spent the first nine years of my life. As an immigrant in Athens for 20 years subsequently, and having family members, relatives, and friends who have returned to their hometown of Fier, I had an interest in exploring in-depth the role of family and the transnational relationships the migrants/diasporas and families/communities in the home city had formed as well as their impact on the home town's development. To uncover information about these ties, I designed an interview guide to elicit answers to my research question: What is the impact of post-Communism Albanian transnational migration to Athens on the socio-economic development of Fier? Over the summer of 2019 I conducted 18 interviews in the two research sites, Athens and Fier. Ten participants from Fier who resided in Athens, and eight Albanian who had returned to Fier accepted my invitation to be part of my study.

8.2 Key Findings

The findings of this study suggest that there are tight links between Albanian migrants in Athens and family members back home and that transnational migration, and economic and social

remittances contribute to the survival and well-being of the town of Fier. First, the evidence from Albanian immigrants in Athens suggests that ongoing transnational links are strong. Albanian immigrants in the destination country maintained healthy and powerful links no matter the geographical distance between them and the family members in the hometown, communicating constantly with their relatives in Fier. Transnational bonds were secured and perpetuated across borders as families kept in touch, and this communication exchange suggested that Albanian immigrants perhaps needed to feel 'home' by maintaining those links. They needed to feel that sense of 'belonging' in their country of origin when they consolidated their connection with their family members back home.

Secondly, this thesis has underlined the importance of both monetary and social remittances for the community of Fier which potentially contribute to the socio-economic development of the hometown of Fier. The transfer of knowledge, skills, practices, and new ideas to Fier serves as a stimulus for social change. The financial support appeared to be frequent, from once a month to a few times during the year to their families back home. Albanian immigrants had the intention to support their loved ones to pay the bills or save the funds received from their families in Athens, or were contributing material things such as clothing, small appliances, and other items necessary for the households in Fier. Moreover, the financial transfers stemmed from cultural practices because participants remitted to show 'respect' to their parents, and particularly to their father. A form of social remittance, the "transnational care" was also one of the findings of this study. Albanians showed their 'care' and support by sending medication to their families as well as by providing emotional and counseling support. Thus, it can be argued that the role of care is multi-faceted and multi directed; it can encompass financial and emotional dimensions. Besides, care can be provided by both Albanians who live in Athens toward their family members

in Fier and Albanians in Fier toward their families in Athens. Additionally, the findings suggest that there were assigned roles for men and women in the Albanian case. Men were supposed to remit financial transfers and medication to their parents and mainly to their father, and women were expected to send remittances in kind to their parents and siblings. Women used to send remittances in kind but they also sent medication to their parents. They both made contributions to their parents to show respect, an activity that stemmed from cultural practices and a feeling of respect towards their parents.

Regarding the findings on Albanian returnees to Fier, the evidence of this study suggests that the economic capital brought by returnees has a positive outcome for the socio-economic development of the community. The impact of social remittances played potentially a significant role in the social and economic growth of Fier because immigrants transferred their skills and knowledge they had gained while they were residing in Athens to the new business initiatives they carried out upon return. Changes in mentality and daily behaviours that returnees noticed indicated a social change in the community but any change they noticed had taken place with the collapse of communism not because of their return to their country of origin. It is critical to stress that Albania, as a post-communist country oppressed for 45 years under the leadership of Enver Hoxha, has manifested progress in the way of living. A social system has been established where human rights and freedom are protected and Albanians were able to see and feel those changes. They were also able to notice improvements in infrastructure in Albania although they didn't perceive these changes significant enough for the development of the country. Return migration didn't have any positive impact on these changes in Albania as any improvement had taken place over the years in the post-communist Albania. I argue then that return migration likely did not contribute to the socio-economic transformation of Fier as I cannot point to hard evidence that social and financial

remittances have made discernible and measurable impact on the transformation of Fier. This lack of measurable impact may be due to the methodological choices made in my study. The findings hint only to potential for transformation. Ultimately, the findings demonstrated that family relations changed upon migrants' return and communication relied only on special occasions. A possible explanation for this is the possibility that returnees started to feel in their comfort zone again and did not feel the need to connect as much as they did when they were away from their families.

8.3 Significance of the Study and Recommendations

To conclude, this thesis has underlined the significance of transnational migration and socio-economic remittances that may have the potential to generate economic and social change in the community of Fier. I should provide a note of caution with regard to the development potential of transnational migration in Albania, as a non-random sample of 18 in-depth interviews cannot not be generalized to the whole country. However, based on this sample, I have provided evidence on the development-migration nexus indicating that there is potential for socio-economic transformation of Albania, through ongoing links and impacts of transnational and / or returning Albanian migrants to Fier. Albanian immigrants and returnees have made contributions to the hometown of Fier and migrants on both sides maintain strong bonds. Economic and social remittances, and transnational care as a social remittance have had a positive impact on the survival and well-being of the residents of the town of Fier. Returnees have brought capital, skills and new ideas to their hometown and have applied knowledge they have acquired in Greece to the businesses they launched upon their return. However, further research needs to be performed to

establish whether transnational migration and social remittances contribute to the development of Albania by expanding the scope of the research, using a variety of mixed methods and devising creative ways to measure well-being, development, and transformation at the local and national levels.

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Appendix

Interview guide

Albanian Migrants in Athens

1. Do you have immediate or extended family in Fieri? Who do they consist of?
2. Can you tell me about the relationship with them?
3. Do you have family in Athens? Please elaborate.
4. Do you stay in touch with the family in Fieri and how (skype, phone, email, mail etc.)?
5. Do you stay in touch with friends and community in Fieri and how (skype, phone, email, mail etc.)?
6. How often do you communicate with family and others? If not, why not?
7. How often do you visit?
8. Where do you stay when you visit?
9. Do you visit individually? Or with your family?
10. What do you do when you visit?
11. If you do not visit, why?
12. Do you send your children in the hometown of Fieri for summer or other visits during vacation? If not why?
13. Do you send back financial contributions or gifts? If so, what amounts (approximately) and how often?
14. What is the purpose of sending gifts or money?
15. Who do you send it to?
16. How are these contributions used by the family / relatives back home?
17. How long have you been living in Greece for? How long in Athens?
18. Please tell me how you migrated to Greece or Athens (individually? With family?)
19. Are you sharing your skills with others in Fieri when you travel (or from away)?
20. Are you planning to return? Why or why not?
21. What are your plans if you return?

22. Do you receive anything from family and/or friends back in the hometown while you are in Greece?
23. How important are these connections and exchanges to you?
24. What do you do to maintain or strengthen your links with family, friends or the community in Fieri?
25. Do you provide care to any member of the family or others in Fieri? What kind of care?
26. How closely are you following developments in Albania since you left? How do you know about what is going on there?
27. Are you involved in any Albanian ethnic community organizations while you live in Athens? What kinds and what do you do for them?
28. Has your participation in these organizations been helpful in the community in your hometown and in what ways?

Appendix 2

Interview guide

Albanian Returnees to Fieri

1. How long have you been away from Albania?
2. How long did you stay in Greece for? How long in Athens?
3. Have you lived in other countries besides Greece?
4. Can you tell me about your decision to return to Fieri? Why did you decide to come back to Albania? Why to Fieri specifically?
5. How did you make the decision to return and how did you return? Individually? With family? Please elaborate?
6. If you brought back capital, how did you use it in Fieri?
7. Did you buy property back in Fieri? Of what kind?
8. Did you start a business? If so, how is it doing?
9. Why did you choose to start that business?
10. Did anybody help you with the business?
11. Is the business in the area where you were working in Athens before you returned?
12. How did you earn a living in Athens?
13. Is there anything that makes your business different from other local businesses?
14. What did you do with your property in Athens upon returning to Fieri?
15. Where are you working in Fieri upon your return?
16. What kind of relationship do you have with your extended family in Fieri upon your return?
17. Can you tell me if you are providing care to any family members? How often and of what kind?
18. Do you see any changes in Albania? In Fieri? What kind of changes are those?
19. Do you think that the mentality is different since you left? If yes, in what ways is it different?

20. How easy was your coming back to your hometown after living in Athens for such a period of time?
21. How easy was this transition for other members of your family? (for example, your children?)
22. Did you receive any support in the process? By individuals? By organizations (either in Fieri or in Greece)?
23. Upon your return to Fieri, are you more involved in political or other organizations and how?
24. Have you left any family back in Athens (or Greece)? Please elaborate.
25. Have you changed as a result of your living in Greece and, if so, how are you different?