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**THE CHILDREN OF ALBANIAN MIGRANTS IN  
EUROPE:  
ETHNIC IDENTITY, TRANSNATIONAL TIES AND  
PATHWAYS OF INTEGRATION**

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DPhil in MIGRATION STUDIES  
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July 2011

**DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

**Signature:** .....

*To my family*

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

ZANA VATHI

DPhil in MIGRATION STUDIES

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INTEGRATION

**SUMMARY**

The study of the integration of the children of migrants—the so-called ‘second generation’—is a recent trend in migration literature. Their integration is thought to be an important indicator of the degree of integration of immigrants in general into a specific society. This thesis is the first full-length comparative study of the Albanian second generation. Using a variety of field methods, it compares the ethnic identities, transnational ties and integration pathways of Albanian-origin teenagers in three European cities—London, Thessaloniki and Florence—by focusing on intergenerational transmission between the first and the second generation. Greece, Italy and the UK are, in that order, the three main European countries where Albanian migrants have settled during their short but intense migration experience of the past two decades. My study shifts the focus partly to the situation and developments in Southern Europe, where the awareness and interest in issues of the integration of the second generation are still at an initial phase.

The research involved fieldwork in each of the above-named cities, where quota samples of three categories of informants were interviewed: parents, their second-generation teenage children, and teachers and other key informants within the host society. Findings show significant differences in the integration patterns of both generations, affected by sharp differences between the three contexts and the history of immigration in each context. They also point to important within- and inter-group differences, based on various socio-economic indicators. Intergenerational transmission appears as a dynamic process affected not only by context and the parents’ socio-economic background, but also by parents’ stage of integration. By studying a settling immigrant group and their descendants, the thesis takes a proactive approach towards the integration of ethnic minorities.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All research touches the lives of many people, and let us hope it also, in all cases, improves them. Since this research was an international multi-sited project, the number of people and institutions I have met and interacted with is even bigger. I thank them all, although probably I will not be able to do justice to their help in this note. I hope my work justifies their investment, time, effort and understanding. I am very grateful!

I would like, however, to single out a few. First of all, I would like to thank my participants. I will be forever amazed by the whole experience of meeting them and getting to analyse and frame the experiences they shared with me. I am indebted because I know this has taken a lot of courage.

My principal supervisor Prof. Russell King has been a great inspiration. I really thank him for trusting me throughout this study. I hope I have justified his belief in me. Dr Anastasia Christou, Prof. Janine Dahinden, and the late Prof. Michael Bommes have been of great support, too. I thank them for all they have contributed to my work.

I would probably not have made it without my friends. I thank Julie Vullnetari, Shova Thapa, Nalu Binaisa and Simone Castellani for their wisdom and support; Jacques Enaudeau, Danesh Jajatilaka, Francesca Zampagni, Tanja Sinozic, Ana Porroche Escudero and Carlos Cuevas Coral for making the writing-up so much easier; the TIES junior and senior researchers for their social support and their intellectual contribution to my work; and Jenny Money for a crucial input at the final stage.

This research would have been impossible without the sponsorship and assistance of many institutions. Due thanks go to the sponsors of this research: Marie Curie Actions of the European Commission and the Sussex Centre for Migration Research. In particular, I would like to thank Prof. Russell King and Dr Patrick Simon for their help and support with the complex administration of my grant. Other organisations, in no particular order, have been of great help: in **London** the Albanian organisations, especially ‘Ardhmëria’, Globalb, Shpresa. In **Thessaloniki** the Albanian organisations, especially ‘Mother Tereza’, and Valbona Hystuna, SEERC, the ‘Organisation of Albanians of Thessaloniki’, the Antiracist Initiative of Thessaloniki, particularly Nikos Glarnetakis. I also thank Emmanouil Pratsinakis, Julie Vullnetari and Panos Hatziprokopiou for their help with my fieldwork in Greece. In **Florence**, the Department of Educational Sciences at the University of Florence and Prof. Giovana Campani for hosting me during my fieldwork; various Italian schools; and Giulia Martini, Gerta Zaimi and Tonine Pllumbi.

My greatest thanks and gratitude go to my family. This thesis is dedicated to them.

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## Abbreviations

ASA	American Sociological Association
EU	European Union
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

## Chapter 1

### RATIONALE

This thesis is the first full-length comparative study of the Albanian ‘second generation’.<sup>1</sup> Using a variety of field methods, it compares the ethnic identities, transnational ties and integration pathways of Albanian-origin teenagers in three European cities: London, Thessaloniki and Florence. Greece, Italy and the UK are the three main European countries where Albanian migrants have settled during their short but intense migration experience of the past two decades, since Albania opened itself to the outside world after more than four decades of isolation under the communist regime. My research involved a 3–4-month period of fieldwork in each of the above-named cities, where quota samples of three categories of informants were interviewed: parents, their second-generation teenage children, and teachers and other key informants within the host society.

As far as the structure of my thesis is concerned, three is the magic number: three cities in three countries, three main respondent groups, and three conceptual/analytical dimensions—ethnic identity, transnational ties, and integration. Further details on this research design are given later in this introductory chapter, whose purpose is to provide the rationale of the thesis, introduce the ‘new’ Albanian second generation, set out my research questions and give a brief overview of each chapter.

#### 1.1 Research context

Interest in the so-called second generation is a relatively recent trend in the academic literature on migration and integration. Originating in the US, in the last fifteen years a whole body of research has grown out of observations that the integration strategies of the ‘new second generation’ (coming mainly from Latin America and Asia) represent more complex phenomena than those of the ‘old second generation’—the children of

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<sup>1</sup> While this does not reflect my views on the topic, the term ‘second generation’ is used throughout the thesis for practical reasons. My concerns over the label ‘second generation’ have mainly to do with conceptualisation and definition, and will be spelled out more fully in Chapters 3 and 4.

migrants of European origin (Gans 1992). In Europe, research on the second generation has followed societal and political concerns about the failure of European societies to 'integrate' ethnic minorities, as well as a pure academic interest. It is a common view among scholars of immigration that the integration of the second generation is an important indicator both of the degree of integration of immigrants into a specific society and of the more general legacy of contemporary immigration (Portes 1994). Moreover, the study of the second generation has given new dimensions to the integration and assimilation debate and opened up great opportunities for more comparative research on integration processes, across countries and generations, within and between ethnic groups (Thomson and Crul 2007).

Research on the integration of the second generation seems to have reached a stage of 'maturity' by explaining the different integration patterns as the outcome of an interplay of structure, culture and personal agency (Thomson and Crul 2007). There are, however, several 'gaps' and inconsistencies in the literature that highlight the need for further research. Firstly, scholars both in the US and in Europe have argued that more attention should be paid to the differences in identity formation processes and integration pathways between and within ethnic groups, against a tendency observed in previous research to see immigrant communities and ethnic groups as homogeneous entities. This essentialising tendency had been particularly worrying to the European scholars, as such an approach fails to capture the diversity of immigrants in Europe, in terms of national or ethnic origin, educational level, social class and religious background (Crul and Vermeulen 2003a). Furthermore, most of the studies conducted in both continents have focused on the performance of the second generation in the spheres of education and the labour market, while other issues such as citizenship, identity and transnationalism remain understudied (Thomson and Crul 2007). In addition, a strong emphasis on quantitative methods and large surveys can be identified, while there is a growing awareness that this kind of methodology cannot capture fully the integration processes of the second generation. More particularly, it fails to grasp the dynamics of identification processes and transnational practices (Jones-Correra 2002; Van Niekerk 2007).

On their part, European scholars have alleged a failure of the major theoretical frameworks developed in the US to explain different patterns of second-generation integration across Europe (Crul and Vermeulen 2003a; Thomson and Crul 2007). It has been found that, due to significant differences in institutional arrangements and policy

frameworks between European countries, the opportunities that different national contexts offer to the second generation can vary greatly (Crul and Vermeulen 2003b; Joppke 1999). But it is not only national settings that vary. Recently, cities are becoming increasingly prominent in the literature on the incorporation of immigrants (Brettell 2000). In fact, as White (1999) maintains, cities are a product of migration, both internal and international, yet only recently have they been analysed as distinct contexts of incorporation. This omission is related to an assumption that has for a long time ruled migration studies, that nation-states are homogeneous entities as settings for migratory phenomena (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2009: 183). As a result, data taken from research in cities have been considered as representing the situation in the whole nation-state, although paradoxically most of this research has been conducted in ‘gateway’ cities: those cities where immigrants initially settle and which attract significantly more immigrants. Nevertheless, research on cities as migration contexts is still lacking, especially regarding the second generation (Christou 2011).

## **1.2 The Albanian second generation**

The main characteristics of the Albanian second generation are inevitably related to the history and chronology of Albanian migration in Europe. Contemporary Albanian migration dates only to the beginning of the 1990s and its dynamics have developed rapidly during the past two decades, which has clear implications for the age range and integration strategies of the second generation. According to the statistics of the Government of Albania (2005), the biggest communities of Albanian migrants in Europe are concentrated in Greece (600,000), Italy (250,000) and more recently in the UK (50,000). Recent World Bank estimates (2011: 54) confirm 600,000 Albanians in Greece but increase the figure for Italy to 400,000. The flows to Greece and Italy date from 1990 and 1991, that to the UK is much more recent, mainly since the late 1990s. However, due to high rates of family reunification and settlement, Albanian children constitute the biggest second-generation group in the first two countries (Gogonas 2007; King and Mai 2009). In Greece, students of immigrant background make up 8.9 percent of the school population, with Albanians being 72 percent of the foreign pupils in 2004–2005 (IPODE 2004, 2006, cited in Gogonas 2007; see also Papandreou 2005). Data

from Italy likewise reveal a rapid growth of the Albanian pupil population, which accounts for 17.7 percent of the population of students of immigrant descent and makes them the largest foreign-origin group (Caritas data, cited in King and Mai 2009). The data from Greece and Italy point to the fact that the majority of the second generation is foreign-born (Caritas/Migrantes 2009; Papandreou 2005). This is also expected to be the case of the Albanian second generation in the UK, which became a receiving country for Albanian migrants only a little over a decade ago (King *et al.* 2003).<sup>2</sup>

The Albanian second generation in Europe is a new and almost completely unstudied group. Some expectations on their integration prospects can be derived from data on the performance and integration of the first generation, which would indicate a disadvantaged starting-point for the second generation. Research has shown that Albanian migrants in the three main receiving countries are concentrated in low-status jobs, live in marginalised neighbourhoods, do not get organised in communities, and face strong racial discrimination (Bonifazi and Sabatino 2003; Hatziprokopiou 2006a; King *et al.* 2003; Kosic and Triandafyllidou 2003; Mai 2005; Markova and Black 2007). The strong discrimination already documented in the case of the first generation points to the importance that studying ethnic identity has in the case of this particular second generation.

Moreover, if we were to follow the major theories on second-generation integration, this would mean that Albanian-origin youth will soon repeat the story of those ethnic minorities in the US and Europe that have faced downward assimilation into the poor ‘underclass’. This line of argument derives especially from Portes and Zhou (1993) who include the concentration of the first generation in poor inner-city neighbourhoods and the presence of racial discrimination as factors that would most likely influence negatively the integration of the second generation. The absence of an ethnic community should also bear serious implications, as Portes and Rumbaut (2001) consider the pathway of ‘selective acculturation’—a strong ethnic identity and a second generation embedded in the ethnic community—as the best scenario for a successful integration of the second generation.

It should be mentioned immediately that the most recent research shows that the situation of Albanian migrants in the main host countries reveals striking signs of improvement. According to King and Mai (2008, 2009), Albanian migrants in Italy are

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<sup>2</sup> This compromises the ‘classic’ or ‘pure’ definition of the second generation as host-country-born. The variety of criteria applied to define the second generation will be discussed in Chapter 4.

the most integrated migrant group when compared to all non-EU migrant groups. Similarly, Hatziprokopiou (2006a) points to an improvement of living and working conditions and better integration of Albanian migrants in Greece in recent years, especially after the migrant regularisations of 1998 and 2001. However, strong negative stereotypes in the media persist (Bonifazi and Sabatino 2003), and the tendency to identify with the ethnic culture, to establish organisations and to use institutional structures remains weak (King and Mai 2009; Mai 2005). Other research has also highlighted the negative impact of the institutional environment and policy implementation practices on Albanian migrants' socio-economic integration and perceptions of identity (Kosic and Triandafyllidou 2003). In particular, Gogonas (2007) points to the negative impact of a very tight citizenship and naturalisation regime that causes great insecurity surrounding the integration of immigrants in Greece, with further consequences for the second generation's efforts to become part of Greek society. These Greek results are further supported by the findings of Zinn (2005) in Italy. These data raise concerns about the integration of Albanian second generation—firstly, because the mode of incorporation of the first generation is recognised to have significant impact on the amounts of cultural and social capital transmitted to their descendants (Levitt and Waters 2002). Other research conducted in Switzerland and Austria (Fibbi *et al.* 2007; Herzog-Punzenberger 2003) has also found a strong relationship between naturalisation, school performance and labour-market integration.

But how are Albanian migrants and their children reacting to such conditions? Data on the Albanian second generation are largely missing. There is some attention in the two main 'host' countries (Greece and Italy) to the issues of integration of the descendants of migrants. Meanwhile, the Albanian second generation in the UK is to date completely unexplored. Anecdotal and journalistic accounts from Greece suggest a high educational performance of Albanian-origin students, further supported by the survey data of IPODE in 2004. Thus, while gender and length of residence in Greece are significant variables related to school performance, Albanian students in Greece outperform other foreign-origin students (cited in Papandreou 2005). Studies conducted in Italy show similar results: generally, high educational achievements on the one hand, but also a marked tendency of male students to leave education and enter the labour market in early adolescence. For example, Casacchia and Natale (2007) and Fava (2007) studied the educational performance and the integration of children of immigrant descent in schools in different provinces of Italy. They found that pupils of Albanian



origin record high academic attainment, with girls significantly outperforming boys, but somewhat counter-intuitively Albanians also score high on intentions to quit after middle school. Furthermore, while Zinn (2005) reports that the early-years schooling in Italy of their children is important to Albanian migrants, in a study conducted by Fava (2007) it is shown that Albanian parents score lower than the average of the first generation in Italy in their interest towards their children's educational performance and the desire for them to pursue studies at university level.

Without overlooking the importance of the above-mentioned studies, this existing research in Italy and Greece takes mainly a limited-variable quantitative approach and offers a general overview of the second generation as a whole, while inter- and intra-group comparisons and qualitative research on their identification processes and integration strategies are largely missing. Some evidence on these topics comes from the studies of Zinn (2005) and Gogonas (2007) on the intergenerational transmission of native language and the role of the education system in Italy and Greece respectively. Education systems and the general schooling policy on foreign-origin children differ significantly between countries in Europe and between Greece, Italy and the UK in particular (Eurydice 2004). The educational system in the UK is legally bound to actively promote racial equality, although research has documented some negative issues related to the integration and performance of ethnic minorities in the educational system (Chadderton 2010). The system in Italy is characterised by a general climate of indifference toward multiculturalism and intercultural education (Zinn 2005), whereas in Greece schools take an ethnocentric approach and focus on monocultural and monolingual teaching, reflecting an exclusionary Greek national identity (Benincasa 2002; Xenitidou 2007). Gogonas (2007) emphasises the incapacity of teachers to recognise the importance of bilingualism, widely acknowledged in the literature as a factor that promotes academic achievement and expectations among immigrant-origin teenagers (Golash-Boza 2005).

### **1.3 The current study**

This thesis builds on the above-mentioned observations and is furthermore tailored as part of an international comparative research initiative, The Integration of the European

Second Generation (TIES), which shapes its overall approach ([www.tiesproject.eu](http://www.tiesproject.eu)). The TIES programme tackles the broad issues of integration and focuses specifically on the second generation, taking a European comparative approach. It specifies a comparative dimension for all the projects under its framework, to be implemented either by including two or more countries and comparing one ethnic group across countries, or by investigating the differences between two or more migrant groups in one country. My project studies the children of Albanian migrants in Europe and explores their identity and socio-cultural profiles. It has a strong focus on the intergenerational transmission of ethnic identity and transnational ties, in view of the institutional arrangements and policy framework in place, and investigates the impact that these factors have on the second generation's educational performance and integration pathways.<sup>3</sup>

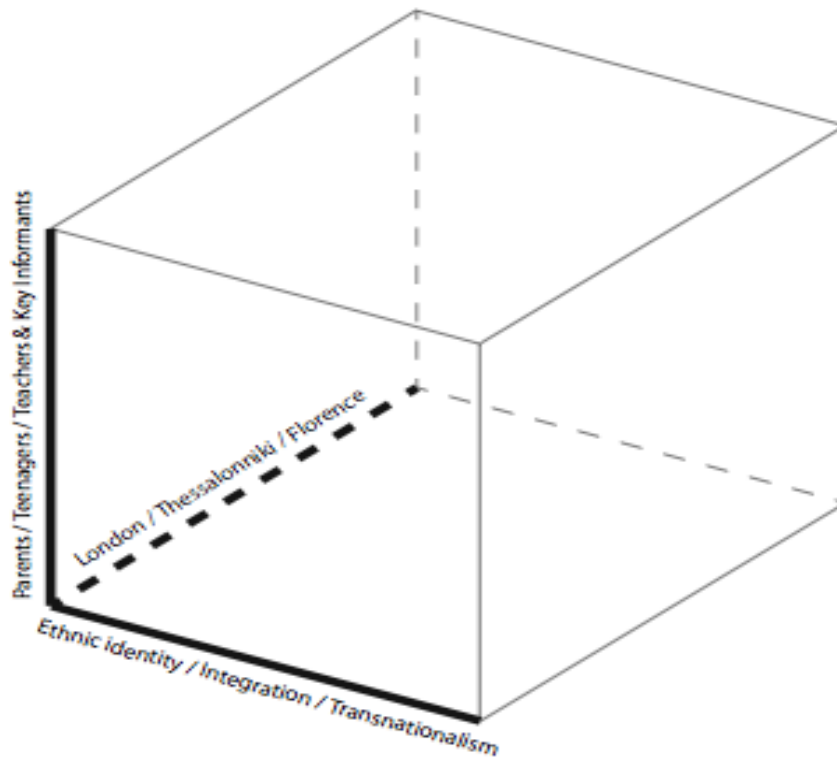
Observing the TIES requirements, this thesis studies one immigrant group across three countries: Greece, Italy and the UK, the three main receiving countries for Albanian migrants in Europe. However, in contrast with most other projects under the TIES framework, this project takes a strong qualitative and 'grounded' approach. On the one hand I aim to achieve a broad account of the Albanian second-generation experience, in the sense that my study takes a transnational optic and is based on inter-country comparisons. On the other hand, my approach focuses on in-depth analysis and aims to bring a 'rich' perspective on the second generation's perceptions of identity and identification processes. This latter perspective includes the transmission of identity across generations, and the multiple interactions of immigrants and their descendants with different societies across Europe and the 'home' country.<sup>4</sup> Figure 1 is a diagram which portrays the structure of the research design of this thesis. This three-dimensional diagram portrays the 'triple-triple' nature of the research design. Along the vertical axis are the three target groups of interviewees. Along the horizontal axis are the three main analytical dimensions of the study, each potentially leading on to the next and reflecting the ordering of my three main 'research' chapters. And along the third axis are the three geographical contexts of my comparative study. The diagram draws inspiration from a similar one in King and Mai (2004: 456).

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<sup>3</sup> The TIES project is financed by the Marie Curie Programme of the European Commission. It is composed of a European survey—the TIES survey—that investigates the processes of integration of Moroccan, Turkish and (ex-) Yugoslavian second-generation adults in 15 cities in eight countries, and a Research Training Network (TIES-RTN) which involves 12 PhD projects based in university research centres across Europe. My study is one of these doctoral projects.

<sup>4</sup> I should also point out that this project requires knowledge of four languages. I am a native speaker of Albanian, have fluent English, good knowledge of Italian and reasonable knowledge of Greek.

**Figure 1:** The structure of this study



Another point of ‘divergence’ of this thesis from the TIES framework is the fact that, whereas the other studies focus on the second generation at an adult age, my study is on a ‘new second generation’ or a ‘second generation in-the-making’. This characteristic of the Albanian second generation is inevitably related to the history and chronology of Albanian migration in Europe, which dates only to the 1990s.<sup>5</sup> This has two main implications for the approach of this project. Firstly, it gives us a ‘privileged’ position to investigate the processes of integration of a newly settled immigrant group and their descendants and to compare and contrast different national, city and local contexts where these processes are taking place. Secondly, this study draws attention to a group potentially ‘at risk’. This expectation is based on the ‘performance’ of the first

<sup>5</sup> I should clarify here that I am referring to migration from the country of Albania; there is a longer history—of labour migration dating back to the early 1960s—of ethnic Albanians from the former Yugoslav republics and regions of Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro when they were part of the large-scale Yugoslav migration of the 1960s and 1970s.

generation of Albanian migrants, notably their concentration in disadvantaged employment and housing and their strong stigmatisation and discrimination (Bonifazi and Sabatino 2003; Hatziprokopiou 2006b; Markova and Black 2007). These data would indicate a disadvantaged starting-point for the Albanian second generation, in light of the US-derived theories on the integration of the second generation (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Portes and Zhou 1993).

My approach is also based on other scholars' observation that the second generation in the US and Europe came to the attention of researchers and policy-makers only when it 'came of age' (Crul and Vermeulen 2003b). The literature in both continents points to clear examples of failure to address issues of discrimination and exclusion, which led to the marginalisation of large second-generation groups. Therefore, another major objective of this project is to provide evidence and inform policy-making on the integration of the second generation, taking thus a proactive approach towards the integration of ethnic minorities. In this respect my study follows the strong emphasis of the TIES project on bridging the gaps between research and policy-making on issues of integration. It also responds to European scholars' concerns that, despite the growing interest in the integration of the second generation, research and policy-making in Europe have lagged behind in time and scope. For example, Crul and Vermeulen (2003b) and Simon (2003) observe that it was the lack of recognition of the second generation as a legacy of immigration in many European countries that led to a general apathy among scholars and policy-makers.

My study also shifts the focus to Southern Europe, where awareness and interest in issues of second-generation integration are still in an initial phase. Informed policy-making is particularly important in this context as the lack of coherent immigration and integration policies and the negative impact on the second generation's integration strategies have already been documented (Gogonas 2007; King and Mai 2009). It also needs to be pointed out that the first wave of TIES comparative research has been carried out in the main immigration countries of continental North-West Europe (France, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland etc.), and Greece, Italy and the UK were not part of the original TIES survey (Crul and Vermeulen 2003a).

Studying the aspirations of the first generation for their children, and the impact of the first generation's migration experiences on the second generation's identity formation, constitutes another important strand of my research. This element seeks to elaborate on a general observation in the literature that 'the mode of incorporation of the

first generation endows the second generation with differing amounts of cultural and social capital in the form of job networks and values, and exposes them to differing opportunities, thus exerting differential pulls on their allegiances' (Levitt and Waters 2002: 15). However, few studies have integrated parents in their investigation and, when this is done, the information on parents has been considered as subsidiary to the data drawn from the second generation (e.g. Waters 1994). There are only a handful of studies in the field of migration and integration of the second generation that have recognised the role of the family as a source of social and human capital (e.g. Aparicio 2007; Dwyer *et al.* 2006; Marques *et al.* 2007). Portes and Rumbaut (2001) and Rumbaut (1994) took a quantitative approach to investigate the second generation's prospects of integration and the impact of parents' status and child-parent relationships on the second generation's adaptation. And Crul (1999) investigated the role of parents' socio-economic characteristics, their education in relation to their knowledge of the education system of the host country, and their rural or urban background in relation to the process of acculturation—all these through interviews conducted with second-generation youth. In contrast to the above, in this thesis the experiences of the first generation and the *intergenerational transmission* constitute an integral part of my research design, given that I see parents and their experiences as having a direct and active role in shaping the second generation's perceptions and integration expectations.

My additional focus on the parents is also related to recent developments in the theorisation of migration. Portes (2010: 1557) maintains that a middle time-frame which encompasses two or three generations is the best approach in studying migration since short-term approaches miss the durable effects, whereas the historical lens would miss those effects already absorbed into the culture of the respective society. Like many other recent migrations, and perhaps because of its illegal nature (King 2003), Albanian migration has not been studied in depth in terms of identity and social and cultural integration. The focus has mostly been on the migration process itself, and on issues of regularisation and integration in the labour market. Therefore, a focus on parents' identities and intergenerational transmission would add significant new insights to this body of literature.

## 1.4 Research questions

My research is articulated around five main questions, together with a much larger number of related questions. Some of the latter reflect an ‘unpacking’ of the main questions, others are spin-offs from them. A detailed list is presented below, starting with principal ones. I acknowledge that this is an unusually long listing of principal and secondary questions, but this reflects the range and complexity of my research project.

1. What are the patterns of identification of the Albanian first and second generation?  
What is the role of ethnicity in identity construction?
2. Do Albanian migrants and their children establish transnational ties with the ‘homeland’ and the Albanian culture? What is the nature of these ties?
3. What are the factors that condition identity formation, transnational ties and pathways of integration? More specifically I focus on:
  - a. the role of the family/immigrant community;
  - b. the institutional environment (schools) and policy framework (on immigration and integration) of the ‘host’ country;
  - c. the regularisation process of Albanian migrants and their children;
  - d. the role of host-country media towards immigrants in general, and Albanians in particular.
4. What are the patterns of the intergenerational transmission of ethnic identity, transnational ties and integration?
5. Do ethnic identity, integration and transnational ties interact? What are the factors that affect these interactions and how do they ultimately impact on integration?

Three sets of more detailed questions relate to the three main social actors in my research: first and foremost the second-generation children themselves; second, their parents, the first generation; and third the institutional setting of schools, education and teachers. First, then, the children:

- How do second-generation teenagers express their feelings of belongingness? What frames of reference and values do they refer to?
- How do they view the Albanian language as part of their identity formation?

- What is the teenagers' attitude towards religiosity?
- What organisations/clubs are they members of?
- What is the frequency of their visits to Albania? How do they react to these visits?
- Does maintenance of transnational ties play a role in how the second generation develops ethnic identity?
- What is the experience of the second generation at school? How does this differ between the three research settings chosen for this study?
- How do second-generation teenagers perceive and react to discrimination and social exclusion?
- What are their perceptions of the accomplishments/failures of the first generation?
- How does access to naturalisation and citizenship affect the second generation's perceptions on integration/transnational orientation?
- Are there gendered differences in the way they relate to the above-mentioned factors?

Next, a listing of not-dissimilar questions for the parents:

- What are the main patterns of identification of the Albanian first-generation migrants?
- What transnational ties do first-generation migrants maintain with Albania?
- How does the public discourse affect immigrants' transnational orientations? Does this relationship vary between different local contexts and between countries?
- Do discrimination and stigmatisation play a role in the establishment of transnational ties and their transmission between first and second generation?
- What are the perceptions of the first-generation migrants on their integration and settlement/return?
- What are the parents' expectations towards their children's life prospects?
- How does their migration experience (e.g. as regards work, social integration) shape their expectations?
- What are the main resources/obstacles they expect to affect the prospects of the second generation?
- What is their attitude towards native language transmission to the second generation? What factors shape this attitude?

- What is the parents' attitude towards religiosity and the religiosity of their children?
- Are there differences between mothers and fathers in the way they relate to the above-mentioned factors? And are there differences in attitudes towards sons and daughters?

And finally, for the schools and teachers:

- Are there policies that address the education of immigrant children?
- Are there school mechanisms that lead to a differentiated selection among pupils?
- Are there spaces in the curriculum where the background and experience of immigrant-origin pupils can be valued and shaped?
- What is schools' policy towards ethnic relations and discrimination?
- Is there any policy that addresses the segregation of immigrant-origin children in specific schools?
- How do teachers perceive their role in ethnic minorities' integration in the school and their academic progress?
- What are the attitudes and perceptions of teachers and schools specifically towards Albanian-origin children?

## **1.5 Thesis outline**

The thesis is organised in eight chapters. After the research rationale, context, methods, theoretical assumptions and key concepts are introduced (Chapters 1–4), I move to the presentation and discussion of my results. Chapters 5–8 present my findings around the three major concepts involved in this research: ethnic identity, integration and transnational ties. Each of Chapters 5–7 is organised in three main sections. I firstly analyse the relevant data for the first-generation Albanian immigrants as parents of teenagers; then I continue by presenting data on the second-generation teenagers; followed by a third section which describes the intergenerational transmission patterns. Chapter 8 encompasses the three main concepts and the intergenerational transmission, and discusses the findings of each empirical chapter, focusing also on the inter-relations between these concepts in the way they are played out in the data. Throughout these last



four chapters the comparative context of the three countries/cities is highlighted where relevant. A summary of each chapter is presented below.

### ***Chapter 1. Rationale***

This chapter, the present one, has introduced the thesis, focusing particularly on the broad research context and the main rationale for the research. It identifies key findings of research already conducted in the field, pointing to research gaps and inconsistencies. It then relates the second-generation literature to the case of Albanian migrants and their children, by also highlighting the specifics of this case and delineating the main and secondary research questions.

### ***Chapter 2. Context***

The chapter starts with a brief literature review on Albanian identity, focusing on different historical influences. Due to the comparative nature of this thesis, the role of the three country/city contexts is deemed to be important in explaining the variation in integration patterns of immigrant groups and their children. This hypothesis of international and inter-city comparison reflects the ethos of the TIES project. This chapter, therefore, analyses the context of the three countries (UK, Greece, Italy) in terms of immigration and ethnic relations, focusing on each city (London, Thessaloniki, Florence) as a distinct site of research.

### ***Chapter 3. Methodology***

The methodology chapter contains detailed information on the methods used and the logistics and implementation of this research. I start with a short section on epistemology, and go on to describe sampling and other procedures of the fieldwork process. I then explain the process of data analysis, following a comparative approach. I pay particular attention to my positionality and explain how my own qualities and convictions have impacted the research process.

### ***Chapter 4. Theory***

Here, the main theories and concepts employed in the research are discussed. The chapter is organised in three main parts. It starts with a section on concepts of agency, culture and structure, which are identified as important in interpreting the data in relation to other middle-range theories. The second section discusses the main concepts

involved in this research: ethnic identity, integration, transnationalism and intergenerational transmission, and their inter-relations. The last part focuses on theories of integration research and the second generation, and also brings together the above-mentioned concepts and theories.

### ***Chapter 5. Identities***

This is the first in a sequence of three main ‘results’ chapters. The main focus here is on the role that ethnicity plays in the identity formation processes of both the first and the second generation. As with all empirical chapters, I start with a section on the identities of the first generation, followed by a section on the identities of the second-generation teenagers, and a third one on the patterns and mechanisms of identity transmission between generations. The chapter integrates my own findings with literature on identity and ethnicity in different life-stages, and on ethnic identity of immigrants and the second generation.

### ***Chapter 6. Integration***

The chapter on patterns and dynamics of integration employs various concepts commonly considered under the umbrella-concept of integration. Because of the variation in the composition and history of immigration of Albanian immigrants in each country studied, these concepts need to be flexible in order to capture the dynamics unfolding in the three different sites and the different integration paths experienced by the two generations. The chapter thus pays particular attention to the way integration takes place in each of the sites for each of the groups, seen from a comparative perspective. It investigates structural and socio-cultural integration and thus draws from literature related to each of these types of integration as well as studies that encompass the two; for example, the experience of education for the second generation. The intergenerational transmission of integration is then analysed by paying attention to the processes rather than an end-state of integration.

### ***Chapter 7. Transnational ties***

Transnational ties can vary among different generations and across the sites. This chapter investigates this variation, by describing and analysing the establishment, maintenance and disruption of transnational ties and factors that influence such instances for each of the generations. It also focuses on the intergenerational

transmission of transnational ties, going beyond what is already discussed in the literature—that is, whether transnational ties are only a first-generation phenomenon or persist in the second generation. The findings are analysed in relation to other research in the field.

### ***Chapter 8. Conclusion***

In this chapter I round off my analysis by reviewing the extent to which I have been able to answer the five main research questions outlined in Chapter 1. I draw from the literature reviewed and the arguments presented in the empirical chapters and elaborate and reflect on the main findings. The chapter also includes a discussion on the inter-relation between the three domains, discussed in relation to the theories and concepts presented in Chapter 3. It also considers implications and avenues for future research in the field.

## Chapter 2

### CONTEXT

In this chapter, I provide necessary background on the three countries and cities where this research was conducted. Firstly, I write about Albanian identity within the context of recent mass migration. Then I describe the particularities of each of the sites of this study in terms of their immigration history and policy framework, focusing on the specific cities as related but distinct research sites within the nation-states. Since I could not, within the time-frame constraints of a doctoral project, include a control group of natives in each country and could not conduct research with parents and teenagers in Albania,<sup>6</sup> this chapter aims also to complement my analysis as a background against which I will compare my findings.<sup>7</sup>

#### 2.1 Introduction to Albanian identity

The national and cultural trajectories of Albania are marked by a unique and fragmented course of development, both historically and contemporarily. The factors that shaped these features appear to be bound to its geographical location and, although not exclusively, to politics operating at different levels (Morgan 2002). The process of national and cultural self-definition continues today and the two elements—the national and the ethnic—continue to be intertwined in the contemporary discourse. The cliché that represents Albania as a country between the West and the East (Winniffrith 1992) has come now under attack as the country leaves behind its immediate need for economic recovery and prepares for major political projects that head West (Kadaré 2006).

Both its timing and the ‘content’ of Albanian nationalism differ significantly from those of other European and Balkan countries. Compared to its neighbours, Albania started its attempts at national statehood several decades later (Lubonja 2002).

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<sup>6</sup> Although my own personal background, growing up within a family setting in Albania, compensates to some extent for this latter omission.

<sup>7</sup> Of course, such knowledge cannot account as an ‘objective’ representation of Albanian social relations, due to the subjective time/space particularities that characterise it.

Language and folk-culture were at the basis of this uprising, while the whole process was led by intellectuals mostly operating from abroad (Morgan 2002; Nitsiakos and Mandros 2003). Renaissance (*Rilindja*) is thought to be the most significant cultural and patriotic action in the entire history of Albania, as it responded to the historical momentum of differentiating Albanians from the Ottoman Empire, nurturing national self-consciousness. This process was unique in that internal national unification and the task of representing claims to the outside world were merged into one (Malcolm 2002: 71). Borrowing from the European romanticism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was based on typical myths of pride in uniqueness as a people. Thus the movement embodied a shift towards ethnic identification. ‘Albanianness’ was based on the link to Albania in terms of ‘blood’, language and culture, but away from religion, especially when the latter was associated with the Ottoman Empire (Morgan 2002).

Instead, Albanian nationalism is based on several important myths: of historical and geographical origin, of ethnic homogeneity and cultural purity, of permanent national struggle, and of indifference to religion. These myths appear both as historically informed and as important elements of identity that have been the basis of historical and political claims (Malcolm 2002: 73). Similarly, Albanian culture is ‘an original minor culture’ that has been marked by the different cultural influences due to its geographical position (Morgan 2002). Lubonja (2003: 3) talks about roots and layers of Albanian culture. Firstly, he points to rites and traditions based on patriarchal clan cultures enshrined in *kanun*,<sup>8</sup> on top of which is positioned a long influence of Byzantine and Ottoman culture followed by the *Rilindja* and its influence on the diminishing importance of religion. More recently, but very importantly, is the culture created and imposed by communism for fifty years, influenced also by the culture of other communist allied countries, notably Russia and China. These communist cultures also drew selectively from cultural elements of the past, by, for example, excluding religion, but retaining certain institutions, such as the family.

The broad tolerance accompanied by religious openness are in effect based on the general ambivalence and fragility that characterise Albanian identity (Kadaré 2005). This fragility and ambivalence is also reflected in the choice of the main institutions of Albanian culture and nationalism. The choice of Skanderbeg as a national hero

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<sup>8</sup> Albanian Customary Law collected by Lekë Dukagjini in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. For more details on the controversial and difficult interpretation of *kanun* into contemporary Albanian life see Schwanders-Sievers (1999), Tarifa (2008), Young (2000).

represents a strategic move from religion to ethnicity and, with Skanderbeg being a Christian, a move closer also to the Western world (Lubonja 2002).<sup>9</sup> Indeed, unlike the rest of the Balkans, religion had a minor role in the Albanian uprising against the Ottomans, while ethnicity, ‘blood’ and native language were more important in determining group identity (Morgan 2002). On the other hand, this loose attitude towards religion has been considered historically as one of the main obstacles in building a strong national identity (Misha 2008). Instead, family and kin constitute the main institutions of the Albanian culture (Dingo 2007). The kin group as ‘the living microcosm of Albanian society’ and *besa*<sup>10</sup> consist of two important elements of Albanian identity, especially in reaction against social and political organisations imposed from outside (Lopasic 1992: 104).

While, from a nationalist perspective, the three religions—Islam, Catholic and Orthodox—were seen as dividers of Albanians, communism saw them as ‘opium of the people’ and part of the old conservative world (Lubonja 2002; Misha 2008). It should be mentioned that issues of ethnicity and identity, and related social and political allegiances, were prohibited in Albania as in many other socialist countries in Central and Eastern Europe (Morgan 2002). Communism, in effect, constituted a paradox in terms of its impact on Albanian identity. Being represented as the saviour from the evils of the past and the construction of a new world and new people, it retained a great deal of the nationalist mythology since this held an important place in the collective memory of Albanians (Lubonja 2002). However, when it came to the meaning of state and nation, communism had a strong negative effect. Communism’s overall ideology paid little attention to the concepts of state and institution and instead taught the Albanian people to save all their devotion and respect for the communist party (Kadaré 2005).

The new communist state, nevertheless, strongly built its legitimacy on national mythology and the creation of a new homogeneous national culture as an important part of its modernising project, with folklore consisting of its main source (Nitsiakos and Mandros 2003). There was a symbiosis of national-communist ideology with national mythology, with the ‘glorious’ past having four major moments: the Illyrian battles, the time of Skanderbeg, the Albanian renaissance, and the partisan war. There were two main heroes: Skanderbeg and Enver Hoxha (Lubonja 2002: 95). In the meantime, communist ideology was preached as the only culture and the bearer of all the truths,

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<sup>9</sup> Skanderbeg signifies unity and glory as he fought against the Ottoman invasion of Albania in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>10</sup> *Besa* means keeping the given word under any kind of conditions and being loyal.

although its basis rested upon ‘frozen moral and ideological truths’, non-challengeable from the intellectual and political elite. The rites and traditions of *kanun* and religion on everyday lives were radically transformed, although the clan and honour (*besa*) resisted these changes (Lubonja 2003: 6). The cultural changes were also strongly associated with shifts in the communist orientation of Albania. After the break with the Soviet Union in the 1960s, the communist regime introduced a politics of isolationism. This stance supported a selective Albanian state-sponsored patriotism, with only certain elements of Albanian culture being granted legitimacy, while religion, historical consciousness and ethnic customs were controlled or completely suppressed (Morgan 2002).

More importantly, communism had an impact on identity and national belongingness. Acting as a belief imposed on the people, communist ideology became the main instrument of repression used by the communist party, while the masses were increasingly believing in a virtual reality made up of the new myths of the communist era (Lubonja 2002). On the other hand, the disregard of communism towards the state and its institutions gave rise to the weakening of national belongingness, the more the communist state was orientating its devotion towards the Soviet Union as the real fatherland (Kadaré 2005). By the mid-1980s, however, ethnicity was re-appearing as an important category of belongingness while the concept of the unity of workers of the world and the idealism of achieving communism were weakening, together with the regime’s legitimacy (Morgan 2002).

Nevertheless, the long period of isolation and the ensuing collapse of communism caused a major identity crisis, especially evident during the 1990s. With the withdrawal of the national-communist myths and symbols, Albanians lost their past and found themselves unprepared for the future in a world that was changing rapidly, whilst simultaneously discovering the distorted perception they had of themselves and their history during communism (Misha 2008). Compared to the other post-communist countries in the Balkans, Albania’s nationalist ideology was distorted more by communism. In the absence of a strong collective identity, Albanians in the 1990s returned to the fragmented social organisation and action based on individual clans trying to survive (Lubonja 2002). The period of communism, like in other ex-communist countries, was seen as a historical accident (Misha 2002). Soon another myth was created: that of the West, that appeared both as a promised land, where everyone could freely choose to go and start a new life, and as a saviour, as the place

where one aspires for freedom and democracy (Lubonja 2004). It also represented an element of continuity with Albania's pre-Ottoman past and an opportunity for Christianity to re-establish itself as Albanians' original faith (Lubonja 2002).

More generally, the post-communist period was characterised by a simultaneous 'chaos and crisis' in terms of moral and cultural values (Lubonja 2003). Once communism collapsed, the new Albanian state tried to find the balance between the continuous aspects of its history and the universal elements that inevitably were incorporated in Albania (Lako 2009). This was part of the contradiction that many ex-communist countries went through: the demand to return to the traditional and national values abused by communism and, on the other hand, integration at a global level and the re-connection to other countries and cultures. At a more micro level, the impact of communism was evident in the 'standard individual', since communism aimed at the creation of a unique homogeneous culture. Nevertheless, the Albanian culture at the end of communism was a mixture of three main cultures, which were incorporated in different dosages: the patriarchal and traditional, the national, and the communist (Lubonja 2003).

While the initial stage of post-communism was characterised by a 'competition' between the regimes and styles of the pre-communist era and the Western ones, together with a dose of nostalgia for communism (de Waal 2009; Schwandner-Sievers 2004), there is latterly a new growing maturity and the discourse has moved towards issues of national identification (Frashëri 2007; Kadaré 2005, 2006). The myths of the West and of nationalism remain strong today; there is a new awareness and confidence not least as a result of the sense of betrayal and disillusionment that made Albanians sceptical about their myths.

Migration is strongly related to these transformations, appearing at times as both the consequence and the cause of such 'crisis' and renewed confidence; the articulated superiority of being Albanians and the escape and denial of Albania for a better life elsewhere go hand-in-hand (Lubonja 2002). Misha (2008) refers to the overcrowded 'Partizani' ship<sup>11</sup> as an important symbol of Albanians' first confrontation with the outside world, and explains that such confrontations caused a serious crisis of self-confidence. This was part of a devaluing process of the main social and cultural

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<sup>11</sup> The 'Partizani' was one of the ships that Albanian migrants occupied and travelled to Italy on in 1991. It symbolically represents the migration of Albanians after the fall of communism. It is also found in secondary-school books in Italy on contemporary Europe and modern transformations of Italy.



institutions which rested on the basis of community life, and in turn caused the social fragmentation which characterised Albanian society during the transition period. On the other hand, negative Western representations of Albania and in turn Albanian migrants' perceptions of identity and their strategies of integration have impacted 'Albanianism at work' (Hall 1999). These representations seem to have over-emphasised the importance of *kanun* and have simplistically explained Albanians' violence and victimhood as a 'natural' cultural predisposition. Although hiding Albanian identity was noticed also in earlier migrations (Blumi 2003), these representations are probably at the roots of Albanian migrants' mimicry and self-denial (Schwandner-Sievers 2004: 126). Nevertheless, the identification processes of Albanian migrants and the consequent impact on their integration strategies remains a largely unexplored topic.

After this extended, but necessary, discussion of Albanian identity, I now turn to the more pragmatic context of my three research sites. In the remaining three sections of this chapter, I outline the background to immigration and ethnic relations in the UK, Greece and Italy, including specific information on the immigration context of the three sites where I carried out my field research.

## **2.2 Britain**

### ***2.2.1 Immigration politics and ethnic relations***

Like many other European countries, Britain has faced sizeable levels of immigration in its modern history. However, the post-war migrants, including large immigrant cohorts who were non-white and non-Christian, arrived earlier in Britain than in most other countries in Europe. Perhaps as a result, Britain led the way in managing this new 'challenge of immigrant multiculturalism' (Kymlicka 2000: 723). Britain has taken pride in its focus on tackling racism and discrimination earlier than these issues were recognised elsewhere in Europe. At the same time, Britain started earlier with its policies to reduce and later block spontaneous immigration, since the early 1960s with the Commonwealth Immigration Acts (Holmes 1988; Layton-Henry 1994; Westin 2000).

The 1960s and 1970s were a time of immigration restrictions for the country, at least

as far as labour-migrant recruitment was concerned. This situation, as in the rest of North-Western Europe, changed rapidly by the beginning of the 1990s. The decade of the 1990s recorded substantial net immigration as a result of the British government's programme for voluntary migrants and the waves of asylum-seekers (Hampshire 2005). Britain, however, has assumed a different positioning and adopted a different stance on immigration and integration compared to the rest of Europe. This is thought to be the outcome of very different geographical, historical and political conditions, framing the basis of a multicultural and multiracial society with little in common with the rest of Europe. Yet, nowadays British immigration politics are highly institutionalised, dominated by elites which tend towards increasingly restrictionist measures, ruling out potential effects of a pro-migrant lobby (Geddes 2005; Statham and Geddes 2007). This was especially evident in the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, a period which recorded six immigration acts in fifteen years—all aiming at further cuts in immigration (Vertovec 2007).

Favell (1998: 97–98), however, notes that there is a distinct dualism in British immigration and integration politics. The discourse seems to be divided between the issue of nationality and border control on the one hand, and on the other hand strong measures for ethnic minority integration. The legislation put in place shows that the successful integration of minorities is seen as a separate issue from, or perhaps even conditioned by, the control and management of new migration flows. The harsh nationality and border control measures contrast with progressive race relations legislation and the broader and inclusive conception of Britain as a multiracial and multicultural society.

This particular stance on ethnic relations and integration is associated with a certain conceptualisation of multiculturalism, citizenship and Britishness. Today's 'old minorities' in Britain—the original Commonwealth immigrants—went through a process of settlement over a period of 20–30 years, during which immigration to Britain had almost stopped. They were also given the name and status of permanent ethnic minorities and were distinguished at all times from the newly arrived immigrants. This was realised through a *laissez-faire* attitude, or a lack of intervention of the state in everyday life in managing ethnic relations. As a result, multiculturalism has been on the one hand a fabricated official concept by elites and, on the other, was actualised at local levels by ethnic groups lobbying to monopolise local institutions for the realisation of their interests (Favell 1998; Joppke 1999). The settlement of permanent minorities was

strongly impacted by notions and discourses on Britishness, the citizenship regime and the politics of multicultural education. Along with its tough zero immigration regime, Britain was one of the first EU countries to adopt liberal naturalisation for its post-colonial migrants (Favell 2001).

On the other hand, while ‘Britishness’ is thought to be at the core of the development of the country’s concept of multiculturalism (Kymlicka 2000), the direction of change in the citizenship regime has been towards exclusion and a narrowing in the definition of those people who belong to the national body. Hampshire (2005) maintains that the lack of a citizenship regime in the formal sense accounts for the absence of a distinct notion of belonging and creates the space for a more inclusive multiculturalism by enabling multiple modes of belonging. In turn, Favell (1998: 53) argues that through a concept of citizenship based on the idea of *subjecthood*—loyalty to the Queen—the cultural, national and civic components of classic citizenship consist in effect of separate forms of citizenship attributed to different resident groups.

This emphasis on the development of multiculturalism is also associated with a persisting focus on race and an emphasis on the integration of post-colonial migrants, thereby overlooking the new migrants. This is highlighted by Favell (2000) who quotes research showing that race and ethnicity in Britain nowadays bear less importance than class and other social factors in marking minorities’ (lack of) integration. Other literature, however, suggests that the belief that race and ethnicity have lost their importance could be rather premature. For instance, Platt (2005) has examined the social mobility of the second generation, finding that although education and class of the parents mattered, particular ethnicities and religions were important predictors. On the other hand, Cross (2000: 364) notes that the integration of those populations which are more similar to the majority has been more difficult than for those with a distinctively divergent cultural origin. He explains this within the framework of *pluralism* and *separatism* applied towards minorities in Britain. The integration of post-colonial migrants, according to Cross, has succeeded via the outcome of offering them ‘the benefits of non-integration’ and concessions in the form of ethnic entrepreneurship and community resources. This strengthens the rationale behind claims that the old framework focused on race relations seems inadequate for analysing the conditions of new migrant groups in Britain.

Three main features characterise the new immigration to Britain: the reduction of immigration from Commonwealth countries in the Caribbean and South Asia; increased

migration from Eastern Europe and East Asia; and the opposition towards asylum-seekers, as scepticism regarding their legitimacy has increased (Berkely *et al.* 2006: 1). The issue of the new migrants is especially related to the laws and practices on asylum, as the 1990s recorded, as mentioned above, a substantial rise in the number of asylum applications. Hampshire (2005) argues that the recent tendency to acknowledge the positive impacts of migration is associated with an increase in emphasis on welfare parasitism, stigmatisation and penalisation of asylum-seekers and an increasing antagonism towards sponsored immigration. New Labour policies further eroded the rights of asylum-seekers, considering them as a threat to the management of migration waves (Flynn 2005); and the new Coalition government of Conservatives and Liberal Democrats seems even more determined to reduce immigration, including highly skilled and student entrants from outside the EU.

Although the number of migrants entering Britain in the 1990s was smaller compared to most other European countries (this changed in 2000s, especially after 2004), the new migrants have been made unwelcome. They are ‘blamed’ for the further increase of immigration into the country and for ‘ruining’ the balance of privileges and rights already in place for the old minorities (Favell 2001). Britain became a destination for Albanian migrants only by the late 1990s. Although in small numbers when compared to other minorities in the country, Albanians arrived when the political discourse was already characterised by a stigmatisation and penalisation of asylum-seekers and an emphasis on the negative impact of new arrivals on school, health and welfare systems (Hampshire 2005). The size of the community is hard to estimate and different figures are reported both from official sources and key informants. The IPPR report on new communities settling in the 1990s in Britain estimated the Albanian community to be just under 2300 by 2001, compared to 150 recorded in 1991 (Kyambi 2005). The Government of Albania on the other side reports that the Albanian community in Britain is the third biggest in Europe, estimating it at around 50,000 (Government of Albania 2005). Key informants interviewed for this research maintain that the community has grown to 100,000.

Markova and Black (2007) have noted that East European immigrants do not feature prominently in the government’s agenda on community cohesion, which still focuses on race equality and issues of cultural ‘distance’. It is only very recently that the diversification of the migrant population has been fully acknowledged, at least in academic terms. In 2007 Vertovec put forward his now well-known idea on *super-*

*diversity*, thought to characterise London in particular, but also other urban areas in Britain, both in migrants' characteristics and the emerging social patterns and conditions. Vertovec (2007: 1049) notes that super-diversity is the outcome of different factors that mutually condition and combine with each other. Among these, legal status is considered as an important feature. It is also an element of difference within the same ethnic group, leading to different social capital and socio-economic and ethnic ties to different members. Nevertheless, more research is needed on these new migrants, especially on their identities, life experiences, settlement patterns, interaction with 'old' minorities, and the local initiatives that can affect their integration (Markova and Black 2007).

### **2.2.2 London**

Immigration in London is not a recent phenomenon. Indeed, historians go back 250 years when looking for the origins of London as the 'city of nations' (Akroyd 2000: 701). The same is true for the multicultural tensions, but also openness and acceptance. As such, London has a particular position in Britain's immigration history and its variety and heterogeneity have impacted the notion and re-definition of Englishness itself. Holmes (1997) furthermore points to London as a principal destination and location for many immigrant groups whose immigration and residence experience in Britain is bounded within the capital.

The dynamic relationship of London with immigration is very much related to its character as a global city with an imperial past (Eade 2000). Like other global cities, London is characterised by an increase in informalisation and casual labour markets—an aspect closely related to immigration as the source of low-wage labour to economically marginal sectors of production, including the service economy (Sassen 1991). However, compared to other global cities such as New York and Los Angeles, up to the early 1990s the growth of low-paid employment in London was impeded by a relatively generous welfare system and a limited supply of 'fresh' migrant labour. But then, with the increase in immigration over the past twenty years, it is notable that a 'migrant division of labour' has emerged, which in London is characterised by a disproportionate growth of managerial jobs and a lower, but still significant, growth in low-paid jobs, the latter being mostly taken by new migrants. The emergence of such a divide necessitates a closer look at the place and lived experiences of migrant workers

in London, as such polarisation is related to major political challenges which negatively impact the situation of new migrants, who are mostly constrained to taking low-grade jobs (May *et al.* 2007).

Most of the research on global cities, and on London in particular, has focused on the economic dimension of the local, urban impacts of globalisation, and relatively few studies have focused on the everyday experiences of ordinary people (Dürschmidt 1997). Eade (1997) points to the lack of research on the meanings that such structural developments hold for individuals and how they relate to collective categories such as 'classes' and 'minorities'. It is found that the racialised boundaries between insiders and outsiders are still evident in the transition of London from an imperial to a global city, and while the attention of researchers and commentators has been on the inner-city areas, it is often in the outer suburbs of London where a more general process of racialisation takes place. In general, Eade (2000) maintains that assimilation can be questioned on several grounds: racial beliefs of the native population enhance the exclusion from the white majority of African- and Asian-origin populations; many of these minorities prefer to keep their own culture and pass it to future generations; the second and third generations of these minorities are creating new cultural identities, which in turn challenge assumptions about a coherent and lasting national culture within which all newcomers should assimilate.

The integration of new migrants represents worrying features, too. Together with the polarisation of the labour market and the lack of secure low-waged jobs, the reception of new migrants throughout the country, and in London in particular, is found to be affected by local labour markets, local housing pressures, local and regional demographics, and political leadership on migration. The integration of new migrants is especially hampered by the diversity and pace of new migrations, which in turn affect the information available to the local authorities. Besides, there is a widely held view among public authorities that 'race relations' refers to the established white communities and 'visible' ethnic minorities, but not to the new European immigrants, while the required emphasis on local-level integration is still misconceived (Pillai *et al.* 2007).

The situation with new migrants is even more problematic when the large number of 'illegal' immigrants is considered and the fact that no large-scale regularisation campaign has ever taken place in the UK (Vollmer 2008). Recently this issue seems to have come to a high level of discussion, at least within London, with the Mayor of the

capital advocating the regularisation of illegal immigrants through an ‘earned amnesty’ scheme, estimating the number to be 400,000 in London alone (cited in Vollmer 2008). The initiative seems to be supported by a general public consensus in London, set against a background of negative media coverage and policies of immigration that insist on a regime of law and order against irregularity (Vollmer 2008). London, however, is not a homogeneous entity and this should be taken into account in any analysis of processes associated with it, such as the ‘new’ migration of Albanians.

## 2.3 Greece

### *2.3.1 Immigration policies and ethnic relations*

Like other EU countries, diversity and related issues in Greece encompass the ‘old ethnic minorities’ and the new immigrants of the 1990s and after (Gropas and Triandafyllidou 2007), although in this case their weight in the diversity ‘issue’ is of a different scale. Against a history of large-scale emigration in the 1950s and 1960s, Greece became host to a large number of immigrants after 1989. By 2007 the number of immigrants is reported to have arrived at 1.2 million or 10 percent of the total population and 12 percent of the labour force, making for one of the highest percentages of immigrants within the EU (Gropas and Triandafyllidou 2007: 9).

Albanians in Greece constitute the biggest Albanian migrant community in Europe (600,000; Government of Albania 2005). They are also by far the biggest immigrant group in Greece. From calculations based on Census and other sources, Baldwin-Edwards and Kolio (2008) conclude that, from 120,000 non-Greek residents of all ages *born* in Greece, the biggest group of 110,000 were of Albanian origin. Immigration of Albanians in the 1990s was largely irregular; the only way to immigrate legally was through tourist visas or family reunification procedures. However, the first regularisation programme for immigrants in Greece was not before 1998, where two-thirds (241,561) of the undocumented immigrants regularised were Albanian (Hatziprokopiou 2006a).

On the other hand, the predominance of one ethnic group among the new immigrants makes the Greek case unique in Europe. Rovolis and Tragaki (2006: 99) maintain that

the ‘average’ immigrant worker in Greece is young, male, and from an ex-communist country, pointing to a clear gender division in the reasons and forms of migration. However, although most immigrants come from the neighbouring countries of Central and Eastern Europe, newer waves originate in Asia and the Middle East, and less significantly in Africa (Baldwin-Edwards and Apostolatos 2008: 21). As a result, immigration patterns in Greece are affected and represent features of three different models: the Balkan dimension, the Southern European, and the global (Fakiolas and King 1996; Hatziprokopiou 2004). Specific patterns of immigration to Greece include the proximity between countries of origin and the destination, the sudden transition of Greece into a migrant-receiving country, the weight of specific immigrant groups (notably Albanians) and of immigrant ethnic Greeks, the late policy response towards immigration, and the specific features of the Greek economy and labour market. There are further differences between various regions and localities and between the urban and rural settings. On the other hand, the Balkan features of regional cooperation and cross-border historical alliances and fractures seem to impact the patterns and current features of immigrant integration, while increasingly immigration in Greece shows the features of global migration, in the variety of migration forms, countries of origin, channels, routes and categories of migrants (Hatziprokopiou 2004). Furthermore, the dynamics of these new phenomena are shaped by features of its labour markets, such as the segmentation of work, the predominance of the informal sector, the commonality and importance of self-employment and family enterprise. These features create in Greece a particularly ‘pure’ form of the Southern European model and significantly impact the development of a coherent migration policy (Fakiolas and King 1996: 187).

In effect, migration policy in Greece is characterised by a lack of legal migration channels, reactive measures against largely illegal immigrant flows, and a fragmentation of existing measures which often cause the return to illegal status of previously regularised immigrants (Gropas and Triandafyllidou 2007). The attitude of the Greek authorities exhibits reluctance to accept that immigrants are settling and creating communities (Baldwin-Edwards 2009; Triandafyllidou and Veikou 2002). Starting with a law in 1991 mainly designed to regulate admission and control policy, Greek authorities responded to the fast-increasing stock of illegal migrants during the 1990s with two presidential decrees in 1997, through which immigrants could apply for a short-term White Card and then a longer-term (one to five years) Green Card, without, however, any right of renewal. Another regularisation took place in 2001, followed by



others in 2005 and 2007 (Baldwin-Edwards and Apostolatos 2008). However, very minimal measures are made for immigrants' integration and, when this is done, the focus is on assimilation, ignoring the increasing diversity in Greek society, while migrants' legal uncertainty has significantly affected their economic bargaining power, impeding their strategies of integration (Baldwin-Edwards 2009). Triandafyllidou and Veikou (2002: 191) explain the delay in authorities' response towards immigration as affected by the novelty of the phenomenon, while the lack of an integration policy reflects the fiercely ethno-cultural definition of Greek nationality and citizenship. This shows up also in policy implementation and institutional culture. Jordan *et al.* (2003) found that, apart from problems with efficiency, flexibility and overall quality of public services, the immigration services were guided by serious prejudice towards immigrants and their cultural background.

The definition of Greek nationality and citizenship is rooted in the way Greek identity is constructed (Kapllani and Mai 2005). The main historical influences on Greek nationalism are the Enlightenment which impacted the construction of nation-states in Europe, and Greece's classical past, contributing to the conceptualisation of the Greek national community as both singular and universal (Gropas and Triandafyllidou 2007). Drawing from its Byzantine tradition and Christian Orthodox heritage, Greek identity was further amalgamated with the Western institutions during the nation-building process of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, carrying over to the intensive political, educational and cultural policies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Triandafyllidou and Veikou 2002). These policies were based on the Greek *ethnie* as a pure continuation of the antique version (Tzanelli 2006). As a result, the contemporary definition of the Greek identity rests on a triple boundary that distinguishes Greek ethnics: common ancestry, cultural traditions (especially language) and religion (Gropas and Triandafyllidou 2007). In particular, religion is an important element of Greekness, with Orthodoxy being recognised and officially sanctioned as an important condition of Greek nationality and citizenship (Tzanelli 2006). Although religion is mostly experienced as ceremonial, Helleno-Christianism becomes very important for the natives to define themselves against the immigrants (Xenitidou 2007).

Tzanelli (2006: 40) takes the discussion to a further level, pointing to the conflation of the discourse on Greek national identity with that of race, because of the symbolic references to Greekness as based on 'blood bonds'. She maintains that the Greek identity is composed by two main discursive layers. On the one hand, the 'civic' and the

‘ethnic’ are interchangeable in the Greek identity, while on the other, the naturalised status attached to the ethnic notions of identity creates the potential for ethnic identity to take racial connotations, inspired also by the international definition of Greekness as unique, and practices of homogenisation at a European level (2006: 45). Other research has related the emergence of this conflation to the social changes taking place in Greece since the late 1980s and the country’s ambivalence of belongingness (European, Balkan, Mediterranean etc.) which impacts the perception and definition of difference. This has caused the emergence of racism based on both biological and cultural characteristics, which greatly impacts the opportunity structure and the positioning of immigrant groups (Lazaridis and Koumandraki 2001).

Nevertheless, Greek national identity has been under significant pressure in the past twenty years and it has shown signs of transformation based on changing international and internal conditions (Kapllani and Mai 2005). Immigration as a new phenomenon in the 1990s has been one of the important factors of such transformations, but also of the revitalisation of the racist discourse (Triandafyllidou 2000). Lalioti (2005) goes even further, arguing convincingly that immigrants are a new pole against which the Greek identity is negotiated and defined. This is particularly evident in the policy-making process on migration, which in turn shows the redefinition of the boundaries of national identity and of in-group and out-group members. While the lack of a coherent migration policy is blamed on the particular ethnic identity, the latter shows signs of some adaptability to internal and external pressure. Thus, the initial ‘fetishisation’ of Greekness during the 1990s against the threats posed by new internal conditions and international political affairs was followed by a more flexible notion based on civic and territorial elements (Gropas and Triandafyllidou 2007: 7). However, the development of this new identity is slow to emerge and to have an impact on the policies and their outcomes for immigrant- and minority-origin residents in Greece (Baldwin-Edwards 2009). The problematic situation of the welfare system in Greece adds to the problems that an immigrant family has to face (Hatziprokopiou 2004). Many immigrant-origin children drop out of high school to enter the labour market (Papandreou 2005). The recent economic crisis in Greece only compounds the problems of survival for immigrants there.

It is important to see developments in Greece within a larger context of global development. As a result, changes are taking place in the national identity and the respective immigration policies are impacted by external pressures because of EU

integration and the large immigrant population in the country (Hatziprokopiou 2004). Nevertheless, the emergence of a kind of *de facto* multiculturalism has found partial recognition in the public debate, so that cultural and religious diversity is slowly being recognised (Rovolis and Tragaki 2006). Yet, at the same time, the presence of immigrants has made evident the different traits of Greek identity by leading to the construction of a hierarchy of Greekness, with different immigrant groups at different levels around the ethno-national main core (Triandafyllidou and Veikou 2002: 189; Tzanelli 2006). These distinctions are also institutionalised in the definition of national citizenship, which is based on *ius sanguinis*. There are no legal provisions for the residence of the children of immigrants and the naturalisation of immigrants is regulated by one of the strictest regimes in Europe (Gogonas 2007; Gropas and Triandafyllidou 2007).

### **2.3.2 Thessaloniki**

Thessaloniki is the second biggest city in Greece with over one million inhabitants, and one of the oldest cities in Europe dating back to 315 BC, with a continuous urban history and a rich multi-ethnic and cosmopolitan past (Mazower 2004). Its diversity is related to its positioning between Western Europe on the one hand, and the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean on the other, which gave Thessaloniki both Oriental and Occidental features (Hastaoglou-Martinidis 1997).

Thessaloniki represents many of the common features of the cities of Southern Europe, but its urban history has particularities which have had a significant impact on the spatial and social characteristics of the city (Hassiotis 1997; Leontidou 1990). Both Athens and Thessaloniki show a strong employment linkage, which usually determines the spatial dispersion of the population, in combination with residential choices, as well as a large informal economy (Leontidou 1990: 101–102). However, while other cities in Greece expanded without planning, Thessaloniki's urban history was marked by major events in the beginning of the twentieth century and strong governmental policies (Hastaoglou-Martinidis 1997).

These policies are broadly related to the nation-state building process and the foundation of the Neo-Hellenic state in Greece in the nineteenth century (Hastaoglou-Martinidis 1995). There were two major events—the great fire of 1917 and the arrival of 117,000 refugees after the war with Turkey in 1922—that brought about key changes

in its urban structure (Hastaoglou-Martinidis 1997: 494). Also relevant, however, were the emerging nation-state and its ideology (Mazower 2004). This ideology gave rise to the process of modernisation which influenced the shape of the city so as to serve three purposes: to ensure a link with the West, to disguise its rural past and its related memories of foreign rule and backwardness, and to serve as link between the ancient past and the modern new state (Hastaogou-Martinidis 1995: 99).

Thessaloniki was, as a result, created as a 'new' European city so as to restore 'civilisation', with its space arranged according to models adopted by other European nations. This reformed the old traditional town according to the needs of a centralised state and the new urban space was seen as a laboratory to create new social values through a homogenised and unified structure. This in turn impacted the social, demographic and ethnic composition, especially noticeable in the case of the main ethnic and religious communities and even more so in the placement of the refugees, who were dispersed in different areas of the city (Hastaoglou-Martinidis 1997). These spatial divisions are found to persist today, with the eastern part being richer compared to the western areas and a mixed centre, although the presence of a large and dispersed middle class softens the social divisions (Hatziprokopiou 2004).

In effect, the refugees and the state's policy on their settlement reflect broader issues related to the attitude towards multiculturalism and diversity. Although the city's history is marked by significant discontinuities, the different pasts, notably the Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman periods, were largely denied through publishing programmes, research institutes' agendas and the educational curriculum. This was clearly seen in the renaming of public places, the erasure of the Ottoman period and its heritage, and the denial of the refugees' presence, who were assimilated through various policies, despite their contribution to the transformation of the city into a regional metropolis (Hastaoglou-Martinidis 1997). Thus, inspired by nationalist claims and emphasising the Hellenic past at the expense of other important influences, the city's claimed history is rather one 'of forgotten alternatives and wrong choices of identities assumed and discarded' (Mazower 2004: 474).

Currently Thessaloniki is host to a large number of immigrants and, like many other Mediterranean cities, is transforming itself into a multicultural metropolis. The immigrants in the city account for 7.2 percent of the total number of immigrants in Greece, the main groups being Albanians (75 percent), Georgians (9 percent) and Bulgarians (5 percent) (Hatziprokopiou 2004). Thessaloniki's migrant population is

thus mainly composed by immigrants from the Balkans and the former USSR; Athens is far more mixed and diverse. The new immigrants are gradually contributing to the city's urban transformation, through their use of social space, their residential settlement, and the characteristics of the labour markets they have access to. Their integration and participation in the different domains of social and economic life is significantly affected by their regularisation, whereas their settlement appears to follow the social geography of the city, which may well counter the segregation trends fuelled by exclusion by the locals. In turn, their cultural proximity with the natives impacts their visibility and adaptability in the city (Hatziprokopiou 2006b; Labrianidis and Hatziprokopiou 2010). However, spatial proximity does not lead to social proximity and inclusion and exclusion operate differently in different domains and levels. Various factors such as national origin of the migrant population, the time spent in the receiving country, agency, place and the proximity offered by the common Balkan context appear as interdependent elements that shape every migrant's incorporation experience (Hatziprokopiou 2006a: 269–270).

Nevertheless, at a city level, the impact of the new waves of immigrants has uncovered old debates on the city's complex cultural identity. So far, the new discourse on multiculturalism lacks substance (Mazower 2004). Perhaps not surprisingly, due to its historical past, the city has been the epicentre of harsh debates over the issue of the name of Macedonia, objections against the use of the Rotonda, a Roman monument, as a cultural centre, the downplaying of its Ottoman past in favour of its Byzantine tradition when chosen as a European capital of culture, objections towards the non-inscription of religious beliefs on the Greek ID cards, and brutal abuse of immigrants' rights, both first and second generation (Hatziprokopiou 2006b). These issues reveal the difficulties the city still has in coming to terms with diversity within.

## **2.4 Italy**

### ***2.4.1 Immigration policies and ethnic relations***

Italy has a special profile in terms of history of immigration in Europe, due to its long history of emigration and a switch to an immigration country starting from early 1970s.

The reversal from mass emigration to mass immigration matches that of Greece, but in the Italian case the ‘migration turnaround’ started two decades earlier (King *et al.* 1997). The Italian turnaround was a consequence of three main trends: the slow decline in emigration after its peak in the 1960s, the subsequent growth of return migration, and then the rapid increase in the number of immigrants, starting in the 1970s and escalating from the 1980s onwards. These special characteristics, and others related to the diverse features of the immigrant population and its patterns of integration, are even more emphasised by the unparalleled speed, extent and the suddenness of immigration as a new phenomenon, alongside important political issues in the country (Favell 2002; Haddock and Bedani 2000; King and Andall 1999).

There are several differences between contemporary immigration in Italy and the earlier migrations in Northern Europe and the later immigration to Greece. First, the number of immigrant groups is significantly larger in Italy, while their relative size is far smaller, which has implications in terms of integration policies. On the other hand, there are fewer families entering Italy, but a bigger number of single migrant women, while migration from Eastern Europe and South Asia is more significant when compared to Northern Europe (except South Asians in Britain). The colonial experience is insignificant in Italy, but immigration is taking place in a more transnational world when compared to previous waves of immigration to Northern Europe or America (Grillo 2002).

The employment and integration of immigrants in Italy is differentiated according to gender, nationality and regional location. Indeed, the impact that the different labour market opportunities across the regions have on the recruitment and distribution of migrant labour is one of the distinctive features of Italy as an immigration country. This impact is more concretely seen in the migrants’ working practices, possibilities for social integration and the effect on their internal mobility within Italy (King and Andall 1999: 147). Strong identities of Italian cities are thought to underpin the fragmentation and regionalism within Italy, which persists in its contemporary history. While other countries in Europe were emerging as strong nation-states, Italy’s nation-building process was weakened by the prominence and the *de facto* sovereignty of several cities in the North and Centre of Italy (King 1987). Despite the influence of Fascism, no government has managed to eradicate the strong regional identities within Italy, which

make Italians the most ‘regional’ among nations in Europe.<sup>12</sup> Although since 1948 the development of a more cohesive national identity is noticeable, the regional ‘roots’ are still very visible, ‘vocalised’ by regional dialects which act to counter the development of strong national identity since they keep alive the local or regional cultures (Moss 2000). At the same time, divisions over religious versus secular identity persist, while there is unevenness among the strength of local identities among various regions, with some of them facing an identity crisis and others holding strongly to their historical identities (Levy 1996).

As with Greece, the political response to the reality of immigration has been delayed and fragmented. Immigration policy has been organised around three overlapping but broadly consecutive stages: the control agenda, the social agenda and the difference agenda (Grillo 2002: 16). Scholarly work initially focused on ‘push’ factors in the sending countries and overlooked the changing nature of Italian society (Calavita 2005; King and Andall 1999: 144). Migration started to be treated as a policy issue only in the mid-1980s (Bonifazi 2000; Boswell 2003), characterised by a politically opportunistic stance and a short-term approach (Foot 1995; Triandafyllidou 2000). This is also partly explained by the involvement of the Catholic voluntary sector in organising the response to immigration, which in turn had an impact on the character of the immigration policies, putting the focus on assistance-oriented measures (King and Andall 1999). Even so, the first initiative and framework for immigrant integration policies was established only in 1998 under the Turco-Napolitano Law (Gabrielli *et al.* 2009).

According to Zincone (2006: 347), Italian immigration policies are characterised by three main strands. There has been some continuity in the stance taken towards immigration despite the frequent changes in governmental coalitions. Second, the authorities have mostly focused on the conceptual part of policy-making rather than the actual policies. Thirdly, despite the strong public opposition towards immigration, which grew especially during the 1990s, Italy is known for its frequent mass regularisations of illegal immigrants (Boswell 2003: 123). It should be mentioned, however, that immigration legislation has continuously tended towards restrictive measures. These changes have partly reflected internal political pressures, but also the positioning of Italy in a series of international migration systems that cross East and

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<sup>12</sup> Gabaccia (2000: 31) points out that regional identities characterise also Italians abroad; hence the title of her book, *Italy's Many Diasporas*.

West, South and North, and the impact of the EU legislation. The last factor reflects the status of Italy as one of the founding members of the EU, and the country's geographical importance as a gate for the entry of immigrants into the territory of the EU (Favell 2002; Triandafyllidou 2000).

Similar to other nation-states that have become immigrant-receiving countries, the arrival of immigrants in Italy has triggered important discussions on national identity. The particular response that each country formulates towards immigration varies according to the transnational migration experiences of each society, the philosophies of integration developed in recent decades and the national political cultures (Grillo 2002: 4). According to Triandafyllidou (2000: 202), nationalism in Italy is based on common civic traditions and historical experiences. She also emphasises the role of immigrants in the redefinition of the nation, and shows how ethnicity, otherwise marginal in the definition of Italian identity, is emphasised as an important feature that differentiates 'natives' from immigrants. Favell (2002), on the other hand, refers to the same process and maintains that Italy is developing its own 'multiculturalism', based on its own particular social and political system.

Albanians arrived in Italy in the early 1990s when Italian society itself was going through major transformations in order to subscribe to new discourses of European identity (King and Mai 2008: 19). Albanians are nowadays one of the biggest immigrant groups in the country, exceeded only by Romanians. By challenging the already-established notion of skin colour as the signifier of immigrant status, they consisted of the 'new others' emphasised by the large relative size as an immigrant group, and by their cultural, economic and moral 'difference' from Italians (King and Mai 2008, 2009). The settlement of Albanians in Italy now shows signs of rapid stabilisation and integration. This is firstly seen in the increasing number of females, who in 2001 consisted of 40 percent compared to less than a quarter in the early 1990s. More importantly, the number of Albanian-origin pupils in Italian schools has increased tenfold over the 1990s through to the 2000s, and Albanian-origin children are the largest foreign-origin group in Italian schools (King and Mai 2009, citing Caritas Migrantes 2009).

#### ***2.4.2 Florence***



Florence is one of the most celebrated Italian cities and a major centre of international culture. Its history and overall identity are related to its medieval and Renaissance treasures, which make Florence one of Italy's prime artistic and commercial centres, but also a very popular touristic attraction. Perhaps as a result, conceptualising Florence and its ideology as a city and as a living context over thousands of years is not easy. On the other hand, Florence has played an important role in the political, cultural and economic life of Italy (White 2000).

Florence was at the centre of the nation-building process by becoming the capital of Italy in 1865, four years after its unification. The city also pioneered early economic development in Italy. Moreover, Florence's ancient city centre, with an urban tradition that dates from the age of Dante, has marked the historiography of the Italian city in a wider sense (White 2000: 40). Florence is also associated with Italian Unification and the establishment of an Italian national identity. Due to historical fragmentation within Italy, even by Unification in 1861 there was no language known as Italian, apart from a 14<sup>th</sup>-century Florentine language that was used by the great Tuscan writers of that century and known by a small elite at the time. It was the prestige of Florence and writers such as Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio that influenced the choice of the Florentine dialect as the official language of Italy. It remains today the national language and continues to serve as a strong basis on which a sense of belonging to the nation is built (Moss 2000).

Florence's strong local identity, however, has also represented signs of closure and exclusivity towards newcomers. White (2000) goes back to the writings of Dante to point to a dualism in the vision that Florentines held of their city. The myth of an earlier Florence was contrasted with the commercial dynamic of the urban culture, while at the heart of the dualism were the *nuova gente*—people migrating from the surrounding areas and further afield attracted by the possibilities offered by its dynamic economy. A parallel can be drawn here between the historical past and the tense encounters between newly settling immigrants from abroad and traditional city dwellers since the 1990s. Nowadays Florence is a big touristic centre and major cultural repository, which brings a high revenue to the city's economy. On the other hand, the city's diversity is growing, with 10.3 percent of its population of over 364,000 people at the end of 2007 being foreigners. In 2008, foreign residents in Tuscany were 309,651; nearly a third of whom were in the province of Florence, the largest of Tuscany's ten provinces. Four immigrant communities are numerically dominant in the Tuscan region: Romanians

(64,280, 20.8 percent), Albanians (61, 940, 20.0 percent), Chinese (26,050, 8.4 percent), and Moroccans (24,150, 7.8 percent). The Chinese are particularly numerous in Prato, a city-province adjacent to Florence. The Romanians, on the other hand, are mainly recent arrivals, so that for the second generation and school-age cohorts, it is the Albanians who are by far the most numerous foreign-origin group in Florence and Tuscany (and in fact in Italy as a whole; for details see Caritas/Migrantes 2009).

The discourse on immigration, however, continues to refer to the image of a ‘divided city’ over the settlement of new ethnic communities, suspected as unable to ‘fit in’.<sup>13</sup> As White (2000: 70) furthermore puts it: ‘The forms of reaction on the part of pre-existing Italian communities to the sheer cultural otherness detected in a *gente nuova* while in part a continuum from Dante’s time to our own have significant inflexions in the present. In other words civic insularity both endures and takes new forms which is not the least reason for its being so hard to root out’.

## 2.5 Conclusion

The account presented above shows stark differences between the three main sites of this research, but also important similarities. The main differences are related to regimes of diversity, history of immigration and time of arrival, and relative size of Albanians as an immigrant group in each of the sites. The UK stands out as a country with a long history of immigration, where Albanians consist of one of the ‘new’ migrant groups arriving in the 1990s. Although they are potentially a sizeable group among the new migrants, the size of the Albanian immigrant group is rather insignificant when compared to the old minority groups of Asian and African origin. This contrasts with the situation in Greece and Italy, where Albanians arrived in large numbers in the early 1990s, when the two countries were experiencing a structural shift from emigration to immigration countries. Due to the differences in each of these two southern countries’ ideologies of nationalism, however, the positionality of Albanians as an immigrant group differs, which we can expect to have implications on the attitude and policies of immigration and integration, and above all on the experiences of the migrants.

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<sup>13</sup> Although conflict and unrest over immigration have been recorded in other Italian cities: see for example Foot (1999, 2001) on Milan and Turin respectively.

The three cities also differ significantly in size and in their urban cultures and politics. While London is a global city, Florence and Thessaloniki are smaller urban centres. ‘Super-diverse’ London has pioneered British multiculturalism, although not completely successfully, given that many immigrant-origin communities remain concentrated in deprived areas and suffer from various forms of social exclusion. Meanwhile, within a country still broadly hostile to immigrants, Florence has been the first city to adopt pro-immigrant measures and is the main centre of the development of interculturalism in Italy; whereas Thessaloniki has witnessed some of the harshest racist events towards immigrants and diversity in general in Greece. These differences, coupled with a fragmented Albanian identity, have affected the course of settlement and perceptions of integration of Albanian migrants and their children, as we will see in later chapters.

## Chapter 3

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter is structured in three main sections: research design, methods and analysis, and ethics and positionality. The main epistemological approach is set out in section one, where some assumptions on social constructionism and critical realism are briefly discussed, followed by a subsection on multi-sited research and the comparative case-study method. These are followed by a more detailed account of sampling and fieldwork logistics, reflecting the complexity of this research. Section 3.2 describes the field methods employed and analyses implications of the research design for the methods used. It also contains a subsection on data analysis. The chapter closes with a self-reflexive discussion of the ethical issues encountered in the field and my response to them, including reflections on my positionality and its effects on the research process. I should perhaps warn the reader that this is a long chapter, inevitably so I believe, because of the multi-method, multi-participant and multi-sited comparative nature of my research.

### 3.1 Research design

#### *3.1.1 Epistemological approach*

This project was based on a qualitative approach. Other scholars working in the field note that qualitative research is most suitable for capturing the transnational and identity experiences of the second generation (Jones-Correra 2002). In the words of Van Niekerk (2007: 1075), ‘quantitative research cannot grasp the dynamics involved in ethnic identification, because it often presents a picture at a given moment in time. Moreover, respondents are often asked to opt for one single ethnic category whereas in reality ethnic identifications may be multiple, they may change according to the social context, or may not be relevant at all in given situations. Qualitative research better reflects the context-bound variety in ethnic identifications’. Another point in favour of qualitative methods is the fact that, compared to other second-generation groups in

Europe, the Albanian second generation is a significantly smaller community (except in Greece), whose profile and dynamics can best be captured through qualitative and relatively small-scale studies.

Preissle (2006: 692) maintains that qualitative researchers are members of multiple and overlapping communities of practice. From a philosophical point of view, a social constructionist perspective—the idea that we construct both our realities and the way we interpret them—has shaped my approach and my understanding of the narratives of my respondents. The constructionist position is based on a relativist ontology which sees the world as composed of multiple realities, and a subjectivist epistemology, which gives an active role to the researcher and respondents in the creation of meanings (Denzin and Lincoln 2008: 32). More specifically, social constructionism is based on the assumption that the realities to which a researcher refers, and the sites where the research process takes place, are products of the researcher's perception and interactions in these spaces (Burr 2003). From a more applied perspective, social constructionism usually 'operates' through a naturalistic set of methodological procedures and presents its findings through pattern theories. This line of thinking and analysis replaces positivistic terms such as validity, reliability, objectivity and credibility, with transferability, dependability and confirmability (Denzin and Lincoln 2008: 33). Thus, social constructionism is not radically relativist; it differs significantly from postmodernism in its acknowledgment that certain universal aspects of human life exist and there is a variety of representations of the social world and human psychology, as there are some essential attributes of people and processes (Harré 2002).

Critical realism is another competing epistemological approach, which stands at the opposite pole from postmodernism (Harré 2002). As Bhaskar (in Bhaskar and Danermark 2006: 284) puts it: 'From a critical realist perspective [...] we cannot completely explain how we are speaking without taking into account what we are speaking about (and not just what we think we are speaking about)'. Although critical realism was in vogue in the 1980s, more recently migration scholars have returned to it in order to develop more sound migration theories (Bakewell 2010). Methodologically speaking, this approach was recovered after discussions on its worth within human geography. As a result, three methodological avenues were identified as central for critical realism: iterative abstraction, grounded theory and the use of triangulation (Yeung 1997). Overall, critical realism places a strong emphasis on the importance of *processes*, based on continuous conceptualisation and reconceptualisation (Pratt 1995).

This approach resonates closely with my research, based on multiple processes—migration, identity formation, integration, transnationalism, intergenerational transmission etc.

### ***3.1.2 The multi-sited comparative case-study approach***

Following the general framework of the TIES project, my thesis takes a multi-sited comparative approach. Multi-sited research is conducted in two or more sites offering ‘spatialised cultural difference’ (Falzon 2009: 13). Such an approach, however, has various strengths and limitations (Hage 2005). On the one hand, multi-sited ethnographic research is criticised for its underlying assumption that it provides a ‘holistic’ account of the phenomenon under study across sites. A ‘spread’ over sites makes it impossible for the time-constrained researcher to develop an in-depth analysis of all the fields (Falzon 2009). On the other hand, the multi-sited approach responds to the long-standing question of the value and the positioning of the ‘local’ in single-sited ethnography. This, coupled with the post-1990s focus on transnational phenomena, required a move to multiple sites of observation and participation that bridge dichotomies such as the ‘local’ and the ‘global’, the ‘lifeworlds’ and the ‘system’ (Marcus 1995: 95).

The case for comparative multi-sited research is also supported by recent writing on the second generation, which highlights the need for closer attention both to the differences between national contexts and a focus on local settings (Morawska 2003; Thomson and Crul 2007). Furthermore, a comparative design is thought to be a good research strategy in advancing theory because of its systematic way of exploring diversity and interpreting cultural or historical significance. According to Ragin (1994: 111), the comparative method is neither as fluid as qualitative research, nor as fixed as quantitative research. This is because the typical goal of a comparative study is to unravel the different causal conditions connected to different outcomes, for which the cases and analytical frames are set at an early stage of the research design, although they remain flexible throughout the research process. Furthermore, depending on whether the research goals are to explore and appreciate complexity and explain the diverse experiences across societies, cultures or nations, or to test propositions derived from general theories, comparative studies of difference are distinguished as *case-oriented* and *variable-oriented* designs. As the groups included in this study are little

researched, I took a rather flexible and inductive approach to the comparative case study, by focusing on interpreting and contrasting the findings across the research sites, rather than taking the research sites themselves as my primary focus.<sup>14</sup>

Accordingly, this research is based on what is known as a *divergent comparative approach* (Green 1997), in that it examines Albanian migrants and their descendants in three different research sites, following the migrants as they ‘diverged’ out from a common point of origin, Albania. The focus of the study is the Albanian second generation in the three main receiving countries of Albanian migrants in Europe: Greece, Italy and the UK. The sites for research were chosen as relatively big urban centres in the respective countries: Thessaloniki, Florence and London. My choice of cities was based on several factors. All three of them host large Albanian migrant communities, as noted in the previous chapter. London is the obvious place for the UK since it is where the major concentration of Albanians is found. Thessaloniki is the second city of Greece and hosts a significant Albanian presence (Hatziprokopiou 2006a). I decided to avoid Athens because Gogonas (2007) has recently completed his DPhil thesis on ethno-linguistic aspects of Albanian (and Egyptian) pupils’ experiences in school and home in that city. Albanians are present in all major cities of the Italian mainland and have a relatively high concentration in Tuscany, the capital of which is Florence. Choosing Rome as a big urban centre would have followed the line of the typical second-generation studies, which concentrate on big cities and inner-city neighbourhoods, and in Rome Albanians have also a lesser relative presence (King and Mai 2009).

Context was analysed as a composite of the national and city levels. According to Hantrais (1999), cross-national studies need to contextualise through situating the social phenomenon under study by referring to national institutional settings. However, a newer approach in comparative studies has emphasised the need to focus on internal differences within nation-states. The city as context has been particularly highlighted in migration research by focusing on the differences in cities in terms of structure, ethnic composition, historical patterns of minorities’ settlement, and the size and characteristics of the immigrant groups under study (Favell 2001; Foner 1998). Glick Schiller and Çağlar (2009) propose an approach that moves away from a focus on the

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<sup>14</sup> In parallel with writing the thesis, I developed case studies for each of the sites, before writing comparative chapters and papers. These are being published as working papers and as journal articles (so far, Vathi 2010a, 2010b, 2012; Vathi and King 2011).

so-called global cities and on typical criteria related to them, such as density of population or economic power. They propose an approach that considers all cities as global and focuses on *city scale*, which shows a city's positioning in a field of power against regions, states, multi-state entities (such as the EU), and the 'world system'.

These considerations are reflected in the design of this study. Firstly, the three city-sites are characterised by significant differences in migration times and rates in each city, in perceptions on the receptiveness of the host society by the immigrants, and in the three countries' respective immigration histories, education systems, ethnic relations and integration policies. Secondly, they are very differently positioned as urban places: among the three, London is a global city, whereas other differences can be noted when considering these cities' socio-economic, historical and cultural positioning within the states where they are located and beyond (as noted in the previous chapter). As a result, in order not to blur the differences between the three sites, no assumption of functional equivalence was made (Przewoski and Teune 1970). Rather, secondary data, such as academic literature and official documents on immigration policy, integration, ethnicity, Albanian migration etc. were critically reviewed in order to set the background for the thesis and inform comparisons between the three research settings.

### ***3.1.3 Fieldwork logistics and sampling***

#### ***3.1.3.1 General strategy***

Data collection took place over a one-year period starting in December 2007. Fieldwork was designed to include three stages, each to take place over a three-month period, with an intermission of three months between June and September. The planning was partly conditioned by the fact that, since I needed to work with schools and teachers, I had to conduct my fieldwork during term times. I also expected the fieldwork to be very intensive, so I avoided going to Greece and Italy during the hottest summer months. Another important reason was the fact that during the summer many migrants go to Albania on holidays, taking the children with them or even sending them for the summer there. Logistically, having a three-month 'break' was very important for organising the research material and preparing for the third stage. I was originally contemplating a slightly longer stay in each of the field sites, but this was made



impossible by the movement constraints I faced under the EU Schengen Visa regime.<sup>15</sup> Due to geographical proximity, I commuted to London from Sussex, usually 3–4 days a week; for the two other sites I relocated for three months.

My fieldwork was preceded by a pilot study in London in December 2007. The aim was to test the research tools in a small sample, in order to reduce ambiguity, to ensure that questions were appropriately sensitive to issues of culture, gender and age, and to attempt to ‘standardise’ the questions for use with larger samples and think about their applicability in the three different research sites (Barbour and Schostak 2005; Piper and Simons 2005). This pilot study gave me a better understanding of more general issues, such as community dynamics, specific issues that might arise when working with minors, and also facilitated the beginning of fieldwork in London later that winter. For example, through these first contacts with children and parents in London I realised that the teenagers, even when they speak Albanian, do not necessarily know how to read it. This held true for the parents regarding their knowledge of the host-country language: spoken English was not necessarily matched by literacy. As a result, I decided to prepare information sheets and consent forms in all four languages. I was also made aware from the start that my attitude and interview techniques would be significantly different when interviewing teenagers. The ethical issue of parents literally stopping the children against their will from communicating with me, and the associated dilemma on how ethical it was to leave out of my study teenagers who showed great interest and apparent strong agency, arose during my pilot study, too.

Due to the time constraints, I prepared my fieldwork strategy well in advance and exhausted all potential ways of communicating and building contacts at a distance. I conducted a detailed search online, read Albanian newspapers published in each of the countries, contacted local Albanian migrant organisations and community leaders, accessed Albanian expatriates’ mailing lists and visited any websites of diaspora or the second generation available in these cities. The information I received was not vast and was not always reliable, but it was crucial in planning ahead. Once in the field I followed up with meetings and, when possible, I conducted interviews with key informants.

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<sup>15</sup> The EU Schengen regime dictates that the non-EU nationals wanting to travel to the Schengen area need to apply for a Schengen visa. The longest visa I was issued was the six months multiple entry valid for 90 days from the day of entry in the Schengen area. The EU abolished the visa requirements for Albanian nationals on 8 November 2010, when I was in the middle of writing-up.

My fieldwork strategy and its realisation were affected by differences between the three sites. For example, the sector of non-governmental bodies, especially those focusing on migrants, is more developed in Italy than in Greece. Yet, a very distorted interpretation of the law on privacy in Italy hampered my access to the activities of charities working with minors and was a serious obstacle to my communication with schools. The organisation of the education system and, as a result, accessibility to schools is also markedly different—a very centralised system in Greece, more regionally organised in Italy, and a far more autonomous system in England. Also important is the fact that concepts of ‘time’ and ‘research’, and the way they are incorporated into everyday organisational life, were very different, again changing along a continuum from a very informal way of thinking in Greece to a much more institutionalised and regulated form in England.

Albanian organisations were conceptualised as important points of reference for my fieldwork and indeed served as such throughout its course, at least in London and Thessaloniki. However, not always were my inquiries to Albanian organisations welcomed. Some gatekeepers in London and Florence (NGO leaders and activists) showed little interest in my research, although it is directly linked to their agendas. In London in some cases they even tried to block access. Somewhat less predicted was the role of ‘casual helpers’; these were Albanian migrants, and some nationals of the countries where I went for research, who were effective in bringing to my attention community events, and who acted as contact persons en route to others who I wanted to talk to.

In all three sites I tried to use snowballing from very different starting points. The ‘sources’ were both migrant-community related and more ‘neutral’, such as schools, but this worked quite differently in each of the sites. Snowballing worked well in Thessaloniki, on a few occasions in Florence, but was completely ineffective in London. This means that, in most cases, I had to start from scratch with finding new contacts. While this was physically and psychologically demanding, this kind of sampling has probably benefited my work and has perhaps increased the ‘representativeness’ of my samples. Hardly any of my respondents in London and Florence had previously been interviewed for a research project; a very limited number had been interviewed by journalists or for non-academic work. In contrast, some of my informants (parents) in Thessaloniki were at times trying to guess the answers and in some of the answers they seemed, I felt, unnaturally fluent. Some also felt perplexed about why I wanted to speak

to their children. Through using snowballing from many different start-up points, I tried to correct for any potential bias that could occur in these cases. When interviews took part in participants' homes, I always took with me packs of cookies or a drink in order to respect the Albanian customs, but in no cases did I pay for the interview.

Sampling was 'complicated' by the presence of a relatively established Kosovan community in London and by the presence of ethnic Greeks of Albanian nationality who have migrated to Thessaloniki after 1990. Since both Albanian and Kosovan immigrants attend community events in London, I often spoke to Kosovan parents (and their children) to respect their patriotism and their claim that they are Albanian. Moreover, since many Albanians are registered as Kosovans, when working in schools I asked for information and meetings with both Albanian- and Kosovan-origin children to increase the chances of meeting 'true' Albanian-origin teenagers. Soon, however, I developed an interest in the Kosovan migration to Britain as I thought a comparison with the Albanian case would provide very interesting data, and thus followed up with more interviews in autumn 2009 and summer 2010. Although some of this Kosovan material is included in the thesis, most of it is kept apart for further comparative analysis in the future.

In the case of ethnic Greeks who lived in Southern Albania and migrated to Greece, although they, too, would make a good case for comparison, I decided to leave them out of my sample, since my study focuses on perceptions of ethnic identity and their inclusion would complicate the analysis. A further reason was that, while in the case of Kosovan and Albanian migrants I could make the difference between the two and therefore analyse them accordingly, in the case of Albanians and ethnic Greeks of Albanian nationality in Thessaloniki, this would be impossible. There are, however, in my sample some Albanians who have presented themselves as Greek ethnics or *vllahë* (Vlachs)<sup>16</sup> for the purpose of gaining residence rights in Greece.

A great personal advantage for this comparative research was my knowledge of the four relevant languages. This gave me the possibility to 'live in the context of study' by communicating with locals, reading documents, visiting sites online, watching TV and so on. This also afforded the opportunity to have many casual discussions, which are not counted as interviews, but remain very important in understanding my participants' everyday environment and narratives. Interviews and focus groups in London and

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<sup>16</sup> These are semi-nomadic populations of Latin origin that have been largely Hellenised (Agnew 2007).

Florence were conducted by me in any of the languages as appropriate. This was not quite as freely possible in Greece, since I am not as fluent in that language. Here I had some interviews and focus groups transcribed with the help of bilingual researchers. Apart from that, all the fieldwork was carried out personally by me.

As a rule, I always carried with me my mobile phone, my diary where I recorded scheduled interviews, a small notepad where I could scribble down notes and memos, my digital recorder with a set of extra batteries, the camera and research material (information sheets, consent forms, interview schedule in the host country language and interview schedule in Albanian), even when I had not planned an interview. This was another lesson from my pilot experience, which made me understand that important research experiences can happen when least predicted. I was furthermore helped by a degree of ‘familiarity’ with the fields, which led to what Boyatzis (1998: 13) calls an optimal ‘projection’. I knew something about the context of the three cities and about the Albanian family and mentality, which allowed me to insert myself comfortably in the field and also avoid focusing on very general or cliché-type responses. On the other hand, meeting and working with teenagers was a novelty.

### *3.1.3.2 Participant groups*

My three sets of participants were children of Albanian migrants within the age-range 12–18; first-generation Albanian migrants—parents of adolescents or of children approaching adolescence; and teachers/principals in the mainstream schools where a number of Albanian-origin pupils study (Table 1). My main target-group was the second-generation youngsters, and this is the group mainly discussed below. The interviews were conducted individually, although I visited many migrant families with adolescent children, where I made observations, had informative talks and took pictures. Some of the interviews combined parents and children, teenagers and their younger siblings, and in some cases grandparents and other relatives, but in all cases they were counted as one interview depending on who was the main respondent. Although I was very interested to interview the siblings of the teenagers and also to interview both parents and children in all cases, this was very much hampered by the attitude and availability of the parents and other practical issues. Therefore the total number of people involved in this project is significantly higher than the number recorded in Table 1 as the total number of actual formal participants (155). In addition, I interviewed 12

key informants across the three sites: 5 in London, 3 in Thessaloniki and 4 in Florence, consisting of Albanian community activists and others who have knowledge of the Albanian community. The total number sums to 167 interviews.

**Table 1.** Project total interviews<sup>17</sup>

City	Teenagers		Parents		Teachers		Total (city)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female		
London	11	14	3	21	2	4	55	
Thessaloniki	13	15	6	9	3	2	48	
Florence	8	16	10	10	2	6	52	
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>M: 58</b>	<b>F: 97</b>
<b>(participants)</b>	<b>77</b>		<b>59</b>		<b>19</b>		<b>Total: 155</b>	

The average age of the teenagers was 15.5 years and average age on arrival 5.5 years old, so most of them are 1.5 generation (Rumbaut 2002); whereas the average time spent in the receiving country was 10 years. Parents' average age was 42 years, and they had been in the countries where they migrated for an average of 12 years. A table with the participants' main descriptive data is attached as Appendix 1. I use pseudonyms for all parents and children. In the case of the children, I tried to change their names by keeping the name similar to the 'category of name' they hold in reality—for example, when a child in Greece was baptised and held a Greek name, or in those cases when a second-generation teenager born in Albania was given an Italian name.<sup>18</sup> There is a difference in terms of gender among the participants, which worked similarly across the three groups, with the number of female participants being larger than males. I found that more girls took part in the introductory meetings organised by schools in Florence, although all Albanian-origin students were invited. In the case of the parents, the gender imbalance is mostly the result of availability and accessibility: mothers have more flexible working hours in Italy and Greece and more mothers accompany the children to the Albanian organisations' events in London.

There are among my participants a limited number of over-18 'second generation', who had arrived early in life in the host country and were still in education; as well as a

<sup>17</sup> Excluding key informants. The sample in London included 11 Kosovan-origin teenagers and 12 Kosovan mothers.

<sup>18</sup> This is for the very important role that names are found to have in the way identities of immigrants in general are perceived (see for example Silberman *et al.* 2007).

few parents with younger children than my ‘teenager’ criterion. These ‘older’ and ‘younger’ participants were also recruited so as to ‘bracket’ the sample and provide important contextual information (Boyatzis 1998: 58). I did contemplate having control groups of native teenagers and/or teenagers in Albania and adding a fourth fieldwork site, but I appreciated that this would pose an insurmountable challenge to my schedule (three groups and three sites were already challenging enough!). Instead, I decided to refer to other studies on second-generation teenagers and youth studies in general and those specific to each of the countries.

Choosing adolescents as participants is based on three main reasons. Firstly, due to the timing of Albanian migration since the 1990s, the Albanian second generation is concentrated in young age brackets. Secondly, ethnic identification processes start to develop and are found to be particularly dynamic during adolescence (Phinney 1992). Finally, I thought that articulating issues of identity and discrimination would be demanding for children of a younger age, which would consequently bear higher risks and ethical implications.

Teachers were accessed through schools in the cases of London and Florence. In the request I presented to the schools, I asked to speak to teachers who had been teaching for several years and had some experience with Albanian pupils. However, in both cities, teachers in charge of general minority-origin students were those who were mostly available for an interview. These were usually teachers of English or Italian language or other subjects in the humanities and social sciences division. The overall sample of teachers includes also one headteacher, one vice-principal and four teachers who were in charge of minority-origin students. In Thessaloniki, teachers could not be accessed through schools and were contacted through activists of local organisations working on immigration and racism issues, which could have lead to selection bias.

### *3.1.3.3 Sampling and interview settings*

A major challenge was how to ‘compose’ broadly comparable teenager samples in the three research sites. For this purpose I defined ‘second generation’ rather loosely, as the children of Albanian migrants who were born in the ‘host’ country or who arrived by the age of 12 with their families (or reunited with the parents by this age) and have lived in the country for at least 5 years. Thus, my sample of ‘second generation’ includes both second and 1.5 and 1.75 generation (defined as arrival between ages 6–12 and before 6,

respectively). This is the broad-brush definition adopted by most of the large-scale American surveys reviewed in the next chapter.

There are, however, significant differences between the Albanian communities in the three countries. In Greece, Albanian migrants are mostly low-skilled and from a working-class and generally rural background (Hatziprokopiou 2006a). Albanian migrants in Italy come proportionally more from a middle-class background and from the more urban and less-poor parts of the country (King and Mai 2008). This has implications for the selection of first- and second-generation participants, since parents' social class and education level are widely associated with the second generation's educational performance and integration prospects (e.g. Van Niekerk 2007). Finally, the Albanian community in the UK is much smaller compared to the other two receiving countries, has arrived more recently and mainly comes from the mountainous and poor northern region of Albania (King *et al.* 2003).

Data collection took place in various settings. I spoke to respondents in their homes, my own place, in schools, organisations' venues and community events, their workplaces, public areas such as squares and small parks, cafés and churches, and via the internet. I also conducted some informal interviews 'on the move', for instance whilst travelling on the Tirana–Thessaloniki long-distance bus, on planes and at airports. The type of setting varied somewhat between the three research sites. The majority of informants in London were recruited through organisations. Many interviews were conducted with Albanian-origin teenagers who attended weekend Albanian language and traditional dance classes organised by these organisations, which might have caused some bias in their responses on ethnic identity. However, I want to stress that these organisations have multiple meanings for the teenagers, as we will see in Chapter 7. A smaller number of interviews were conducted in mainstream secondary schools and family homes. Access to schools in London was more difficult than predicted. I sent a written request to 40 schools in the areas indicated by key informants as the most inhabited by Albanian-origin families, but with minimal success. The response rate was very low and in most cases negative. From the limited research I did in schools, it seemed like the Albanian (and Kosovan-origin) teenagers were 'invisible' and keep a low profile as a group.

In Thessaloniki, most of the interviews with both teenagers and parents were conducted in home settings. The presence of the parents might have created another kind of bias in the responses of the teenagers. Getting access to schools was made

difficult by the very lengthy procedures and bureaucracy of the Greek central administration. The response from the Ministry of Education in Athens arrived three months after my request and just a couple weeks before the end of my stay in Thessaloniki. The answer was less than helpful: my official request to gain access to interview teachers and make observations was not to be accepted unless I submitted a list of questions for the interviews with minors, although I was not asking permission to work with minors in school settings. Through the help of some teachers I visited an intercultural school and a mainstream secondary school, where I conducted interviews with teachers and observed the school environment, school texts and students' socialising patterns. However, the inaccessibility of schools made after-school time and the home environment the most realistic setting to conduct the interviews, respecting the ethical requirements attached to working with minors. Usually the interviews took place in the evening and at weekends when both parents and children were at home. A smaller number of interviews and the three group discussions were conducted during the weekend Albanian classes organised by an Albanian organisation in Thessaloniki. However, visiting homes, observing the decoration of the living rooms, certain customs in the family and interactions and conversations between parents and children provided very interesting insights.

'The researcher in the square' was one of the main methods used in Florence. Unlike Thessaloniki and London, both of which I was familiar with through previous time spent in these cities, I knew little about Florence and had no personal contacts there. The Albanian community was particularly scattered and ethnically disengaged and although there were (used to be) some Albanian organisations, they were not functioning apart from some *ad hoc* activities or concerts with Albanian artists. Therefore some of the parents were contacted through approaching people in the city centre and asking them to be involved in my study. Aware that this 'convenience sampling' could lead to considerable bias, I tried to 'target' other potential sources for snowballing. Some Albanian activists and/or people working in institutions (mainly in those sectors concerning migrants) offered valuable, but limited help. The time available (three months) was also very short, so from an anthropological point of view, building contacts and gaining people's trust were hampered by the time limit. These were the main reasons that made snowballing rather ineffective. This also dictated the interview setting; most of the interviews with parents took place in the squares, in their work place or in public areas and the majority of teenagers were accessed through



schools. I contacted several secondary schools in different areas and in the end gained access and conducted interviews in four institutes (two professional and two technical) in Florence and one scientific secondary school (*liceo scientifico*) in Prato. The interviews with teachers involved two other schools. The number of families I visited was limited, but nevertheless yielded some very rich research experiences.

The setting of the interviews with teenagers was dictated by ethical requirements in working with minors. I was expected to always ask parents' or the school's permission before approaching and asking the consent of a minor for an interview. This made it impossible for me to consider having interviews with teenagers who had left home and/or dropped out of education. I acknowledge that the impossibility to approach and work independently with the teenagers may have impacted or even blocked discussion on certain sensitive topics, such as discrimination from teachers, love and sexuality, and bullying and/or domestic violence.

From my prior experience with Albanian migrant families, I had noticed that parents are very sensitive to issues concerning their children's welfare, and tend to give answers complying with their expectations on the children's opinions and desires.<sup>19</sup> This proved to be so in this project as well. This could be another potential source of bias, but can also be regarded as an interesting piece of research evidence in itself. Further bias could be associated with the recorder effect: people speak their mind more when they are not recorded. It sometimes happened that, during the casual talk before the recorder was switched on, people said other things and during the interview they rephrased or even changed their opinion. Apart from a few interviews with parents in London, where they wished not to be recorded, all the interviews in the three settings were recorded.

### 3.2 Methods and analysis

When choosing methods, logistics played an important role. While a comparative and 'divergent' research methodology (comparing one migrant group in three destinations) was seen as an interesting and heuristically appropriate design, this inevitably posed limitations on the time I would be able to spend in each field site. Furthermore, due to

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<sup>19</sup> I worked as a research assistant for a project on immigration and community cohesion in Britain and conducted 27 semi-structured interviews with Albanian migrants in Brighton and Hove in the period June–September 2005, some of them in family settings in the presence of children of different ages.

the restrictions on the time I could spend in each country, it seemed more feasible to take a more structured and up-front approach. Therefore interviewing was chosen as the main research method, although separate group discussions with parents and teenagers were conducted in each research site, where this proved to be feasible. Further data were captured through making observations and maintaining a research diary in the form of memos, notes on conversations with key informants and other observations throughout the research period (Altrichter and Holly 2005). Photographs and video shots were also taken as occasions arose.

Throughout the research process, I followed a Grounded Theory approach. Although in its classic form this approach stands as entirely inductive, more recently social scientists employing this method recognise the role of pre-existing theory in guiding the researcher in the process of designing and conducting research, provided that she or he does not allow these theories to constrain the interpretation of data (Ezzy 2002: 12). Due to my travel restrictions, I was not able to go back to the field and follow up with more research, so as to 'saturate' the data analysis; rather, when in the field I was following up on the 'new' findings by asking more questions on that aspect. Furthermore, employing several methods and drawing on data from different groups provided a larger database and additional methodological rigour through triangulation (Frey and Fontana 1993), as well as the possibility to uncover tensions between different sources.

In order to avoid the methodological pitfalls associated with qualitative methods, my overall analysis is based on a combination of methods. Triangulation of findings offers an alternative to strict statistical validity, and is built on the multiple methods and target groups of this project, which create both simultaneity and a display of multiple realities or competing visions of the context (Denzin and Lincoln 2008; Mason 2002). Miles and Huberman (1994: 267) list different kinds of triangulation, such as triangulation by data source, by methods, by researcher, by theory and by data type. Although I considered a combination of different kinds of triangulation, that was not feasible given the very demanding multi-sited schedule of this project. As a result I relied on a comparison of interview and discussion-group data with observations in the field as the main means to triangulate.

### ***3.2.1 Interviews***

For each of the target groups, I prepared in advance a list of interview questions, although these were conceptualised as guidelines and potential topics to be covered, rather than a fixed sequence dictating a structured schedule. They can be found attached in Appendices 2–5. In general, key items in each schedule consisted of operationalisations of important concepts based on theories and previous studies. I also referred to the TIES questionnaire and other research in the field, for example Portes and Rumbaut (2001). As the fieldwork was progressing, however, I asked questions according to the issues that arose during initial interviews and tried to follow up and uncover more information from other participants' responses.

The interview schedule for the teenagers in particular was conceptualised as broad and open-ended, in order to cover different 'life domains' and see how culture and ethnicity are perceived and negotiated in different settings. The aim was also to move slightly away from the typical design of ethnic identity-oriented studies on integration of second-generation teenagers and leave space for other experiences to be expressed. As the last section of the interview schedule with teenagers I had indicated the 'Final word' questions. The first goal of this closing section of the interview was to increase the input from the side of the teenagers on more general issues and their personal experiences. This was especially because it was sometimes difficult to 'unlock' the flow of their narratives and also because they tended to use the 'third person' account, especially when reporting embarrassing experiences and instances of discrimination. Secondly, the speech of teenagers can be insecure at times and they expect far more prompting than adults. Giving them another chance to rephrase the main issues that came up during the interview was also a good way to allow them more space to express themselves. Sometimes they liked to emphasise some of their strong points in this section, which also helped in bringing together the main issues, as once we had reached the end of interview more understanding was created, many barriers were overcome and memory was better activated.

Finally, the questions aimed to empower the teenagers and give them a feeling that their opinion really counts and they are not only my passive participants, knowing that during adolescence people are in search of more recognition and the interview setting might create power and positionality issues. Indeed, some of their 'casual' final suggestions were very revealing and helpful in future work. This part was also a

transitional phase between the ‘intimate’ interview questions and the de-briefing part I had planned in order to make sure that the interview did not have a negative impact and explain in practical terms what would happen to the material they gave to me. Interestingly, this worked better with the children. They were less suspicious than the parents, more technology-aware and showed solidarity when told that this was my ‘assignment’ and they were indispensable to the successful completion of it.

The interview experience was different across groups and sites, in terms of language used, length, techniques employed, power relations and the actual material acquired. With teenagers it required that I be positive and ‘laid back’ in my attitude, so as to encourage more openness and to avoid any potential ‘rivalry’ in terms of intelligence and interpersonal skills with them. As part of my efforts to establish communication, I tried to avoid ‘teasing’ questions, but also a dull outfit/appearance. In effect, in the case of minors some of the main ethical requirements proved to be very important as methodological strategies. For example, most of ethics codes suggest that the setting has to be ‘pleasant’ and ‘neutral’, and the researcher should make sure that the interviewee can enjoy and feel empowered by the interview. In reality, these ‘rules’ turned out to be important interview strategies in breaking the barriers and building a conversation with the teenagers.

In terms of techniques, more ‘direct’ and leading questions were needed in the case of teenagers, and in general these interviews were more of a semi-structured type when compared to those with the parents. This is in line with other authors’ observations (e.g. Dunne *et al.* 2005) that maintain that, in contrast with more classic approaches, ‘leading questions’ can sometimes yield the very substance of an interview. In the case of the teachers, the interview structure resembled elite interviews (Berry 2002): there was the ‘institutional perspective’ which sometimes limited their response to the cliché or the very politically correct answer, such as ‘Students of minority origin and of Albanian origin are very good and very disciplined’, ‘We are very aware of diversity’ and so on. The teacher interviews worked better with those who were in charge of minority-origin students. It should be noted that this issue is regulated differently in the three cities. In London these teachers were working at the Ethnic Minorities Achievement Unit, in Florence some schools I visited had appointed one teacher—usually a teacher of the Italian language—to be in charge of issues dealing with academic progress and social integration of the minority-origin students, and in Greece the issue of the minority-

origin students is ‘sorted’ through intercultural schools that run in parallel with the mainstream education system.<sup>20</sup>

Interviewing experiences changed not only across groups, but also across contexts and settings. In general the technique employed was ‘conversational interviewing’ (Holstein and Gubrium 2008), as the majority of the interviews took place in people’s own environment in which I tried to be a natural part. The technique benefited my work with parents although at times it posed further challenges to my schedule as sometimes I had to spend a whole afternoon with the family and sometimes with the neighbours or relatives before I could start the actual interview. A recognition of my participation in the process of interviewing and reporting is also reflected in the way my participants’ accounts are integrated in my research writings. Along with other researchers who suggest that ‘the writer is never more present in the text than when she seems to be absent and the subject less audible than when he seems to be speaking for himself’ (Stronach and Maclure 1997: 35), the analytical and writing process involved a careful preservation of the natural and transparent character of the accounts and at the same time a move beyond my participants’ narratives into a more analytical engagement with the material, which was inevitably influenced by my understanding of those narratives.

Interviews with different groups also varied in length and in the material they produced. Interviews with parents lasted longer than those with teenagers and teachers; they narrated more, and more detail was offered. Yet, there was a significant difference in the response of parents across the three sites. In Florence, parents were more skilled; as a result the interviews were more constructive and their narratives more analytical and included more proverbs and metaphors. Finally, it should be noted that there was a gender difference in the case of the parents. Mothers focused more on family issues, children’s upbringing and the difficulties of life as a migrant. Fathers were more prone to speak about general issues such as legal status and the economic situation in the country where they lived, rather than reveal much about themselves or their children.

### ***3.2.2 Group discussions***

I organised five group discussions, three with teenagers, one in each of the three sites, plus two group discussions with parents in Thessaloniki, one with fathers and another

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<sup>20</sup> It is worth pointing out that the so-called intercultural schools in Greece originated to cater for ‘returning’ Greek-origin children who were to be ‘re-integrated’ into Greek society.

mixed with fathers and mothers. The group discussions with teenagers in London and Florence were organised in school settings, whereas the three group discussions in Thessaloniki were organised through an Albanian organisation. An almost equal number of girls and boys, aged 13–18 years, participated in the group discussions. The teenager groups comprised respectively seven, six and five members.

The combination of interviews with (focus) group discussions is highly recommended in the literature as these two methods are seen as complementary. Focus groups give access to group norms and dynamics, and also allow for observations on the interactions between group members, which are otherwise inaccessible through individual interviews (Barbour and Schostak 2005). However, group discussions with immigrant parents were difficult to achieve because they work long hours and have little spare time once their family responsibilities are also taken care of. On the other hand, when access to schools was achieved, the idea of organising a number of individual interviews was not welcomed as this would create an extra burden because of a lot of coordination within the schools was required to locate the Albanian-origin students and fix a time so that the interview would not disrupt the student's progress. During negotiations, I suggested a group discussion as an option, which was appreciated as more feasible from the side of the schools.

These group discussions increased the overall number of the participants, provided more evidence and added more methodological variety to my research design. This is especially important when noting the concern expressed by some ethnographers who call for more polyphonic accounts to be included in qualitative research reports. Furthermore, this technique allows for de-emphasising the role and subjectivity of the interviewer, considered as one of the main limitations of the one-on-one interview (Frey and Fontana 1993: 26).

### ***3.2.3 Observations and 'occasional ethnography'***

Despite time limitations being one of my main obstacles in a three-site study, one of the main ambitions of my fieldwork was to engage as much as possible in the context of my research; this varied in a continuum from casual observations to a more substantial involvement in the life of people and families in the form of participant observation. The 'depth' of my involvement was also determined by the characteristics of the 'communities' I was studying. First of all, logistics put serious limitations on the design

of the project. My ethnography could be only ‘90 days multiple entry’, as that was the duration and the flexibility of the visa I was granted by the embassies of Greece and Italy. This also affected other decisions such as, for example, choosing a ‘typical migrant neighbourhood’, as one of the requirements to be granted a visa is to present formal evidence of accommodation arrangements. Moreover, as I knew from personal experience and previous research that Albanians are scattered in terms of their residential distribution, are sceptical towards organisations, and lack a strong common religion, a ‘classic ethnography’ based on community studies would have been, in any case, difficult to achieve.

Nevertheless, observations naturally accompanied my research and ‘occasional ethnography’ took place. Adler and Adler (2000) speak about ‘auto-observation of the researcher’ through diary notes and the advantages that this approach offers for yielding insights about core meanings and experiences. While I did not use pure observation as the principal method, I regularly recorded my impressions, feelings and memories so as to stimulate reflexivity and document my positionality in action. Furthermore, combining observation with other methods is thought to strengthen the methodological rigour of the research design. This is because observations can serve as a powerful source of validation since ‘observation rests on something that researchers can find constant: their own direct knowledge and their own judgement. It thus stands as the fundamental base of all research methods’ (Adler and Adler 2000: 105).

Apart from ‘passive’ observations, throughout my fieldwork I aimed for active participation in the lives of the groups I was studying. However, differences in the spatial dispersion of the group under study in the three cities and in the structure of the cities themselves affected the intensity of my participation and the depth of meaning deriving from it, producing a collection of ‘occasional ethnographic instances’.

Accordingly, the main sites I got access to were somewhat different in each city. In all three sites, I took part in community events which varied from national celebrations of the day of independence or Albanian flag day, to parties where I was socialising, talking to people about everyday life issues, dancing traditional Albanian dance and so on. In *London*, Albanian organisations’ venues and activities with the community and children were the main sites, while I also visited families and observed their customs and albums with pictures from their past and from holidays in Albania. Also in London, I visited Albanian restaurants, secondary schools and made observations in Gatwick and Tirana airports during a summer trip to Albania. In *Thessaloniki*, migrants’ homes were

the main sites; additionally, I attended a baptism ceremony of an Albanian immigrant family, participated in public demonstrations for the rights of the second generation, and sat in on meetings between migrants and Greek and Albanian activists. I also visited schools, Albanian and Greek organisations, made observations at the bus station where migrants can take a bus twice a day to different cities in Albania, and took one inter-state trip to make observations on the bus and throughout the trip. The main sites of observation in *Florence* were the city centre, where Albanian migrants work in many restaurants and other parts of the ‘touristic sector’, and various secondary schools. In addition, I visited homes, Albanian businesses (mainly restaurants, clubs, shops) and took part in church services organised for the Albanian community and activities during the national flag day. Important sites in Florence were the intercultural centres and the unions’ offices where Albanians and/or other migrants work as representatives of foreign workers, and where on every occasion I found migrants dealing with their papers or complaining about their employers. I also followed discussions on second-generation networks and interacted with Italian national organisations working in the field of migration and/or youth issues.

These varied fieldwork experiences were materialised into diary notes, varying from short impressions of a new day to complete profiles of people I had met and/or interviewed, or a detailed record of a visit to a family or an event. I could not update my diary every day, but for every interview I wrote a paragraph to record the place and specifics of each encounter. As I went along, I also input a lot of memos to record my initial ideas for analysis, which proved to be very useful in later stages. Some extracts of these notes are included as vignettes in the empirical chapters.

### ***3.2.4 Data analysis***

Following a Grounded Theory approach, I started data analysis very early during fieldwork. I began by noting down the main themes that emerged during the first interviews in London, often on the train coming back home. I also wrote frequent memos to myself recording analytical ideas and categories with examples from interviews. On the second and third phases of my fieldwork, I started noting down differences in the respective fields in comparison with the others. As I was reading literature in parallel, I was also comparing my interviews with the findings of other researchers. Some of the most detailed and rich interviews were transcribed soon after



the event, and notes of the main themes emerging were included in the transcript. Due to the time constraints and intensity of fieldwork in London and Thessaloniki, many interviews were transcribed during my three-month break in summer 2008, and then after my fieldwork in Florence was completed, starting in January 2009. As a rule, the interviews were transcribed in the language they were conducted; also in the case of interviews with teenagers where they combined two or three different languages. Almost all interviews were created in a file with notes about the setting, the main observations, and descriptions of the participants' reaction, and further notes were recorded in my electronic diary after every day of fieldwork. These notes proved to be extremely important during the fieldwork as I was constantly 'in touch with the data' and was following up with questions in other interviews so that I could 'exhaust' the potential themes. As this study is multi-sited and comparative, the notes, together with pictures and video shots, kept my memory and perceptions of each field fresh.

Within a Grounded Theory approach, I used thematic analysis to identify themes and further analyse my data. A few references were very helpful in this regard, such as Boyatzis (1998), Dey (1993), and Ryan and Bernard (2000). Conceptually, my data analysis followed an interpretivist approach. The way the interview material is read and understood, the codes chosen and the meanings 'extracted' from the data are shaped by the researcher's understanding and convictions. The interview material is, therefore, the outcome of the 'collaborative act' of both parties involved in the process (Miles and Huberman 1994: 8). As a result, the data were read literally, interpretatively and reflexively; that is, I was interested in both the literal content of the data, but also engaged in constructing an interpretation of what I thought the data meant, and observed my role in the process (Mason 2002).

I started coding a small sample of interviews and developed an initial coding scheme based on frequently occurring themes which was further developed in later stages. There was both a deductive and an inductive approach employed when starting to analyse the data, which seemed unavoidable. I had a few ideas in mind when thinking about potential themes, which derived from my reading of previous research on this topic, reflected also in the interview schedule, but I then added and merged themes along the way. When I started to read through my interviews, I initially picked some very revealing statements. Once I became more familiar with the interviews, I started to record themes more systematically. Coding was both *descriptive*, aiming at an indexing system (for example, date, city, group of participant) and *analytical*, based on themes

and categories grounded in the theoretical perspectives employed in this project (Mason 1994). I used NVivo to store the transcripts and code the data, but the more conceptual part of the analysis was heavily based on working with hard-copies of interview transcripts. The work with the transcripts was also planned to counteract the main limitation associated with Grounded Theory—the emphasis on fracturing the data into small units and basing the analysis on them, which could ‘block’ the researcher’s understanding of the contextual meaning that underpins the phenomena (Chwalisz *et al.* 1996).

### **3.3 Ethics and positionality**

#### **3.3.1 Ethics**

Due to the diversity of contexts and characteristics of the participants of this study, I was expecting the fieldwork process to pose several ethical dilemmas. My project involved participants from different groups, in terms of age, nationality and social status, and took place in three research sites located in three different countries. More importantly, the topics covered, such as identity perception, discrimination, parent–child relations, etc. and the methods used, which required substantial time and contact with the participants, could make this study seem ‘invasive’ and make access even more difficult. Furthermore, several scholars and professional bodies note that the researcher should expect special issues to arise when working with minors (ASA 1997; Barnardo’s Statement of Ethical Research Practice; Lindsay 2000).

Prior to the start of the fieldwork and at the pilot phase, I assessed the ethical requirements and tried to think ahead of the potential ethical issues specific to this study. This was based on two main concerns: firstly, to ensure that the design of the study would pose minimal risks and emotional costs to the participants; and secondly, as Miles and Huberman (1994) note, poor ethics can damage the quality of data. Accordingly, I consulted several ethical codes, such as that governing research in the (then) School of Social Sciences and Cultural Studies at the University of Sussex, other ethical codes of major research organisations, institutions working with children and young people, and literature on research and ethics. While these ethical codes and other

guidelines served as a frame of reference, my reactions towards ethical dilemmas, particularly those that arose unexpectedly during fieldwork, were further based on my understanding of the cultural context and communities I was approaching. This understanding derived from three sources: being myself an Albanian national; from previous living and educational experience in two of the research sites; and professional training in Psychology and Counselling.<sup>21</sup>

My first challenge was related to the perceptions from the side of my participants towards research and its potential impact—touching on privacy, confidentiality and power issues. In general, the decision of the adult respondents to participate in this study was based on their assessment of their own status in the cases of Albanian migrants, and the potential institutional implications in the case of the teachers. A hoped-for positive impact of research was the drive for some of the participants in Thessaloniki, but my research was much feared in London, and my participants in Florence were rather indifferent. On the other hand, my expectation that the Albanian migrants might feel under pressure when asked to participate, as reluctance can be interpreted as a lack of solidarity due to a heightened perception of their responsibility towards me as a member of the same ethnic group, was rather misplaced. In most of the interviews with parents, the power was rather on their side. Power issues in the case of the interviews with teachers concerned their control over the information sought, while I had to constantly work during the interviews with minors to give them priority and control over the interview process.

One of the main issues that emerged as crucial in terms of guarding the participants' interests and well-being was ensuring the double consent in the case of minors: the consent of parents or teachers about the children and the consent of children themselves. This was related to one of the main dilemmas that occurred during the pilot study—whether the participation of minors should require specific informed consent from parents or legal tutors. The literature left space for this requirement to be waived where it was clear that participation in the research involves minimal risk or risks no greater than those in everyday life, where parental permission is impossible or would not protect the child or young person, and where the emotional and social maturity and particular vulnerabilities of the young people have been evaluated and the risks of participation are considered to be low (ASA 1997). However, I decided to ask parental

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<sup>21</sup> My MSc is in this field.

consent for two main reasons. The regulation of research with minors differs between the three sites; in England permission from parents for children under sixteen is a legal requirement, which leaves no space for interpretation. Secondly, from the pilot study and previous research experience with Albanian families, I expected that access to the children in public areas would have likely been impossible as their social life is not very dynamic and it is hard to distinguish them from the natives. Knowing also the high importance that family and children have for Albanian parents, the decision was also made to respect this fact, but also prevent any potential conflicts that could arise between me and the parents.

From a practical point of view, double consent required that I prepared and delivered copies of information sheets and informed consent in both languages respective to the country to ensure that both parents and children could read the material. In several cases the participants said that the information sheet delivered in advance had not been read, but these occasions gave me the chance to start a conversation in the family about my potential visit and the interview. All interviews started with a short chat about who I am, the project, etc., independently of whether the sheets were read in advance.

In the case of children and young people, obtaining consent for participation in research is not straightforward. For example, as parents and teachers are entitled to be legal representatives of minors, they may impose their attitude, leading to possible coercion. Aware of this, I always started with a short conversation when initiating an interview with a minor, both in home and school settings. Usually, I started talking about myself and my work before explaining that I would need to know a lot from them, but they should feel free to stop or change topic at any time. Sometimes we decided on some sort of a code or gesture that would show that they would like to change topic and I would understand it immediately. I also explained to them how the recorder worked, and asked them where they felt more comfortable with it, so that they could feel in control of the situation. Sometimes issues of consent and freedom from coercion appeared in different forms and stages of the interview. There were cases where parents bullied the children to stop talking about something specific during the interview, explicitly or through grimaces and gestures so that they could be reminded of what they were instructed to say before I had arrived. In these cases, I tried to 'ease' the conversation by asking something casual to the children or making jokes, taking a break and trying the cookies that I was usually offered in the families, and following up with a check on whether the children were still willing to continue talking to me.

The interviews in the families showed other patterns of boundaries among the family members. When all the family was at home, there were cases when there was competition between parents to talk more, cases when the wife let the responsibility to the husband to talk, perhaps so that she was not charged with a ‘mistake’ later, cases when the husband gave the word to the wife as children’s upbringing and education was seen as ‘her domain’, and a few occasions when the presence of the mother-in-law changed the whole line of the interview. Then there were cases when parents offered themselves for an interview and tried to speak about the children so as to reject the request for an interview with the children. On other occasions, the opposite happened: parents monitored the interview with the children, but they were very much against being interviewed themselves, especially in London where they had probably been through a very stressful asylum application process. On some occasions, I was asked by the parents about the interview information revealed by the children. In these cases I limited my response to a briefing on the general well-being and a description of the minor’s attitude towards future life goals. I always assured the children that I would not reveal confidential information to anyone before starting an interview with them.

My presence and the interview could have affected the dynamics of the interactions within the family, too. Some children said that the interview made them think of things they had never thought of before, whereas others had the opportunity to speak up about some issues to their parents. Some parents found the interview useful to understand the world of their children. There were cases, however, when my presence and the interview topic seemed to expose the everyday problems they had with their children, such as the children’s style of dressing and restrictions on going out, attitude towards education and towards Albanian customs, or return to Albania. I saw this as problematic as this could create ‘a new stage’ in the evolution of their problems, now more clearly listed and analysed. This was related to an important observation on parent–children relations: the ‘luxuries’ of having time to talk and experiencing identity issues are not a normal part of the life of a migrant family. Once a lady in Thessaloniki mentioned that the first time she was able to reflect on her new life in Greece and the de-skilling process she went through was when she was hospitalised after several years of hard work as a domestic worker. In order to avoid any potential harm, I tried to spend some time after the interview and talk about the topics they would like to discuss, and followed up with phone-calls or accepted their invitations to visit them at a later time.

On the other hand, the emotional issues that I was confronted with as a researcher were largely left unaddressed.

Ethical issues arose even in those cases when all the institutional requirements had been fulfilled. Indeed sometimes these were the ‘cause’. For example, on one occasion, after a long process of application and negotiation with a school in Florence, we had planned a meeting with Albanian-origin teenagers in one of the classrooms. The meeting seemed to be proceeding smoothly, but then one of the teenagers protested to the teacher that, as this had never happened before, she perceived the meeting as a way for the school to expose the Albanian-origin students. Similar ‘incidents’ happened with the parents and the children when handed the information sheets. Almost all ethical guidelines advise that these research documents should contain the title of the study. However, the words ‘migrants’ and ‘ethnic identity’ were somehow disturbing to my participants and gave them wrong impressions about the study. Some of the long-term immigrants in Italy and Greece found the word ‘migrant’ inappropriate, whereas the words ‘ethnic identity’ made parents think that I was researching patriotism, and on some occasions caused a distancing of the children as they were not happy to be recruited as ‘Albanian’ and as ‘children of migrants’.

Ethical issues were not limited to experiences in the field. While writing about my participants’ experiences, I faced a strong dilemma in deciding how my analysis might affect the presentation of their group profiles and how compatible this would be with their aspired public image. This is not least because of the stigmatisation that surrounds Albanian identity at an international level. I asked people to share with me some of their most embarrassing experiences, so I feel the obligation to voice their concerns. On the other hand, being aware that there is a gap between research and the desired positive impact on policy-making, documenting these experiences, formalising their presentation and making these accessible to a broader public raises concerns on the usefulness of this study. This reflects one of the major ethical dilemmas posed by Crow (2000: 69) as a question that every researcher should ask: the purpose of researching a particular topic. Informally, a mismatch between my portrayal and these groups’ expectation could lead to rejection and resentment from the communities I studied, mirroring the experiences of other researchers (e.g. Scheper-Hughes 2000). A more serious issue may result from the dissemination and the potential misuse of data, especially when considering the community in London and their migration routes. As the regularisation of Albanians in the UK involved Albanian immigrants appearing as Kosovans, the dissemination of the

findings of this study may have consequences for their future residence in the country. Leaving my personal convictions on these practices aside, knowing from these same people how much it has cost them and what it means to them and their children to have got what they call the ‘British’ (achieve naturalisation in the UK), the concerns on a potential misuse of the data I present in this study are heightened.

Other post-fieldwork issues are related to the management of the data and giving participants access to the transcripts and final reports. A transnational fieldwork design required that written records had to be treated with particular care, so as to avoid access and any kind of reproduction from an unauthorised third party. I had planned a short period after each phase of fieldwork to return to Sussex, which allowed me to organise the administration of my research material and think ahead of other arrangements to be made for the next stage. In order to ensure anonymity, I removed all the indications that might identify the respondents in any form of publication of my data. During the interviews I also asked my participants not to mention names, addresses or other personal information that might identify them or people related to them, in case the recorded material would be lost or in any other way fall into the hands of third parties.

I am aware that it is advisable for the transcripts and the draft publications to be given to the participants and their opinion sought before the publications become formal. However, I had recognised since the beginning of the fieldwork that this could prove difficult or impossible in my case. Therefore, as planned in the original proposal, I tried to discuss with my participants after the interview was finished and make very clear to them what would happen to the interview material in practical and academic terms. During these conversations I shared with them which parts I found particularly interesting and took their opinion on whether there were issues that they found particularly sensitive and would like not to be quoted or used for analysis. I kept note of their reactions in those few cases when objections were raised.

### ***3.3.2 Positionality***

The way I was perceived in the field and the attitude of the people I worked with towards me were significantly affected by the fact that I shared the same nationality with those researched, by my being single and a professional woman, and especially by a combination of these traits. The effect of a common nationality reflected on their narratives on ethnicity and culture. There were cases when parents made assumptions

about my preferences and sometimes tried to encourage children to have the interview in Albanian or emphasise their belongingness to Albania. On several occasions, parents made assumptions or suggestions that I knew what they were talking about, especially when they were describing their experiences before migrating from Albania. But being a researcher of the same national origin can negatively impact on power relations, increasing the vulnerability of the researcher. In order to approach potential participants and open up a conversation, I was usually asked to disclose personal information, sometimes for hours, before an interview took place. Many times people expected a lot of information about me, about where I come from, about my family, my life in different countries, my thoughts about marriage etc., which I found quite draining. My independent style of living was not welcomed by some parents, who made negative insinuations about my values and my relationships with my family. Although I found these instances difficult to handle, I tried to avoid any engagement in debate. These instances, however, raised questions on the classic representation of the researched as being always the vulnerable party.

There was also an expectation for more disclosure and expression of affection from my side, which complicated my departure from the research field. This was very crucial in my case. Having only a short time to access the fields and exit them, but also being of the same national origin as those under study, made it very hard not only to communicate with people, but also for me to emotionally deal with the fact that I was there temporarily, that there was not much I could do for the people I was working with, and that maybe I would never return to that place again. This was sometimes expressed also by my participants who, when walking me to the door and waving me farewell, giving me a lift or even just performing the rituals in their houses, were making life-long wishes for my future life, family and children. On several occasions, parents and some of the young people of Albanian origin wanted to socialise with me, and that was also made impossible due to the time limitations. After my fieldwork I sent postcards to some of my participants and key informants to express my gratitude, but also to counteract any feeling of disruption that could have been created after my departure. In some cases, I sent information about higher education schemes to those key informants who had expressed interest in this during our meetings when I was in the field. I also intend to send some copies of the book that I hope will result from my thesis to some organisations and schools.



Other issues were related to expectations from my participants for everyday support or advocacy from my side, which made me reflect further on my positionality in the field. For instance, in London I met a family where both parents could not speak English. So after the interview was finished the mother asked me to accompany her to the school of her son because there was an important event for the 6<sup>th</sup> form where she would be able to see his teachers. While this was an invaluable research experience for me, as it revealed the drama of a family where the parents cannot function in the environment where the children consider their home, making the decision to go with her raised first of all the question of whether this was acceptable to the son who was one of my interviewees as well. After that meeting I was expected to act as a mediator between her and her son's school by making phone-calls to check his attendance. As I would be flying to Greece in less than two weeks time, I had to contemplate the consequences of my departure and the way that this was best communicated to the family. On another occasion in Thessaloniki I was taking part in a demonstration organised by Greek and Albanian organisations for the rights of migrants, and some TV and press representatives were there. When one of the activists revealed to the journalist that there was a researcher on site, they approached me and tried to insist that I give an interview on TV. I decided not to, so as to avoid attention being concentrated on me while I was there to observe and record conversations with the participants. But I felt that the activists who knew me and had supported my research expected more.

My work with migrant families affected my perceptions of my own identity. Throughout the fieldwork period, I had to negotiate and express certain aspects of my identity and most of the time I had to hide certain others, which many times made me feel uncomfortable and strained. This was firstly dictated by a commitment to adapt to the settings and respect the feelings and values of people I was working with, but also facilitate access to the settings I was working in. From a practical point of view, my fieldwork dictated changes in my way of dressing. There was no fashion involved, skirts were untouched for a year, and T-shirts, plain-colour cardigans and flat shoes were the norm. In order to 'satisfy' the expectations of both parents and teenagers, but also to protect myself from any potential risk, I went for a careful and regular dress style. Working mostly with families, however, enabled me to avoid many risks of fieldwork which other female researchers have reported to have experienced, especially in terms of emotional and sexual harassment (see Markova 2009).

Nevertheless, as discussed by Tsuda (1998: 120), this ‘need to engage numerous selves in the field’, and the associated psychological costs for the researcher of some sort of ‘identity prostitution’, gives to the researcher the opportunity to see the world from different vantage points. More than my appearance, my identities were experiencing a wild shift. There were times when I was another person in the living room when talking to the parents—an adult, a respectful and family-oriented girl—and then a student, an outgoing person critical towards Albanian customs when interviewing the teenagers, and surely a different person—a professional—when interviewing teachers.

My social and sometimes ethnic identity was perceived differently across the groups and sites, too. While parents saw me as a co-national, children found my ethnic identity somehow puzzling, in some cases noting explicitly that I did not fit their perception of ‘Albanian’. My civil status was sometimes an issue. Many families offered to find me husbands as I was right at the end of the acceptable period for an educated girl to get married. The fact that I was single meant different things in London, Thessaloniki and Florence. No matter the different contacts and research strategies that I had to employ, the fact that I was thirty and unmarried was found by the Albanian community as really alarming in London, worrying in Thessaloniki and open-minded and progressive in Florence. There were assumptions from my side, too; because I am university educated and choose a transnational, independent style of living, I tended to consider these as the standard positive norms when evaluating the experience and the choices of the young people and the girls in particular.

Moreover, my professional identity was also perceived differently and so was the impact on the fieldwork experience. Many people, especially in Italy, took me for a journalist and introduced me to others as such. While this made the encounters smoother and easier, my role was very clearly explained to the participants later. In Thessaloniki, parents took my own example to express the desired success for their children’s studies, whereas the parents and teenagers I spoke to in London saw me working in a university in the UK as a structural success. In both cases, this perception facilitated access and the process of interviewing. In turn, as most of my skilled participants in Florence had experienced de-skilling, a distinct empathy and understanding from my side (which was part of the interview experience in Thessaloniki) was sometimes seen as a lack of appreciation for their background. They also saw me as a reminder of their de-skilling process, which was reflected sometimes

in more interest to engage in conversation and more often in a certain scepticism expressed towards my commitment to the research I was conducting.

However, I must acknowledge the help of so many people and note that my dual position as a co-ethnic ‘insider’, but also an ‘outsider’ in terms of education and socio-economic status, shaped interactions in the field. Like Kraidy (1999: 461), my positionality was affected by two main worldviews: the ‘native’ culture and ‘the worldview of the ethnographic, academic, systematic, and, therefore, instrumental knowledge’. My entry to the field, however, was more complicated as I was entering Albanian ‘communities’ in other countries and I already had ‘imaginative’ relationships with each of these countries. In the end, through my work with various communities in Europe, I was also perceived and could have acted as a ‘diasporic agent’. This was firstly seen in my participants’ interest in the other communities in Europe where I had been and it will be more ‘materialised’ in my analysis, which will also contribute to the establishment of virtual links to these same communities.

## Chapter 4

### THEORY

#### **Ethnic identity, integration and transnational ties: the case of the second generation**

In this chapter I present the ‘state of the art’ related to the theoretical context of my research. The chapter is structured around two main sections and conclusions. I begin with a section that discusses the key thematic concepts that I employ in this research: ethnic identity, integration, transnational ties and intergenerational transmission. The second section deals with theories on the second generation. It outlines how these concepts have been used in research on the second generation, including a summary of the main research findings on the integration of the second generation in Europe.

The reasons for reviewing the three main concepts of ethnic identity, integration and transnational ties are manifold. Firstly, the three concepts are very complex and used in various, sometimes essentialised, ways in migration research. Furthermore, most empirical research on integration, ethnic identity and transnationalism points to their interaction; however, they have not been analysed jointly in much of this research. Classic studies of integration concentrated on ethnicity and assimilation, whereas more recent ones, starting from the mid-1990s with the emergence of the transnationalism paradigm, take for granted the role of identity, or just focus on transnational identification, assuming its automatic existence in the transnational phenomena (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002).<sup>22</sup>

Another core argument for reviewing these three concepts is that this thesis is based on research on both the first and the second generation. Both these two groups are included in this research because, as was mentioned in Chapter 1, the Albanian migrants and their descendants are settling at the same time, whereas the main theories of second-generation integration give a high importance to the way the first generation integrates and how this in turn subsequently affects the second generation. Furthermore, the

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<sup>22</sup> This thesis was a collaboration with a research network which required joint supervision across the TIES partner countries. I was supervised by two other professors, Prof Michael Bommers and Prof Janine Dahinden, who were based in Germany and Switzerland respectively. The continental and especially the Germanic tradition is more theoretical than the UK or the US system. The extensive theoretical review was also affected by this tradition and the input of these two supervisors in its early stages.

second generation in my case are adolescents. This design also gives the possibility for research on intergenerational transmission, which is currently very understudied.

The main focus of the thesis is the integration of the second generation. The classic theories of second-generation integration are based on ethnicity in a certain biased way, and later on, have integrated transnationalism, although not systematically. It is, therefore, important to review these concepts in detail before seeing how they have been used in the theories and empirical research on the second generation, and before employing them in the analysis of the data of this project.

## **4.1 Key concepts and theories**

### ***4.1.1 Ethnic identity***

Ethnicity has had a distinct evolution as a term. Wimmer (2008) notes that academic discourse on the conceptualisation of ethnicity has evolved around two dichotomous terms: ‘primordialism’, based on the assumption that ethnic membership was acquired through birth and thus represented a ‘given’ characteristic of the social world; and ‘instrumentalism’, which posited that individuals choose between various identities according to self-interest. Nowadays, this dichotomy has been blurred and increasingly the two terms are not seen as mutually exclusive. By seeing the dichotomy through a cognitive lens, Brubaker *et al.* (2004) argue that the real difference between the primordial and the situational stance is that the former emphasises the tendency of participants to naturalise real or imputed human differences in the ways groups are conceived, while the situational approach can explain how ethnicity takes relevance in particular contexts and everyday interactions.

The developments on ethnicity from the primordial stance to the cognitive approach have been long and fragmented. It is important to note here the definition of ethnic groups by Max Weber (1976: 389) who maintained that ‘we shall call “ethnic groups” those human beings that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration; thus *belief* must be important for the propagation of group formation; conversely it doesn’t matter whether or not an objective blood relationship

exists' (*italics added*). A crucial moment was the introduction into this debate of the concept of boundaries by Barth (1969), who considered ethnicity a product of a social process, attributing thus a more active role to individuals' and groups' engagement in redefining their ethnicity, by seeing ethnic identity as defined by the combination of the view one has for oneself and the views of others about one's ethnic identity. Others have followed a similar line. For instance, Alba (2005: 22) maintains that ethnicity 'is a distinction that individuals make in their everyday lives that shapes their actions and mental orientations towards others; and it is typically embedded in a variety of social and cultural differences between groups that give an ethnic boundary concrete significance'. Jenkins (1997: 165) delineates the post-Barthian anthropological model of ethnicity based on several propositions:

- 'ethnicity is about cultural differentiation (bearing in mind that identity is always a dialectic between similarity and difference);
- ethnicity is concerned with culture—shared meaning—but it is also rooted in and is the outcome of social interaction;
- ethnicity is no more fixed than the culture of which it is a component or the situations in which it is produced and reproduced;
- ethnicity is both collective and individual, externalised in social interaction and internalised in personal self-identification'.

Jenkins (2004) furthermore points to the contrast between individual and collective (ethnic) identities by maintaining that the individual identity emphasises difference whereas the latter, similarity. By considering identity 'a practical accomplishment, a process', Jenkins (2004: 23) maintains that both individual and collective identities use a unified model of the dialectical interplay of processes of internal and external definition, with time and space being central to both these processes.

As signalled above, ethnicity is built on two major constructs: identity and culture (Nagel 1994). It is worth noting that the literature on identity is characterised by various strands that are based on different epistemological and disciplinary approaches working at different levels. Indeed, one could not agree more with Gilroy (1996: 224–225) who stylishly points to 'the passage into vogue' of identity and the 'academic mess' that surrounds the concept (see also Handler 1994). One of the most confusing and

analytically problematic approaches has been the ‘soft’ constructivist version which posits that identity is multiple, fluid and always changing, which raises questions on its operationability and usefulness as a research construct (Brubaker and Cooper 2000: 19; Todd 2005). Brubaker and Cooper (2000) in their explicit ‘attack’ acknowledge the importance of the developmental approach in establishing the term and at the same time ‘blame’ Erikson (1968) for the start of a saga of confusing terms and models that made identity an ambiguous analytical concept. They instead propose the use of three clusters of terms: identification and categorisation; self-understanding and social location; and commonality, connectedness and groupness. This reorganisation of the identity literature highlights the growing emphasis on the processes and agents that do the identifying, the cognitive awareness and the multiple forms and degrees of commonality and connectedness discussed under various types of collective identities (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). Relating identity with a shared culture and perceived common origin has been the way ethnic identity has been differentiated from other social identities (Barth 1969; Jenkins 1997; Levine 1999; Vermeulen and Govers 1994).

Ethnic identification, however, is not a ‘flat’ and uniform process across contexts and groups. Jenkins (1997) maintains that culture is taken for granted until the moment when identity is problematised along the interaction across the boundaries. Barth (1969: 14) furthermore recognised that the features that are proclaimed as distinct are not always objectively selected, but consist of those that the main actors regard as significant. The salience of ethnic categories can vary in different socio-cultural systems; they may be ‘inactive’ or may pervade social life—in general or selectively in limited sectors of activity. This view is furthermore elaborated by authors who relate ethnic identity and its performance to structure. While acknowledging these theoretical assumptions and the role of agency in identification processes, Nagel (1994: 155) maintains that ‘the chosen ethnic identity is determined by the individual's perception of its meaning to different audiences, its salience in different social contexts, and its utility in different settings’. She further notes that ethnicity is both the product of actions undertaken by ethnic groups as they shape and reshape their self-definition and culture, and the ‘outcome’ of external social, economic and political processes and actors that shape and reshape ethnic categories and definitions. This view partly reflects the ‘situational’ stance on ethnic identity which holds that ethnic identity is unstable over time and life-span, with different settings ‘activating’ different aspects of one’s possible group identities (Nagel 1994: 152).

But what are the factors and actors that influence identity formation and how do they combine in affecting the way that individuals and groups identify? Until recently, academic work on racial and ethnic identities has emphasised Barth's relational perspective and has considered these identities as the result on the one hand of a process of self-definition and on the other, of the construction of symbolic boundaries and assignment of collective identities by others (Lamont and Molnar 2002). However, most of the post-Barthian literature has overlooked the importance of external definition and social categorisation and has mostly analysed ethnicity based on internal definition and group identification. Neither Barth, nor the members of the Manchester School who developed the situational approach, have paid sufficient attention to the external constraints that condition ethnic identification. The main working concepts extensively used in the study of ethnic identity, such as 'boundaries' and 'choices', have proved to be useful to analyse the already established ethnic categories, but they do not explain how some ethnic categories are developed and engaged in social action (Levine 1999). This has been ordinarily associated with a conceptualisation of social relationships as egalitarian and conflict-free, based on equitable negotiations (Jenkins 1997).

External categorisation is, however, seen as framing and conditioning the internal malleable construction of identity at an individual level, and as a means used by political entrepreneurs to affect collective identification and modify collective action (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). Barth (1994) proposed a multiple-level approach, which entails a combination of the interpersonal interactions at the *micro* level, the processes that create collectivities at a *meso* level, and the role of state at the *macro* level.

Increasingly processes of identification are associated with issues of power. Barth (1994: 16), in his review of academic work on ethnic boundaries, maintains that the process of the construction of a boundary is a joint work shared between members of both contrasting groups, 'though they are probably differently empowered in their ability to impose and transform the relevant idioms'. This empowerment is related to the salience of ethnicity in local settings as a result of differentiation, which results in ethnicity becoming an integral part of an individual's point of view of selfhood starting in early primary socialisation. External categorisation, however, features as a very important factor in shaping ethnicity and the element through which power differentiations are expressed and materialised (Jenkins 1997; Sökefeld 2001).

This view is taken up by Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002), who furthermore emphasise that the anthropology of ethnic groups within modernising or industrial



nation-states tended to describe these as culturally different from the ‘majority’ population because of their varying historical origin, including their history of migration, rather than to see these differences as a consequence of the politicisation of ethnicity in the context of nation-state building itself. They point to the fact that the ‘politicisation of ethnicity’ was a central part of the nation-state project to define all those populations not thought to represent the ‘national culture’ as racially and culturally different, which contributed to efforts to build unity and identity.<sup>23</sup> A newer conceptualisation of ethnicity that followed maintains that ethnic boundaries are the outcome of the classificatory struggles and negotiations between actors situated in a social field and the behaviour and strategies of these actors are determined by three characteristics of a field: the institutional order, distribution of power, and political networks (Wimmer 2008: 970).

However, Levine (1999: 168) maintains that too much emphasis has been put on forces of personal development and calls for more attention to be dedicated to the interaction between mind, society and culture as a main factor influencing the engagement of ethnic categories. Levine’s view is part of the cognitive strand in studies of ethnicity, which criticises the tendency towards ‘groupism’ in conceptualising ethnic groups, taking them as the ubiquitous and elementary constituents of social life. Rather this movement concentrates on ‘group-making’ through activities of classification, categorisation and identification and considers groups as collective cultural representations (Brubaker and Cooper 2000: 45). The cognitive approach, with its emphasis on cultural representations and the involvement of the mind in the elaboration of ethnic categories, gained even more credit with the introduction of an interactional model of identity formation by Todd (2005). She gave full recognition to power relations and resource distribution as two important variables in explaining identity change. However, she notes that ‘if we posit a slowly changing “cultural sub-stratum” that may underlie more radical category change, we need a different model of how identity-categories function. We need to recognize not just the complex and varying meanings of these categories and their lack of fixed or foundational status, but also their social “embeddedness” and their personal “anchorage”, which allow change or stasis to occur out of phase with other variables, and to affect them in turn’ (2005: 433). The new model associated the process of identity formation and change with *intentionality*

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<sup>23</sup> As we saw in Chapter 2, this was certainly the case in Italy and Greece.

expressed in the incorporation of new elements of meaning and value while rearranging the old, or a combination of social practices in a new way, which leads to the production of different meanings. Todd (2005) maintains that the social constraints and the cognitive schemas rooted in early infancy are thought to condition this process, while calling for identity and culture to return into the models attempting to explain socio-cultural transformation.

On the other hand, wider social and cultural institutions and principles of social differentiation are thought to be strongly related to ethnic identity. Firstly, ethnicity is thought to be one of the many sources of identification overlapping with some important others, among which social class and gender feature strongly (Banton 2008; Jenkins 1997). Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992: 9) call not only for a distinction to be drawn between notions of ethnic identity and ethnicity, since the latter refers to a practical term expressing mobilisation on the basis of ethnic ideas, but also for the consideration of the intersections between ethnicity with class and gender, as other prime social divisions. Furthermore, this overlapping is seen to have implications in the process of external categorisation. Broader principles of social differentiation impact on the ability of certain actors to categorise others, especially on the basis of relations of power and authority (Jenkins 1997).

This is why the concept of boundaries is back to the fore in studies of identities in various disciplines, by emphasising the need to look at the intersections of multiple identities. Interestingly, the idea of boundaries related to socio-cultural differences within ethnic groups dates back to the 1960s, with Gordon (1964: 234) defining an ethnic group as ‘a large subsociety, criss-crossed by social class, and containing its own primary groups of families, cliques and associations—its own network of organizations and institutions’. However, as Çağlar (1997) maintains, in migration studies, ethnic identities (national or religious) are treated as the most basic identities that people possess, to the exclusion of other forms of identification, with ethnicity treated as the naturalised marker of an immutable cultural difference. Recent studies on ethnic and racial boundaries are increasingly focusing on the construction of collective identities and are attempting to elaborate models that link cognitive and cultural aspects with the social processes underlying ethno-racial boundary-making (Pachucki *et al.* 2007). The context-dependency of the nature of ethnic and racial boundaries was further supported by Alba (2005). He maintains that the process of defining the boundaries between immigrants and the natives depends both on features of the social and institutional

spheres of the host societies, and on the characteristics and histories of immigrant groups themselves. More importantly, Alba (2005) proposes the concept of boundary as useful in conducting cross-country comparative research in ethnic and racial studies—which of course my own study does.

The concept of boundaries, however, falls short in explaining the meaning, the content and the purposes that ethnic meanings serve. Nagel (1994: 162) points out that ethnic boundaries help us to understand who we are, but does not explain what we are, or, as she puts it, what fills ‘Barth’s vessel’ (see also Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992: 4). Here the concept of culture, seen itself as fluid and negotiated, proves useful in animating and authenticating the boundaries by assigning historical, ideological and symbolic systems of meaning. For this reason, both the concept of boundaries and that of identity are employed in this research, paying attention also to class and gender differences.

#### **4.1.2 Integration**

As this research encompasses different sites, groups and two different generations, a variety of concepts used to describe the process of immigration and settlement in the receiving country and beyond are relevant. It is important to recognise the existence of other concepts in relation to integration, not least because their definition and use have been built on the basis of progressive research based on early work in the field (see Gordon 1964: 60–68). Terms describing migrants’ insertion and settlement in the host society can be divided into groups of terms that refer to different *stages and modes* of integration, such as adaptation and acculturation. Other terms can be classified on the basis of the different *philosophies* they draw upon, such as incorporation and assimilation. Another division refers to terms describing the insertion into different *systems, networks and structures*, the most well-known being the distinction between structural and social integration (Engbersen 2003). In this section, the backbone of the discussion will be the concept of integration, seen as an ‘umbrella’ term that encompasses manifold other terms that refer to similar or connected processes.

Since the early stages of academic work in the field, integration has been conceptualised as a process through which a group becomes and functions as a part of a society. According to Gordon (1964: 246) ‘in social structural terms, integration

presupposes the elimination of hard and fast barriers in the primary group relations and communal life of the various ethnic groups of the nation'. However, the evolution of the terminology that describes migrants' patterns of settlement and interactions with the host society has been characterised by a 'politicisation' and an increased emphasis on government involvement. Nowadays integration rhetorics are associated with those on state policies, although the roles of migrants' agency and of the migrant communities are acknowledged as important factors (Thompson and Crul 2007).

The notion of integration has returned to the political and academic agenda as an alternative to another major concept, *assimilation*. Developed in the nineteenth century after the first wave of migrants, in the 1970s and 1980s assimilation was criticised by social scientists for its emphasis on the demands posed towards minority groups to abandon their cultural and ethnic identities and conform to the receiving society's ethnocentric cultural practices and norms (Joppke and Morawska 2003). As a result, the new notion of integration is conceptualised as a two-way or multiple process, based on mutual change—both from the receiving society and the minorities (Favell 2001). The other dimension of 'new' integration consists of a recognition of cultural plurality against the essence of the original assimilation which emphasised cultural absorption into the mainstream (Joppke and Morawska 2003).

Modern definitions of assimilation have observed these ideological changes and have moved away from the idea of integration as a process that forcefully overrules a minority ethnic group's distinctions. Alba and Nee (1997), in (re)defining the term, take a more 'agnostic' perspective regarding the object of assimilation and maintain that the process does refer to the involvement of the majority group. In order to avoid the pitfalls of earlier definitions, they define assimilation as 'the decline, and at its endpoint, the disappearance of an ethnic/racial distinction and the cultural and social differences that express it' and maintain that the direction of change will depend upon the minority group, the historical moment and the aspect of group difference under consideration (1997: 863–864). Different from its previous definition within the straight-line model of assimilation, the concept refers nowadays to a more complex process. Increasingly assimilation is associated with a segmented and multi-path model (Portes and Zhou 1993), which sees the incorporation of migrants as leading variously to upward assimilation into the middle class; downward assimilation into the lower class; and

‘enclave’ assimilation, which itself can display upward and downward intra-group trajectories (Morawska 2003: 134).<sup>24</sup>

The concept of incorporation, on the other hand, is seen as less politically inflected when compared to other major concepts, such as integration, inclusion, assimilation, etc. Thus it has been more used in some recent migration research (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2009), although it is not clear how this concept resolves the issues associated with the concept of integration.

Nevertheless, recently interest in assimilation has grown. Joppke and Morawska (2003) maintain that assimilation remains the key concept in explaining normatively the integration of migrants. This is especially so because of a growing emphasis within the assimilation debate put on the socio-economic equalisation of life-chances between immigrants and the natives, or the structural dimension of assimilation. This stance is supported by Brubaker (2001: 542) who has argued in favour of the ‘return of assimilation’. Brubaker considers assimilation as a process, rather than an end-state result of minority groups’ integration. This process is seen as taking place in a multi-generational immigrant population, without requiring individual-level changes, and its outcomes are rather heterogeneous, that is, they occur as changes in the features of a group in order to become similar to that of a reference population. These changes are especially expected in the socio-economic realm, as the new assimilation concept is now seen as not opposed to difference, but to segregation, ghettoisation and marginalisation.

A distinction between the dimensions of assimilation is important in understanding in depth the underlying dynamics of integration. The first typology was developed by Milton Gordon (1964: 70–71), who distinguished several sub-processes. Cultural assimilation or acculturation is given priority in Gordon’s model over other types of assimilation. This sub-process may take place even if other types of assimilation do not occur and is seen to be continuous. However, Gordon (1964) considers structural assimilation as a key sub-process as its occurrence, either simultaneously with or subsequent to the cultural one, leads to the other types of assimilation, while the opposite trend—cultural assimilation giving rise to structural assimilation—is not possible. Gordon’s model has since been reviewed and modified, with new models putting more emphasis on structural and economic dimensions of integration.

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<sup>24</sup> The concept of segmented assimilation is discussed in more detail later in this chapter, in the section on the integration of the second generation.

According to Alba and Nee (1997), Gordon's multidimensional account overlooked important forms of assimilation. Notably Alba and Nee (1997) further argue that such omission is vital as socio-economic mobility significantly impacts the social conditions necessary for the occurrence of other forms of assimilation.

The role of *structure* in producing social inequality features prominently in this way of conceptualising assimilation, as it is structure that conditions migrants' access to social resources and, consequently, the realisation of certain life options. Esser (2004) elaborated on this in his attempt to conceptualise a new theory on intergenerational integration. According to this conceptualisation, assimilation can refer both to social integration and to specific patterns of the social structure of a society. In terms of *social integration*, a process of individual assimilation can occur which takes the form of inclusion of individual migrants into subsystems of a host country associated with increased similarity with the native population regarding cultural traits, positioning in the labour market, intermarriage or emotional identification with the host society. Secondly, *structural integration* depends on certain aspects of a societal system: above all, social inequality and social differentiation. With regard to social inequality, assimilation refers to the complete disappearance of between-group variances in education, occupations and income between ethnic groups. Social differentiation, on the other hand, refers to weakening of ethnic institutionalisation or coding expressed in the decline of ethnic boundaries. The converse outcomes of structural assimilation can be ethnic inequality and ethnic differentiation which refer to the persistence of ethnic differences respectively to the horizontal dimension (e.g. lifestyle, similar professions) and the vertical dimension (e.g. differences in education, professions).

Two more concepts worth analysing in conjunction with assimilation include *acculturation* and *adaptation*. The definition of *acculturation* is characterised by similar issues to those of integration and assimilation; they revolve around the reference population compared to which acculturation takes place and the direction of change and its dimensions (Alba and Nee 1997; Berry 2003). In the model of Gordon (1964), acculturation features as one of the sub-processes of assimilation—that of cultural and behavioural assimilation. Gans (1997: 877), however, observes that acculturation is a faster process than assimilation and maintains that the difference between them is based on a more general distinction between culture and society. Accordingly, while acculturation refers to the newcomers' change of cultural patterns with reference to that of the host society, assimilation refers to the newcomers' shift of membership from

formal and informal ethnic associations and other social institutions into those of non-ethnic origin and agenda in the same society. *Adaptation*, on the other hand, consists of relatively stable changes that take place in individuals or groups. This concept is multifaceted, having psychological, socio-cultural and socio-economic dimensions. Each dimension is different in regard to the times and places they occur and the predictors to which they are related; however, they are both conceptually distinct and empirically related to some extent (Berry 2003: 30).

More than any other concept reviewed thus far, *multiculturalism* represents the converse agenda to assimilation. Multiculturalism is a fairly recent term that was first developed in the US in the 1960s as cultural pluralism, and then appeared in various forms in Canada, Australia, the UK and elsewhere (Glick Schiller 2004; Wieviorka 1998). Nowadays multiculturalism stands for a situation in a society in terms of demography, as a philosophy, and also as a policy agenda and practice (Parekh 2000). Furthermore, Joppke and Morawska (2003) distinguish between *de facto* and *official* multiculturalism. The former consists of a recognition of minority rights and design of policies that protect minorities within broad human rights and liberal political philosophies, and therefore common in liberal nation-states. Official multiculturalism on the other hand is much less widespread and it goes beyond *de facto* multiculturalism by engaging states in deliberately and explicitly recognising and protecting immigrants as distinct ethnic groups. Nevertheless, recently liberal states' integration policies have recognised two major changes: a move away from official multiculturalism, and the revalueing of citizenship. The latter is associated with a de-ethnicisation of citizenship and a move towards *jus soli* as a principle for the basis of naturalisation regimes (Joppke and Morawska 2003).

Apart from differences in the policy agenda, these debates have given rise to changes in the way that integration should be studied methodologically. These discussions are particularly relevant to my study due to its cross-cultural design. Although early definitions of concepts such as assimilation and acculturation as well-interpreted by Gordon (1964) refer to a two-sided process where two cultures meet and affect each other, migrants' integration processes have been expected to mostly happen as a minority group assimilating into the majority. This is based on a unified, reified concept of a state and society as unproblematic, and which is then under the threat of immigration and subsequent disintegration, although research has continuously shown that such a society does not exist (Favell 2001; Joppke and Morawska 2003). Currently

a trend in the migration and ethnic minority literature consists of research that leaves the majority population out of the picture or includes it as a source of discrimination. But this research neglects the factors that affect everyone alike, which can be related to age, gender and socio-economic status and not necessarily to differences in ethnic origin (Banton 2001: 159).

As a result, comparative frameworks and a focus on the city as a specific site of integration have been among recent developments in the conceptualisation and study of the term. Favell (2001) reminds us that comparative studies based on national context as the frame of reference have tended to reproduce national stereotypes. Similarly, Glick Schiller and Çağlar (2009) take a city approach, although they discuss this choice as a call to focus on locality at different scales. In the same line with these developments that reject nation-state as a container of society and as a unit of analysis for integration, other concepts such as cosmopolitanism, (super-)diversity and mobility have been developed. Cosmopolitanism refers to the capacity to relate to and ‘consume’ other cultures. This concept is thought to have the potential to ‘correct’ the issues related to methodological nationalism, and to reflect changes resulting from globalisation (Beck and Sznaider 2006; Vertovec and Cohen 2002). Vertovec (2007: 1049) notes that super-diversity is the outcome of different factors that mutually condition each other. Among these, legal status is considered a key feature and also an element of difference within the same ethnic group, leading to different social capital and socio-economic and ethnic ties to different members. In turn, mobility is seen as the antidote of place, being in itself a socialised movement (Cresswell 2006). Nevertheless, there have been issues related to such concepts concerning their concentration on elites. There have been claims, especially in the case of cosmopolitanism but less so in the other two, that these concepts ignore the power differentials that impact the access of different groups to practices they refer to (e.g. Beck 2002). Therefore, although these concepts will be part of my analysis in this thesis, they will not be central to it, since they are not deemed to be appropriate for the analysis of the integration processes of new immigrant groups and their descendants in new immigration contexts.

Rather, as will be discussed in the last chapter, I will explain the integration dynamics through the concepts of agency, capital and power. Different forms of *capital* impact on the integration of both the first and the second generation, with the capital disposed and transmitted by the first generation affecting the integration of the second generation. Because this is an empirical conclusion I do not associate my analysis with



any particular scholarship on capital, but see capital as a utilitarian resource which is either harnessed and enhances integration, or is lacking by the first and the second generation and leads to marginalisation and exclusion. On the other hand, capital is inter-related with power and agency, with the possession of capital resting on the basis of power, and with power marking agency (Bourdieu 1989). These ‘mega’ concepts have been integrated in migration research, but they have not been the basis of significant theoretical developments in the field. In his recent review article, Bakewell (2010) maintains that migration theories have either overestimated the role of agency or structure, or gone for the middle ground, but on all occasions the actual impact that these constructs have on migration processes has not been analysed in depth. Other questions remain unanswered regarding the role of capital and power. To what extent does capital impact on the integration of immigrants and their descendants? What is the perception respectively of the first and second generation on capital and power and on their importance in terms of integration? What are the characteristics of intergenerational transmission in this case? These questions are little studied in migration research. My thesis makes a modest contribution to illuminating some answers, based on my detailed empirical evidence.

#### ***4.1.3 Transnational ties***

The terms ‘transnationalism’ and ‘transnational community’ became formal in academia in the 1990s, as migration scholars started to insist that, rather than two separate domains, the homeland and the home country were interconnected transnationally in terms of the economic, social, political and cultural affairs that migrants were involved in. These ‘affairs’ were found to be sustained, sometimes regular or more situational, involving both migrants and their descendants and operating at different levels (Morawska 2003: 134).

Debates on transnationalism are placed within a broader discourse on the nation-state and its role as a regulator and determinant of social and political life dynamics. Levitt and Jaworsky (2007: 133) conclude that the literature on transnationalism acknowledges the role of the state in shaping transnational practices, by enabling or constraining migrants’ political claims, but they conceive the relationship between the state and migrants as multiple and not disappearing or one-sided. Others maintain that, rather

than being weakened by immigrants' transnationalism, the receiving state is still a major actor in influencing the intensity, forms and directions of transnationalism (Joppke and Morawska 2003). The emergence of the term came also as a response to 'methodological nationalism' and a certain bounded view of society and culture associated with it (Glick Schiller 2004; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002).

Glick Schiller *et al.* (1995: 50) maintain that the conduct of transnational lives is related to three main contextual factors: the history of immigration and the modes in which immigrants are received in the host country; migrants' cultural resources; and discrimination and hostility faced by an immigrant group. Generally speaking, large-scale and/or politically motivated migrations give rise to transnationally oriented migrant communities. The cultural resources of a migrant group are found to shape their transnational practices, such as the type of ethnic niches they occupy, or political activities that connect with home countries. Finally, a high degree of discrimination in the receiving country is associated with 'reactive transnationalism' or a tendency towards engagement in activities that reaffirm migrants' collective identity and open up opportunities for niche-based economic prosperity (Faist 2000a). More recently, Dahinden (2009: 11), while reaffirming that there is a relationship between mobility and transnationalism, adds a 'time element' to these findings, although she cautions us to distinguish between different forms of transnationalism.<sup>25</sup> She found that the longer the migrants stay in the receiving country, the less transnational they are, and the strength and the proportion of transnational ties diminishes as the duration of stay increases—an argument that supports assimilation theory. At an individual level, the degree and kind of transnational engagement are conditioned by several factors, such as gender, social class, migration channel, legal status, economic means, migration and settlement history. These factors are often found combined with others related to community structure, gendered patterns of contact and political circumstances in the homeland (Pessar and Mahler 2003; Vertovec 2009).

Academically, the field of transnational studies is fragmented and coherent theoretical frames to define transnationality are missing (Yeoh *et al.* 2003). In an attempt to ascertain the authority of the term, Vertovec (2001, 2009: 4–13) maintains that both theory and research on transnationalism have been grounded upon rather distinct conceptual premises. He emphasises six of them, which overlap and are

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<sup>25</sup> As for the time element, Guarnizo *et al.* (2003) found that political transnationalism increases with time in migration.

interdependent: social morphology, types of consciousness, modes of cultural reproduction, avenues of capital, sites of political engagement, and (re)construction of place and locality. A clearer and more relevant classification is that of Faist (2000b: 202–210) who refers to the density of ties and linkages and offers a classification based on three groups: transnational kinship groups, which are characterised by reciprocity and are typical especially for many first-generation labour migrants and refugees; transnational circuits which are based on the principle of instrumental reciprocity and consist of a constant circulation of goods, people and information across the sending and receiving countries; and transnational communities, which go beyond kinship systems and consist of dense and strong social and symbolic ties over time and across space.

However, much less is spoken about transnational identities, and culture seems to be ‘lost in the move from the old to the new country’ (Levitt 2005: 51). This is slightly surprising since Vertovec (2001) points out that transnationalism is also about modes of cultural reproduction, associated with a fluidity of constructed styles, social institutions, and everyday practices. Levitt (2005: 51) maintains that research on race, ethnicity and immigration has mainly focused on the transition from the old culture to the new, and argues for ‘bringing culture back in’. She describes social life and institutions under the influence of transnationalism as undergoing fundamental changes while giving rise to new cultural practices and institutions, which furthermore feed back to existing cultural conventions.

On transnationalism and culture, Glick Schiller (2004: 450) argues that the development of the transnational paradigm has helped to reconceptualise the terms against existing definitions based on the idea of culture as discrete, stable and historically specific. Transnationalism scholarship has deployed a broader and boundless concept of culture which is based on elements such as social relations, social structure and a set of inter-generationally transmitted patterns of action, belief and language. These arguments, however, seem not to fully address the need to move away from a bounded notion of culture. Reviewing the literature on diaspora and transnationalism, Nagel (2001: 250) proposes a reconceptualisation of culture as a ‘constant production and reproduction of social meanings through relationships of power, located not only in the nation-state but also in households, neighborhoods, workplaces’. Olwig (2003) likewise maintains that the notion of cross-border arenas of transnational processes defined against the notion of nation-state bring the danger of

narrowing down the field of investigation. Rather, a broader approach that focuses on socio-cultural systems in relation to migrants' life trajectories and fields of interpersonal ties, while considering also the national and transnational structures that condition the migratory movements, is needed.

The concept of transnational social spaces has been an important development in the study of transnationalism (Vertovec 2001). Different authors opt for the suffixes *field* or *space*. Pries (2001: 21) emphasises the stability and pluri-locality of social spaces and defines them as 'configurations of social practices, artifacts and systems of symbols that are characterized and defined by their density and importance in time and geographical space'. Faist (2000a) furthermore observes that transnational social spaces develop in two phases: in the beginning they are the outcome of international migration of mainly the first generation, while in a second phase they are passed on to migrants' descendants and seem to develop a life of their own. During their migration history, which often involves recurrent migration and transnational movements, international migrants are involved in transnational exchanges and build multiple ties of familial, economic, social, religious, cultural and political nature on the basis of which there are various forms of resources and capital.

On the other hand, the concept of transnational social *fields* uncovers another essential element in the way transnational processes are conceptualised: that of the level of interaction and subjectivity. Levitt (2005), recognising the simultaneity of migrants' activities, calls for a move away from the neat division of migrants' connections into local, national, transnational and global. Simultaneity applies also to these different levels of interaction, as social fields are not only multi-layered crossings of nation-states, but while making and unmaking relationships and ties within these fields, migrants are influenced by laws, social institutions and conventions which operate locally, nationally, internationally, and globally. On examining the *simultaneity* of migrants' incorporations in both sending and receiving countries, however, we should consider that home- and host-country socio-economic and status ladders do not always operate on the same principles and criteria. Consequently, migrants often face different opportunity structures in home and host societies, and may move up or down the ladder in respect to one of the two, or experience downward or upward mobility in both of them (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007: 139). The Albanian experience shows that many well-educated migrants experience de-skilling and de-valuation of their human capital through only being able to access low-status jobs in destination countries.

In developing the concept of transnational social fields, Glick Schiller (2004) adds a more subjective element, distinguishing *transnational ways of being* from *transnational ways of belonging*. Transnational ways of being consist of instances of behaviour through which people conduct or are related to transnational activities. On the other hand, transnational ways of belonging tell us about cultural representation, ideology and identity related to these activities. These are processes of an emotional nature, through which people connect to different locations bound together by a common destiny and history, through memory, nostalgia and imagination. Pessar and Mahler (2003: 815) implicitly suggest that both ways of being and ways of belonging are affected by people's social locations within 'gendered geographies of power'. The differentiation is firstly expressed through different access to migration; and gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, class, sexuality and so on condition ways of thinking about migration. Although under-researched, issues of power are thought to have considerable relevance for the current dynamics of transnational processes and are expected to persist in creating uneven trends in these processes (Glick Schiller 2004; Vertovec 2009). In this study, this distinction between *transnational ways of being* from *transnational ways of belonging* developed by Glick Schiller (2004) will be the basis of the interpretation of the data since they are considered less vague than the concepts of transnational social spaces and fields, and therefore, more suitable for empirical research (see also Snel *et al.* 2006: 288). The concept of diaspora is also considered secondary to this project since, as will be shown in Chapters 5 and 6, there is little by way of a strong Albanian community in any of the three cities; nor is there a symbolic identification, belongingness to a common homeland and shared past or a common current or future destiny among Albanian migrants and their descendants (Clifford 1994).

It looks like cognition on the one hand, and the 'classics' such as gender, class and race/ethnicity on the other, have re-established themselves by finding recognition as a bunch of factors shaping transnational processes. However, a more 'spatial' approach can also be noted here. Pries (2001: 28) is explicit in his call for rethinking the relationship between the social and the spatial, claiming that the spatial should be recognised as an independent force in affecting the social. Peraldi's approach is enlightening in presenting a particular account of migration and mobility. The case of 'suitcase traders' and the trading routes that connect northern and southern shores of Mediterranean shows that the nation-state cannot 'contain' the cultural dynamics, social and professional careers and their positionality in various networks. These traders'

mobility shows that their sociability is not organised in relation to territories but to several localities, while their ‘universe’ is made up of scattered urban and metropolitan spaces. Such mobilities appear as ‘marked with the triple seal of emancipation, deterritorialisation and transnationalism’ and give rise to sequential and irregular geographies of migrant diasporas under the effect of globalisation (Peraldi 2005: 60; 2007). Therefore, both the analysis of integration and that of identity and transnationalism will be conducted considering their relations to space.

#### ***4.1.4 Intergenerational transmission***

The inclusion of the first generation in this thesis reflects the fact that literature on the relationship between generations is limited, although its relevance to migration is manifold. Condon (2009) relates intergenerational relationships to major events in the migration process: the migration decision, the maintenance of family relationships in the place of origin during migration, and the integration of the second generation. As these events are interrelated, intergenerational transmission among migrants and their families in the receiving country is found to have particular features (Phalet and Schönplflug 2001).

Much of the existing, limited literature on intergenerational transmission between immigrants and their descendants is characterised by quantitative studies conducted at a macro level and based on large datasets on the performance of the first generation and how that affects the economic integration and socio-economic mobility of the second generation (e.g. Borjas 1992, 1993). Condon (2009), on the other hand, maintains that the relationship between different generations has particular relevance to the family sphere. However, more-culturally oriented studies have also appeared in the form of surveys based on large samples (Phinney and Vedder 2006; Schönplflug 2001). These studies have emphasised inter-group differences and the role of the context and structure in intergenerational transmission. Phalet and Schönplflug (2001) base their study on transmission of values of collectivism and achievement between generations of immigrants and their descendants on two main assumptions. Firstly, they acknowledge the potential conflict in the process because of the differences in the cultural frameworks in the host society and the sending country. They also, secondly, note that transmission of values can be regarded as more important amongst immigrant families

compared with the natives. Taking the case of Turkish families in Germany and the Netherlands, compared to Moroccan families in the Netherlands, they noticed differences in the context, content, mediation process and intensity of intergenerational transmission.

The role of the context has been disputed in other research, which has emphasised the role of capital transmitted from the first generation—human and cultural in particular. For example, Schönplflug (2001) hypothesised that, because of the differences between the culture of the sending and receiving country, the intergenerational transmission in immigrant families will be either dysfunctional, or successful but leading to segregation from the majority culture. This has been a major assumption of intergenerational transmission studies, which are based on the belief that migration disrupts the transmission process, especially when the culture of the host country is very different from the original one. Schönplflug researched the content of transmission and the ‘transmission belts’—the factors that can enhance the transmission—focusing on fathers and sons, working with families in Turkey and with Turkish-origin families in Germany. She hypothesised that, in a discontinuous cultural context, parents are less motivated to transmit their standards and attitudes to the next generation. However, she found that continuity in the cultural context does not enhance intergenerational transmission. Rather, it was the father’s education level that moderated the intergenerational transmission, with parents’ values found to be transmitted more significantly in families with high and middle-level education, but not in those with low education. Adolescence appeared to be a strong determinant of the intergenerational transmission dynamics, with early and middle adolescence being the most favourable for an effective transmission of values, making the inclusion of intergenerational transmission in the study even more important. More importantly, there is a typical tendency in the second-generation literature in general to see parents as a ‘constant’—both culturally and in terms of settlement and spatial mobility. Migrant parents are seen as unchangeable and as the standard to measure the differences with the children’s new identities, whereas the dynamic life experience of parenthood is totally ignored. Getting married, becoming parents, getting old—all these life-course milestones of the first generation are not taken into consideration when intergenerational transmission is studied.

In order to analyse the intergenerational transmission, the operationalisation of Phalet and Schönplflug (2001) is adopted as a guiding tool. They studied

intergenerational transmission in terms of content and the characteristics of the mediation process. However, questions on intergenerational transmission were conceptualised as open-ended and the goal was to investigate the process as whole. Complementary to the quantitative research available on the topic, my research aims to see whether parents are prone to transmit to their children and what, how transmission varies through time and on different topics, how patterns of integration of the first generation affect the intergenerational transmission to their children and *vice versa*.

#### ***4.1.5 Interactions between ethnic identity, integration and transnationalism***

The way that the interactions between identification, integration and transnationalism is shown in the literature has been affected by academic ideologies and paradigms. On the one hand, Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002) warn against a ‘groupist’ way of thinking in viewing and studying migrant transnational social fields. They maintain that the term ‘community’ in the study of transnationalism has been ambiguously used as standing for sets of networks, without questioning the importance of ethnicity and a collective memory in their creation and maintenance. On the other hand, according to Glick Schiller (2004), development of assimilation as the ‘master’ concept to explain immigrants’ integration did not pay attention to the role of transnational ties, despite a recognition since the early times of migration research that many immigrants learnt to identify with their ancestral land only after they settled in the receiving country. Similarly, multiculturalism made no mention of transnational ties, although it acknowledged the persistence of cultural differences and identities among some sectors of the immigrant populations even in the ‘post-migration’ generations. Following the same line of argument, although both the new assimilation theory and the segmented assimilation approach acknowledge the role of the country and context of origin in their discussions of the migrants’ (non-)integration in the host country, it was only after the 1990s that transnational migration scholars added migrants’ transnational engagement as a third perspective to these conversations (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007).

Three main assumptions frame the relationship between ethnic identity, integration and transnational ties. The *first assumption* relates to classic assimilation theory—migrants ultimately assimilate into the host society’s culture (Gans 1992). *Secondly*, several authors maintain that assimilation and the maintenance of ethnic identity and



transnational ties are not necessarily mutually exclusionary processes, but they can co-exist (Itzigsohn and Giorguli-Saucedo 2002; Levitt and Waters 2002). Gans (1997) maintains that ethnic identity is even compatible with assimilation, taking the case of ethnic activists who live public 'ethnic' lives, but assimilated private ones. This points to Vertovec's (2009: 80) presentation of the relationship between transnationalism and integration not as a zero-sum game. Various modes or components of each of these constructs can be selectively combined by migrants. Gans's ideas on acculturation and relationships with other constructs are also in line with recent developments on the role of culture and immigrants' assimilation. Levitt (2005) maintains that in the beginning researchers were more interested in the process of immigrant incorporation and paid little attention to the cultural elements that were transformed along the way. Rather, culture and cultural influences were studied under the term ethnicity and, with the latter's decline, the role of culture was rather ignored.

As the immigration literature shows, historically the process of identification with and involvement in the host societies has gone hand-in-hand with engagement in transnational spaces. Trajectories are found to include different patterns of integration into different layers of the receiving society's hierarchies, or variously labelled upward and downward mobility and ethnic enclave embeddedness, which apply to both immigrants and their descendants (Joppke and Morawska 2003).

Consequently, nowadays the discussion of transnationalism is closely related with the concept of ethnic identity or with patterns and processes of integration. Yeoh *et al.* (2003) point to the main developments in the field of transnationalism as being focused firstly on the 'shape' of transnationality, its 'edges' and the processes and relations which constitute them, and secondly on exploring what constitutes identity formation and identity politics in transnational social spaces. On this second point Vertovec (2001) maintains that many migrants' transnational networks of exchange and participation are grounded upon a perceived common identity. Dahinden (2009) found that 'ethnicisation' and the type of identification are related to migration history and reasons for emigrating. The act of migrating and the reasons related to it appear to strengthen ethnic belonging, giving rise to a kind of uniculturalist transnational subjectivity. Other research, on the other hand, relates mobility and transnationalism with the role of family and kin, although the role of the later is still very under-studied. By concentrating on gender, Pessar and Mahler (2003) show how people's circles of kin

and friends that stretch beyond borders continue to impact their gender and social positionality.

The *third assumption* is that the process of integration is seen to be associated with different patterns of immigrant transnationalism which consequently means that the two processes go in parallel, but with a different pace. These differences are also marked among migrants of different socio-economic status and operate similarly at the local level of integration (Dahinden 2009). In particular, exclusion and disadvantage are thought to be related with transnational orientation. From the very beginning, the new immigrant transnationalism was conceptualised as a strategy of resistance ‘from below’ that members of marginalised and unprivileged racial or ethnic groups posed against the hegemonic powers of nation-states that regulated both their economic and political activities and conditioned their symbolic activities and commitments. However, the way that different migrant groups have reacted towards disadvantage has varied; they have combined strategies of challenging their status, retreating to their transnational identities, and even adopting the dominant society’s negative stereotypes of themselves (Joppke and Morawska 2003). Elements of this last strategy can be observed amongst Albanians in Italy and Greece (King and Mai 2008: 208–209), as I will show in later chapters.

A final point is that most of the literature on the interactions between identity, integration and transnationalism draws on the experiences of the first generation. However, as pointed out by Portes (1999), the most dynamic part of the interaction between ethnic identity, integration and transnational ties takes part in the case of the children of migrants, especially as regards socio-cultural integration. Following this line of argument, the next section reviews existing research on the second generation.

## **4.2 The ‘second generation’**

### ***4.2.1 Theories on the integration of the second generation***

The term ‘second generation’ refers to a very heterogeneous group. Several authors have argued for a cautious use of the term in order to avoid methodological and conceptual problems related to it. Portes (1994) notes that the use of pan-ethnic labels

fails to distinguish between native-born and foreign-born and overlooks the empirical diversity of the group. As King *et al.* (2006) observe, there is a loose agreement when referring to the second generation, namely native-born children of immigrants, plus foreign-born children who arrived before primary school. However, further attempts to specify the group have produced terms like the 1.75, 1.5, 1.25 (Rumbaut 1997) and the 2.5 generation (Casacchia and Natale 2007), referring to the foreign-born children arriving before the age of 6, between 6 and 12 and after 12, and children of mixed marriages, respectively. A more recent trend is shown in the work of several authors (for instance Fibbi *et al.* 2007; Marques *et al.* 2007) who use the term rather symbolically or who refer to the ‘children of immigrants’. In this study I use two different parameters in defining generation. Apart from the classic one used by the second-generation literature, I refer to the definition of Kertzer (1983: 128) who defines generation as ‘a relational concept bound to the realm of kinship and descent’. Furthermore, I also incorporate the meaning of generation put forward by Eckstein (2002) who maintains that generations are defined by different social conditions they experience in their pre- and post-migration times.

Original theoretical models explaining the second generation’s identification and integration processes have taken a strong ethnic stance. The straight-line assimilation theory assumed that the more time spent in the ‘host’ country, the more likely it would be that the second generation would identify ethnically with the dominant group (Waters 1990). Similarly, the ‘second generation decline’ framework developed by Gans in 1992 is based on the assumption that, facing discrimination, the second generation would turn to their ethnicity of origin and create reactive sub-cultures based on a low consideration for educational and job market performance, opposing the mainstream. Ethnicity was also a central framework in developing some key concepts on the identification patterns of the descendants of migrants, such as ‘optional’ (Waters 1990), ‘symbolic’ (Gans 1994) and ‘situational’ (Le Espiritu 1992) ethnicity. It should be noted that these approaches take an assimilationist perspective and the empirical evidence they refer to speaks about the third and fourth generation of immigrants in the US or cases when ‘quantitative transformations of ethnic consciousness’ have happened over decades (Le Espiritu 1992: 2). There has been increasing recognition in the literature of within-group differences in terms of ethnic identification and a move to a more complex and nuanced approach is evident (Kasinitz *et al.* 2004; Song 1997).

However, scholars have increasingly expanded their focus when theorising the

determinants and outcomes of the integration process of the second generation. 'Classical assimilation' theory, a model formulated in the US context of the 'old' immigration from Europe, seemed too simplistic for the new conditions many of the post-1965 immigrants and their descendants had to face (Zhou 1997a). The theoretical argumentation of straight-line assimilation has been strongly opposed by some, based both on historical grounds and on cross-national comparisons (Waldinger and Perlmann 1998). Meanwhile, the observation of Gans (1992: 175) that 'the line of the theory has not always been straight and bumpy-line theory might be a more apt term', was empirically supported by Portes and Zhou (1993). They also referenced ethnicity, but noted three alternative pathways for the second generation: assimilation into the poor underclass, acculturation and integration into the native middle class, and rapid upward social advancement relying on a strong ethnic community. Utilising evidence from the experience of different ethnic groups in California, they put forward the theory of 'segmented assimilation', which attempts to explain the factors that determine into which segment of American society an immigrant group is to assimilate (Zhou 1997a). The experience of the Punjabi Sikhs in Northern California revealed that the effects of a disadvantaged starting point, coupled with strong discrimination and racism, could be buffered with the help of social and material capital from the first generation. However, this strategy of selective acculturation—strong ethnic community cohesiveness as a source of pride to counteract discrimination—seemed not to work in the case of other ethnic groups. The case of Mexicans in Central California showed what Gans (1992) named as 'second generation decline': a 'lost race' between first-generation achievements and second-generation expectations, leading to an orientation towards a reactive sub-culture as a means of protection against discrimination, which furthermore inhibits the upward social mobility of the second generation (Portes and Zhou 1993: 89).

Does the theory of 'segmented assimilation' capture the whole picture of the second generation's integration dynamics? Some of the most important 'gaps' in the theory are thought to be associated with its lack of recognition of differences *within* ethnic groups and of *gendered patterns* of integration (Waldinger and Perlmann 1998). Furthermore, European scholars point to the irrelevance of the theory in the European context, due to the marked differences between national contexts in the continent (Crul and Vermeulen 2003a). However, as recognised by Zhou (1997a), 'segmented assimilation' is a middle-range theory that tries to explain why different immigrant groups face destinies of

convergence and divergence, and describes the patterns and factors associated with these differential outcomes. It predicts that the possible determinants of integration outcomes are manifold, including factors at an individual and contextual level.

In effect, the ‘emancipation’ of theorising the integration of the second generation has followed the same line of conceptualisation. A recent view holds that the paths to integration diverge in various ways relating to structure, culture and personal agency, and the outcome of the integration process is much decided from their interplay in a particular context (Thomson and Crul 2007). Neither did the ‘national context’ theories—the citizenship and institutional approach—put forward by the European scholars, ‘survive’ the diversity and dynamics of the actual integration patterns of the second generation. The citizenship view takes a macro approach and focuses on the effects of the various national models of integration and the resultant impact on the integration of immigrants (Joppke 1999). In contrast, the institutional approach observes that the probability of underclass formation is linked to the opportunities that the national institutional arrangements for educational and labour market transition offer to the second generation (Crul and Vermeulen 2003a), and that there is not a direct relationship between the national models of integration and educational and labour market performance (Crul and Vermeulen 2003b).

This theoretical emancipation is also associated with an evolution of the concept of integration and a focus on the local level to better understand integration processes. Thus, despite an ongoing heated debate on its definition, integration is increasingly understood as both an organic process, shaped by factors operating at an individual and collective level, and a process which is conditioned by key events or legislative changes (Thomson and Crul 2007). As mentioned above, an important ‘gap’ in second-generation research, however, is noted regarding intergenerational transmission. The topic has been the focus of some research in the 1980s (as reviewed by Zhou 1997b). However, the studies are very limited and there is still need for more research on identifying the mechanisms and dynamics of this process (Nauck 2001; Portes 1999).

A more transgressive approach notes that, when investigating the factors that affect the integration process of the second generation, literature has primarily relied on a single frame of reference—the host society’s socio-economic traits and categories (Levitt 2009; Louie 2006). It is only recently that scholars have started focusing on ties that the second generation establishes with the ‘homeland’ or its cultural heritage (e.g. Rumbaut 2002), and the potential role that these variables can play in shaping the

integration process of the second generation in the host society (Levitt and Waters 2002). However, while it is widely recognised that the formative years of second-generation children are characterised by a process of reconciliation of the values of their country of ancestry held by their parents with those of the country where they live, the positioning of transnational ties in the literature on the second generation remains ambiguous (Wessendorf 2007a).

In the case of second-generation teenagers, as Reynolds (2004) observes, transnational ties lead to and become a form of ‘cultural hybridity’. This can encourage the construction of multiple ethnic identities, associated with a ‘de-essentialising’ process of ethnicity (see Wessendorf 2007a). Thus, rather than being fixed in their ethnicity, the process of identification among the second generation is characterised by constant negotiations of their identity by referring to multiple frames of belongingness—‘homeland’, ‘host country’ or even cosmopolitan references—and, moving away from a primary focus on ethnicity, by plural social systems in which they grow up (Colombo *et al.* 2009a; Wessendorf 2007a). Yet, viewing transnationalism and maintenance of ethnic identity as constantly co-existing phenomena would be rather premature. For example, De Vries (1999: 41) notes that the ethnicity of the Dutch Eurasians is ‘a highly individualised form of ethnicity, one constructed without close contact with the co-ethnics and without considerable participation in an institutionalised ethnic life’.

Consequently, an important question concerning transnationalism is whether transnational ties are a first-generation phenomenon or ties that persist in the second generation (Jones-Correra 2002; Vertovec 2001). A general view holds that assimilation is more emphasised in the second generation and the maintenance of transnational ties by the children of immigrants is less uniform and expressed in different forms of engagement, depending on parents’ socio-economic class and context of integration (Morawska 2003). However, in contrast to other research conducted in the US, which shows that only a small percentage of second-generation respondents are involved in transnational practices (Jones-Correra 2002), Zontini (2007) notes that intensive transnational experiences can be found among second-generation adults in the Italian migrant community in the UK. Furthermore, Foner (2002) concludes that the current second generation will most probably be more involved in transnational practices than the previous ones. As Reynolds (2004) observes, taking her cue from the experience of Caribbean families in the UK, the availability of telecommunications and other new

electronic forms of communication has given great opportunities to young people to establish regular contact with family and friends living in other parts of the world. Parker and Song (2007) similarly highlight the role of the Internet in providing new diasporic public spheres, stimulating new forms of self-expression, collective identity formation and social action of the British Chinese in the UK.

Regarding the impact of transnational ties on the integration of the second generation, Foner (2002: 249) writes that 'second-generation transnationalism is likely to be a mixed blessing'. Transnational ties can provide a 'safety net' to the second generation and serve as a resource activated against exclusion and lack of social capital in the 'host society'. At the same time, transnational experiences can obstruct the strategies of the second generation to integrate and pose challenging demands on family responses. Portes (1999: 472) emphasises the positive effect of transnational ties of the second generation in buffering discrimination. He points to the role of transnational activities in facilitating successful adaptation to the first generation and 'softening' the demanding and relentless process of acculturation for the second generation that often leads children to a forced assimilation, associated with the abandonment of their parental languages, unconditional adaptation to the norms and styles of the host culture and internalisation of a feeling of belongingness to an inferior place in the social hierarchy. Morawska (2003) offers a useful summary of the combined patterns of transnationalism and assimilation of the second generation in the US, building on comparisons between mainstream middle-class/upwardly mobile and lower-class/underclass first and second generation. She highlights differences in terms of ethnic identities performed, types of transnational ties/involvement and transnational activities in the 'homeland'. Furthermore, the transnational orientation of the second generation is found to change during the life course, starting to develop and peaking in adolescence, falling in adulthood with the introduction of marriage and children, and then further gaining importance in middle-age and later life (Jones-Correra 2002).

To quote now from some specific empirical examples, Louie (2006: 566) observes that multiple frames of reference inform the identity formation of second-generation adolescents and their views on education. She studied the ethnic and transnational orientations of Dominican and Chinese minorities in the US and found that they referred to ethnic and pan-ethnic frames both in assessing their own educational attainment and mobility against their co-ethnic peers in the US and 'homeland', and as a means to reconcile their marginalised incorporation into the US along ethnic lines. Zinn (2005)

looks at transnational links of a small sample of second-generation Albanian children as a source of better adaptation in Italy, in line with other studies which look at transnational ties as a resource employed by the second generation to counteract discrimination in the 'host country' (Levitt and Waters 2002). Zinn notes that, while practical and institutional arrangements in the 'host country' pose challenges for the future maintenance of these links, the second generation's experience on visits in the 'homeland' included also instances of encountering barriers and difficulties to be accepted by the Albanian society. In turn, studies of transnationalism of the second generation in adulthood have also been associated with 'roots migration' or migration of the second generation to the parents' country of origin. Wessendorf (2007b) has studied the case of the Italian second generation in Switzerland and shows that intensive transnational experiences during childhood and adolescence can have a strong impact on the second generation's future life choices which go beyond identification with the ethnic community and can materialise into return migration (see also Christou 2006; Smith 2002).

Increasingly, however, the literature on the second generation's transnationalism is turning to a more integrated approach in criticising research that conceptualises generation as lineal, draws boundaries between the transnational and integrational experiences of different generations and overlooks various implications of growing up in transnational social fields for the second generation. In a detailed summary, Levitt and Jaworsky (2007) draw attention to the fact that, despite the existence and the frequency of transnational activities and visits, being raised in transnational social fields gives the second generation certain skills and social connections which can be activated at different stages of the life cycle. More recently, Levitt (2009) notes that the transnational experiences of the second generation consist, in effect, of an integral part of growing up in a new destination. Second-generation adolescents, according to her, are not just passive receivers of the host society's culture and observers of homeland traditions; living a transnationalised adolescence, they create their own practices which leave a legacy to younger immigrant-origin teenagers. Orellana *et al.* (2001: 578) furthermore suggest that, rather than being their parents' 'luggage', the existence of children is central to families' decision-making processes; either directly or indirectly, children fundamentally condition the families' migration and transnational experience.



#### **4.2.2 The European second generation**

Whilst theorising the integration of the second generation has so far been dominated by US scholars, research on the second generation in Europe is rapidly developing. However, the research material in the two continents differs, due to several factors (Crul and Vermeulen 2003a). For example, the danger of ‘underclass’ formation as an end-result of downward mobility, though common to both debates, seems particularly prominent in the US in view of specific features of the American economy, society and urban structure. As Waldinger and Perlmann (1998) observe, there is a strong focus on the economic structure in the American literature while other factors (e.g. demography) are almost ignored. This is seen to create a tendency among American scholars to see ethnic groups as homogeneous, which fails to capture the diversity of immigrants in Europe in terms of education, social class and religion (Thomson and Crul 2007; Timmerman *et al.* 2003).

It should be mentioned that ‘segmented assimilation’—the model based on the divergent ways in which ethnic groups integrate into a receiving society—has inspired some initial research in Europe. However, scholars observe that, rather than a ‘segmented assimilation’, there is a ‘spotty’ social mobility across generations of immigrants in Europe (Simon 2003; Timmerman *et al.* 2003; Worbs 2003). As a result, European scholars are questioning whether a return to a modified form of ‘classical assimilation’ would better explain the integration patterns of the second generation in Europe (Thomson and Crul 2007). Furthermore, findings on the role of the ethnic community in the European second generation do not always support the ‘ethnicity as social capital’ assumption, which constitutes one of the pillars of the segmented assimilation hypothesis. This is particularly supported by research findings that show clear differences within ethnic groups along gender lines. Several studies conducted in different European countries found that the Turkish second generation is faring less well in education today compared to other ethnic groups, due to its ‘closure’ which puts serious obstacles especially to the advancement of girls (e.g. Crul and Vermeulen 2003a; Timmerman *et al.* 2003). Similarly, Worbs (2003) observes that there are gender-specific obstacles that deter second-generation women’s upward mobility. She found that participation rates in vocational training and employment of the second generation in Germany are lower for young women of immigrant origin, although women achieve higher educational levels than men.

Thirdly, an original development in the European scholarship is the focus on the role of the national and institutional context, mostly ignored in the US, although cross-national studies are still needed to better understand the impact of the national context on the positioning of the second generation across Europe (Crul and Vermeulen 2003a). Crul and Vermeulen (2003b) compared the integration indicators of the Turkish second generation across Europe and found significant differences in the opportunities that different national contexts offer. For example, the French educational system seems to encourage the second generation to pursue studies at university level, whereas the German context with its apprenticeship system ensures a smoother transition to the labour market but blocks off access to university. As a result, Crul and Schneider (2010) put forward a new theory of integration, based on the experience of the second generation in Europe. The comparative integration context theory is based on the assumption that integration is deeply affected by differences in the contexts where integration takes place—more precisely, the institutional arrangements in education, the labour market, housing, religion and legislation. The other major assumption, which stands in line with other scholars' arguments (e.g. Glytsos 2005; Portes 2010), is that rather than focusing on the present state and the final outcome, integration should be studied by focusing on the underlying processes over time.

The educational performance of the second generation in Europe varies greatly across countries and different ethnic groups (Crul and Vermeulen 2003b). Several studies on school performance of European second-generation pupils show that educational performance is generally improving, however alongside high drop-out rates. Simon (2003: 1105), for example, reports that 46 percent of Turkish second-generation youth left school without any diploma, against an average of 25 percent in France. However, these data conceal those immigrant-origin students who succeed. For example, Westin (2003) notes that the performance of the second-generation migrant-origin youth in Sweden records high rates of drop-outs, but also an over-representation of second-generation youth among those who perform well in comparison with native Swedes. Similarly, Timmerman *et al.* (2003), on the second generation in Belgium, report that while a relatively high proportion of Moroccan boys drop out of school and become marginalised, the proportion of those who do very well at school is twice as large. In explaining variations in educational performance, Crul and Vermeulen (2003b) list a number of indicators found in the national systems of education across Europe which have clear implications for the differences between countries in educational

performance of the second generation. Major factors include school duration, face-to-face contact hours with teachers, selectivity, and the amount of supplementary help and support available to children inside and outside school. However, inter- and intra-group differences in educational performance are seen to be an outcome of an interplay between social and economic exclusion, discrimination in education, ethnic cohesion and values, and the supportive role of family members (Crul and Vermeulen 2003a).

While there is a tendency to consider educational attainment as a good indicator to ‘predict’ subsequent labour market integration and upward mobility (Dronkers and Levels 2006), recent research has shown that this expectation can ‘fail to materialise’ in the case of the second generation (Fibbi *et al.* 2007: 1139). Data from research from different European countries show that an improvement in the educational performance of the second generation is coupled with higher unemployment rates and concentration in low-profile jobs, when compared to the native population in the same age range and educational level (Aparicio 2007; Simon 2003; Timmerman *et al.* 2003; Westin 2003). These data speak of a problematic transition to the labour market and provide further support to the hypothesis of discrimination in the host society towards second-generation communities (Fibbi *et al.* 2007), returning the focus once more to structure and policies.

### 4.3 Conclusion

This chapter has erected the theoretical scaffold of my thesis, with a survey of its key theoretical concepts—(ethnic) identity, integration, transnationalism, intergenerational transmission, and the second generation. This wide-ranging theoretical and literature overview will be selectively yet repeatedly referred to in the chapters that follow.

Important observations that result from this review and that impact on my research relate to both the literature on the main concepts of *ethnic identity*, *integration and transnational ties*, and also on the *second generation*. Firstly, it is important to note that studies on identification have expanded, looking beyond ethnicity and bringing in other social markers, such social class and gender (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992). In turn, there is little of a coherent theoretical framework on transnationalism, while culture and its impact on transnational phenomena has been under-researched (Levitt 2005). In

general, the three main concepts – ethnic identity, integration and transnational ties – seem to have been discussed to different degrees in relation to agency, capital and power. Nevertheless, as mentioned in my introduction to this chapter, the concepts of ethnic identity, integration and transnational ties have not been involved systematically, collectively and interactively in migration research.

The literature on the second generation's integration developed in the US has emphasised ethnicity, while European scholars have developed other models that concentrate on the institutional aspects of different national contexts in Europe, without giving any rationale for the indirect exclusion of ethnicity and culture. The element of space has appeared rather scarcely in literature on the first generation, mostly in terms of their transnational ties and practices. In the case of the second generation, Christou (2011) relates space and locality to experiences of return to the homeland. However, to date, no research on the second generation has made any mentioning to the role of space in terms of integration in the 'host' country.

In writing this chapter I tried to strike a balance between including only those theoretical ideas that would prove relevant to the interpretation of my empirical data, and constructing an all-embracing theoretical treatise that was more or less 'complete' in its coverage. The risks of going too far in either direction are obvious: on the one hand a spotty and incomplete account; on the other an exhaustive and over-long coverage. In any case, the stage is now set for the presentation of the findings from my fieldwork in the three cities.

## **Chapter 5**

### **IDENTITIES**

This chapter focuses on the identification processes of the first generation of Albanian migrants and their children, and the intergenerational transmission of identity between the two generations. Following established literature, it privileges analysis of the role of ethnicity in identity construction, but concludes that, for Albanians abroad, ethnicity in the primordial sense is not intrinsic to their identification processes. Like the next two chapters as well, the chapter is composed of three main sections and a conclusion.

I start by examining the identities of the first generation. I analyse in turn migrant and parental identity, and perceptions and understanding of gender and religious identity, and conclude with the role of ethnicity in identity processes. The second part of the chapter focuses on the identities of the children of migrants. Teenager identity, perceptions on gender and their role in identity processes, and religious identity were the most prominent dimensions to emerge from my data. Once again, the role of primordial ethnic identity was downplayed. The third section is on intergenerational transmission of identity. It starts with a sub-section on the transmission of ‘core’ elements of Albanian identity, as perceived by the participants, focusing on ethnic identity and on language. This is followed by a sub-section on the transmission of the family as an important cultural and social institution. The last sub-section analyses intergenerational transmission of identity more broadly, by focusing on everyday-life practices related to the relationships and boundaries in the family and beyond.

All three main parts of the account are based on the thematic and comparative analysis across three sites (London, Thessaloniki and Florence) and three main groups: the first-generation migrants (parents), the second-generation teenagers, and teachers and key informants. The chapter ends with a conclusion on identity and the role of ethnicity.

## 5.1 The first generation

### 5.1.1 *Migrant identity*

Studies on identities of Albanian migrants are rare while comparative studies and those on the identities of the children of migrants are almost non-existent. The focus of studies on Albanian migration has mostly been on the migration process, issues of regularisation and integration in the labour market (see the reviews by King 2003; Vullnetari 2007).

Among various identity traits that the Albanian immigrants perceive and experience, their migrant identity is very strong and has ‘blurred’ the distinctions on the basis of class.<sup>26</sup> The act of migration is now recollected with both fascination but also with a more mature reflection on the historical and personal conditions at the root of the act (see also Vehbiu and Devole 2010). In general, reflections on identity are more common among migrants interviewed in Florence than in the other two sites and more common among the highly skilled or the highly educated migrants. On the other hand, the search for an identity was an initial unconscious push for migrating (Mai 2002), although this is often recognised only after many years of staying abroad. The quote of Lela below shows how the act of migration has marked her life history, representing an undefined identity search unacknowledged at the time.

**Lela (mother, 37, Florence):** In the beginning there isn’t any push... I didn’t have any objectives like I am going to do this or that. I wanted to just go, that’s it! I didn’t come here with a plan; when I arrived in Italy I was nineteen years old with two children. I couldn’t really think of any project for the future [...] But everyone was leaving so I thought I should try too [...] I wanted to go! I wasn’t thinking of anything else. [...] I don’t think people had clear ideas in those times. Albania was ... I don’t know how it was in those times [in the early 1990s]. A huge mess...

The first migrants also encountered a sympathetic reception, both in Greece and Italy, due to the limited knowledge of Albania apart from the fact of a harsh dictatorship. On the other hand, this lack of knowledge was also alienating and disempowering for the migrants, and was then followed by a very negative image of Albania and Albanians in the years to come. Some migrants’ narratives show that their migrant identity was perceived in association with the mentality and values of the

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<sup>26</sup> Migrant identity is treated for the first generation only since this was not very relevant for the teenagers. In fact, many teenagers explicitly rejected the migrant label.

socialist regime, which guided them in the settlement period and beyond. Others acknowledge the changes that they experienced, contrasting their ‘new’ mentality with the way of life and values they used to have during communism.

There are also differences between those arriving at the beginning of the 1990s and those arriving at a later stage, mostly after 1997, in terms of their migrant identity and the relevance of ethnicity. Due to differences in timing of migration to Britain compared to Greece and Italy, this trend also represents a general difference across the three sites. Those migrating at a later stage had different motivations, with financial improvement of their family situation being a very clear goal. Those who left earlier had a different kind of migrant identity. Michelino, who left on the first ships in 1991, remembers the politicisation of the act of migration and the burden of guilt and treason that the very first migrants were charged with. Typically he still calls himself a *refugee*, a term articulated in the public discourse which became part of the ordinary vocabulary in Albania in the early 1990s referring to all migrants.

**Michelino (father, 46, Florence):** What pushed me to go? What pushed the whole of Albania! If Enver (Hoxha) had been alive most probably he would have come with us! (*smiles*) ... I thought ‘I am going there, whatever happens’.

**Clara (his wife, 41):** Also the curiosity—for example, what is there on the other side of the sea? Because every time we were on the beach we would wonder. I was 24, he was 28; we had never been out of Albania. And those years were a period of darkness for Albania.

Other migrants recollect the purpose and the outcome of migration more as cultural exchange and the desire to integrate in the ‘outer’ world. Taking a comparative approach towards the three subsamples, the desire to know the world and engage in an identity search is much more common among Albanian immigrants in Italy, compared to those in Thessaloniki and London. This could reflect greater knowledge of the outer world among the urban-origin migrants from western and central Albania, where most of those living in Florence come from. Migration was an adventure, a search for alternatives, a need for transgression for the first migrants, as opposed to a slightly more meticulous step from those migrating at a later stage.

Often a *professional identity* is strongly linked to these narratives on migrant identity, especially among those adults experiencing de-skilling and those few who have managed to find a job which requires some skills related to their previous education and job experience. The majority of those experiencing de-skilling, refer to their professional identity when they evaluate their decision of migrating, when they discuss

instances of discrimination, and when they discuss their children's education and their job prospects.

**Bardhi (father, 43, Thessaloniki):** A big problem that I experienced was with the language. I couldn't ... I couldn't express myself! Having been a teacher in Albania, I was used to expressing myself with a rich vocabulary, with a language that suited me, and through language you show who you are [...] Here you don't have a possibility to express yourself. Who you are... and then the jobs that you have to do here; you must be in very good physical, emotional and health conditions. To handle different jobs, to adapt to this society that has a job for you, that offers (only) a physical job... All these change you as a person!

Those who got the opportunity to find a job in the host country that matches to some degree their qualifications show a strong professional identity woven with that of a migrant identity and a parallel assessment of opportunity structures in both the host country and in Albania. But it is also true that the 'joint' migrant and professional identity is also evident in the narratives of the low-skilled. For example, the professional identity of women in Thessaloniki is closely related to the domestic sector and the type of relationships constructed and values recognised or negotiated through this kind of work.

Furthermore, a migrant identity is associated with feelings of settlement and long-term residence in the host country. Over time, migrants change their perception on their positioning in the host society. There is a process of adaptation and acculturation that they refer to, which mostly has to do with acquiring habits and forming attitudes in accordance with those encountered in the host country. Long-term migrants also explicitly distinguish themselves from the newcomers, including those from the same place of origin; and they start to make claims towards the host society and the Albanian government in terms of migrant rights and diaspora organisation. This is more evident among migrants in Greece and Italy, while this process in Britain is affected by the acquisition of British citizenship and associated rights and obligations. From the quote of Abaz, below, we also see that change in the attitude of Greek society towards Albanian migrants is typically attributed to the significant progress of Albanians in the labour market in terms of integration.

**Abaz (father, 44, Thessaloniki):** The attitude of Greek society has changed. Now it is different, it's like they got to know us; there isn't equality, but it seems like they got used to us. And it was us (that caused the change) because, to be fair, when we arrived here it was like we were freed from the chains. Not only those that escaped from the prisons, but also us that were free. I had a job in the state administration and when I came here... It was like we were freed. We experienced a huge change. Because the difference between Albania and Greece in those times was [huge]...



### **Vignette 1. Instances of pre-modernity, masculinities and migration: the identities of the first migrants**

Tony is an Albanian who has a shop in the centre of Florence. One of the participants had tried to convince him several times to talk to me, but he always said he was too busy. Today I went there with one of the painters and tried my luck.

We soon started talking and to show his appreciation for my visit Tony showed me two very important personal items: pictures of two important moments of his life. The first was a picture from the time he was doing his military service (*ushtrinë*). As I could recall from my own childhood memories and as Tony told me, military service was a very important experience for guys during communism. When a guy was going *ushtar*, all the kinship used to gather together and they were celebrating like when he got married. This was therefore an important milestone towards manhood, related to duty, hardship, separation and war. It was also the time when the guy went away from home, in many cases for the only two years of his life. It was common for many guys to marry and live at home with their parents. It was the time of ‘crazy stuff’ as well, a bit of independence, a time to grow up.

The next picture portrayed Tony when he had returned from his first trip to Italy. He had been on one of the boats that left Durrës in 1991 and were returned by the Italian authorities. I instantly called the picture a historical picture. Toni had long hair and a bit of beard which were common features of young men who opposed the communist regime at the beginning of the 1990s. He was full of oily spots on his face as he had been travelling in very bad conditions, and was wearing a rather large cross. As he said, Tony is a committed atheist; he had bought the cross as a sign of transgression against ‘atheist’ Albania during his first migration experience in 1990 in Greece, which lasted a few weeks. He recalls:

Me leaving Albania was just like when *Kuqo* (typical name for dogs in communist Albania) was released. He used to run away, wander around the fence... in the end he would come back to his home... We had no rights; we were denied the right to speak, to entertain ourselves, to dress as we liked, to grow our own hair! Who would have a problem because one would want to keep long hair?! I completed military service in 1986 and returned home... and those years the communist regime was close to collapsing. One of the most transgressive things I did was to go to the tailor and ask for a coat to be made; orange with blue stripes. It was fantastic; very fashionable!

The second picture brought back images of the beginning of the 1990s which I myself lived through as a child, and that of the disconcerted young people, just starting to realise that they had been lied to so much. Their meeting with modernity caused so much rage and, at the same time, pride for being among those who were ‘gone’...

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The first generation, however, still feels economically disadvantaged after ‘starting life from zero’ in the respective host countries. Instead, they strive for the children to have a more secure start. On the other hand, migrant identity is also experienced and

constructed in relation to labels and categorisations developed within the home country; as Hemming (2009: 585) puts it, migrants experience ‘the status paradox of migration self-deception’ during their visits home (see also Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001). Their migrant identity and apparent ‘success’ gives rise to the migration of others, but this ‘success’ is partly a self-deception because of the low-status jobs migrants perform. Meanwhile, as Lida points out, migrants are seen as ‘lost’ from the home country; a disjuncture therefore emerges.

**Lida (mother, 46, Thessaloniki):** Like it or not, one lives (belongs) where one can work, so we are twice foreigners. Firstly here in Greece we are immigrants, and also in Albania, when we go home, we are like foreigners. [...] Things have changed in Albania, people see us as ‘from Greece’, as people from a foreign country because they don’t know how it is (being a migrant).

Finally, the migrant identity is reinforced by the feeling of having no support from the Albanian state. Apart from a higher consciousness on the part of the migrants of receiving an inefficient service by the Albanian consulates and embassies abroad, they refer to the apathy of the Albanian state and its inability to campaign for the rights of its citizens living abroad. At a deeper level, migrants express disappointment and a feeling of great solitude at being exposed to hardship and discrimination abroad and feeling unprotected and small because of a poor and powerless home country.

### ***5.1.2 The parental identity***

The importance of family to the Albanians abroad is widely mentioned in other research (e.g. King and Mai 2008). However, among migrants of the first generation, references to the family and parenthood have enhanced characteristics. Family is not only an important value but also an important structure, a ‘living microcosm’ to which a parent’s identity is related (Lopasic 1992: 104). *Parental identity* features as the main identity trait of first-generation parents across the three sites. With the exception of a few highly skilled migrants who choose their professional identity as very important, the vast majority of the parents said that being a parent is the most important thing to them.

**Mirela (mother, 35, London):** Being a parent is the first main thing and it never changes. The others complement each other, you can’t categorise them easily; work is important, my personal advancement is important, but the security of the children and their welfare is my top priority.

**Monda (mother, 50, Thessaloniki):** The main thing is the family, to raise the children in a good way, for them to have the most positive future. That's all. I have just left myself on the side; I have dedicated my life only to work and the children, and nothing else.

Parent and migrant identity are interwoven in the first generation and are in general experienced as the most important identity traits. Often, the importance of the family and parenthood are emphasised in contrast to the insignificance of ethnic labels, as Agron shows below.

**Agron (father, 42, Thessaloniki):** The most important thing for me is being a worker and a parent. That's what keeps us alive, neither being Albanian nor Greek. If you have a job, you work, you keep the family. These two are the most important things—work and being a parent; if you have these two you are OK.

Parental identity is also important because of the precariousness inherent in migration and living in a foreign country with no family or kin support. The lack of social integration and the difficulty to develop a career are also important reasons for the prime focus on the family and children.

**Marjeta (mother, 37, London):** Being a mother is not bad at all (*laughs*). I am very happy as a mother. I would have liked to have come here younger, so I could have progressed further, because my age doesn't allow me to go further. Now I have left this to the children.

### 5.1.3 Gender

Migration has given rise to a change in the understanding of gender among the first generation. These changes are mostly experienced by women. This is reflected in their attitude towards divisions of gender roles, based on gender inequalities and the hegemonic patriarchal understanding of family and male identity in Albania. These differences are especially stark between Albanian men and women in Florence. The impact with the host society has been significantly different between women and their partners, materialised in different trajectories of occupational mobility and at times culminating in serious tensions in their relationship, and even divorces. In turn, a rapid and silent assimilation in the host society and partnerships with Italian natives have brought up other identity crises and a higher understanding of gender relations and the need for self-empowerment. Among women in the Florence sub-sample there were some cases (only a few, it is true) when women chose *being a woman* as the main identity trait, as opposed to mother. In these narratives women showed that they were

able to articulate their sense of empowerment, independence and individuality as a result of migration.

**Lela (mother, 37, Florence):** *Donna*—a woman. And I say this because I am a free woman. If I make a good or a bad decision, it doesn't matter because if it's a good decision I have taken it myself, and if it is a bad decision it will be an experience. Saying I am a mother is still limiting. Because at the same time I am a professional, at the same time I am also proud to be Albanian ... But in any case, I am a person, I am a woman and this includes everything, 360 degrees!

These women show increased agency and autonomy, expressed in a significant change of their role in the family, in their capacity to make decisions, propose and lead family projects, and in their resistance towards reproduction of 'gender roles' among their children. In Thessaloniki and London, narratives on gender are less emphasised. Immediate issues such as regularisation and employment seem to take priority and blur or block the discussion on negotiation of gender roles; although, as we will see in Chapter 6, different paths of integration have impacted on the perception of gender significantly in London. Nevertheless, women notice the difference as a result of migration in the way of dressing and expressing their 'femininity', as Dila relates below.

**Dila (mother, 45, Thessaloniki):** It has changed a lot (the mentality), it's different here. What can I say, the going out and these things. Because in Albania... Berat (her home town in Southern Albania) used to be very fanatical! (*smiles*) We couldn't wear dresses with... straps were out of the question, but even dresses without sleeves! Or short dresses, miniskirts... no.

Changes in perception of gender are less evident in men. Certain practices such as the involvement of men in housework, or the raising of the children when the mothers are at work, are seen as normal across the three sites, at least in the case of the more educated and those originating from urban areas in Albania. In other cases, gender roles in the host country clash with persistent patriarchal ideas of male superiority in the family and excessive jealousy and control towards the wives. The case of Pali, below, is interesting because of his reappraisal of patriarchal values:

**Pali (father, 48, Florence):** Here in Italy I have corrected something that has to do with the family. I had married, had finished university, had a child, but I had a mother whom I considered a Saint. And I had it fixed in my mind that my mother was in the first place, and then father, then the brothers and sisters, and only then my wife. Here I came across a passage from the Bible that talked about the family. I was convinced in the meantime that I was perfectly right and I had serious conflicts with my wife. But in that case I got a good lesson from the Bible that says that when you marry, the wife has left her parents and has united with you. It is important socially that from that moment you will take a trip together and the wife is the most important person in your life.

The following section analyses more in depth the way migration has affected the first generation's religiosity. This is a particular trait of the identification of the Albanian migrants, especially emphasised in the second generation, as we will see in the coming sections.

#### **5.1.4 Religious identity**

Recent literature tends to put religion as a central focus of migration scholars; often, the religion of immigrants in Europe is perceived as problematic depending on the religiosity of the native population and the immigrants and on the historical institutionalisation of religion (Foner and Alba 2008). Others show that religion supports and gets transformed by the migration experience (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007). The relation between *migration* and *religiosity* has its own particularities in the case of Albanian first-generation migrants. Since religion was banned in Albania, parents grew up without a religion.<sup>27</sup> At this later stage of their migration history they also comment on religiosity as instrumental to their integration and the full integration of their children. This instrumentality is perceived differently according to the importance of religion in the host country. This is how Monda describes the religiosity in her family, while her husband said he was strictly an atheist.

**Monda (mother, 50, Thessaloniki):** I am baptised. I go and light (candles)... because there has remained the tradition that you need to believe in something, but not that I am a fanatic of faith. Here we became Christians; just like in every other religion it means don't steal, don't kill [...] I don't insist on my faith [...] my faith is for myself, not to give to other people [...] For example, my son bought a motorbike and said he wanted a *panagia* (a saint's icon). 'Here it is', I gave him one. My daughter goes to the children's groups (in the church) that get together to sing, but I don't oblige her to follow that line. [...] I believe in God; it probably doesn't exist, but my father left this to me: that God does exist, and he told me that God is for everyone, for the Muslim, for the Roma, for the Christian.

Religiosity among first-generation migrants is understood as *spirituality*, as believing certain universal values and as respect towards humanity, of doing good and helping those in need. There are also some parents who embraced religion as a part of the freedom to choose and try different ways of living, especially those things, like religion,

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<sup>27</sup> The constitution of 1976, Article 37, prohibited religion in Albania until 1990, when the communist regime collapsed (Dingo 2007). In practice, religion had been suppressed by Enver Hoxha since the late 1960s.

prohibited in Albania. Yet others chose the ‘religious route’ in order to facilitate the integration of their children who could thus participate in the activities of their peers.

However, while baptism has helped in the social integration at a *micro* and *meso* level and bearing a Greek-Orthodox or Catholic name has counteracted the offsprings’ visibility as foreigners, Albanian parents had to later recognise that, as Tzanelli (2006: 39) points out in the case of Greece, religious conversion could not truly ‘open’ participation in the Greek ‘nation’ to outsiders. As a consciousness on the (limited) opportunity structure and (closed) identity politics of the host country is developed over the years, religious conversion is also referred to as an ‘identity sacrifice’ that has generated few positive outcomes in terms of integration. In some cases reflections on religiosity are associated with feelings of resistance towards the pressure Albanian migrants experienced in the early years of immigration from the host society to get baptised and to baptise their children. At the same time, their narratives point to the role of the godparents, who are often natives related to the family as employers or neighbours, as a source of support and as important for the families in the context of their limited social integration.

This is how two parents regarded the religiosity of their children when asked a question about religiosity in the family:

**Abaz (father, 44, Thessaloniki):** We don’t believe a lot, but now we are mixed with religion because the children are baptised. We feel ourselves Muslim, but we don’t follow any rites...

**Entela (mother, 42, Thessaloniki):** My children are baptised; I got them baptised when we came. Not that I wanted, but a Greek neighbour insisted, ‘I want to baptise them; I want to baptise them...!’ And the children believe in God, but it’s not that they go to church and take a special interest (in religion)... like asking which (saint’s) day is today or which celebration... no. But they do believe. I see them for example praying ‘God, will you help me? Mum please pray God that he helps me that I get a good grade’.

The presence of religion in migrants’ lives is sometimes reflected in their household decoration—with icons, crosses, pictures of saints etc. (Photo 1). Rather different from the situation of Albanian migrants in Greece, parents in Florence are relaxed towards the religiosity of their children. Indeed, many of the adults admit to being non-religious and uninterested in religion.



**Photo 1.** ‘Religious corner’ in an immigrant family home in Thessaloniki

There are some instances of religious conversion and baptism among the first and the second generation, but these are far less evident when compared to the Greek context. Here is one family’s experience:

**Dora (mother, 43, Florence):** My youngest son got baptised ... he was praying when he was on his own secretly. He used to go to a religious school... So he used to light a candle and pray... like he was doing at school. [...] My son was embarrassed because none of us prayed, in our house we never talked about religion. We never mentioned it. Because as a teacher (in Albania) ... I had always to mention the name of Enver Hoxha and the party in the lesson. [...] One day we spoke with the teacher and he said: ‘Marino has decided to get baptised’. We said ‘We have no information on religion. If you think that it is the right thing to do, he can do it’. He was baptised and chose the teacher as godfather.

On the other hand, religiosity in the country of residence has given the opportunity to many Albanian migrants of Catholic and Orthodox origin in Albania to re-connect with their faith of origin since the intergenerational transmission of religiosity was

interrupted by communism.<sup>28</sup> For some families from Northern Albania where the Catholic religion was prevalent, migrating to Italy has enabled them to experience a continuation in the religious tradition of the family (Photo 2). A similar pattern was evident for migrant families coming from Orthodox Christian backgrounds in Southern Albania. But the link of religious continuity is not automatic, and some families of Orthodox or Catholic heritage did not pick up their religious origins once abroad.



**Photo 2:** Albanian immigrants attending a mass in a Catholic church in Florence—the first of its type to be organised for the Albanian community there, November 2008.

Unlike Florence and (especially) Thessaloniki, the first generation in London did not experience any pressure to assimilate in terms of religion. The multicultural composition of the environment where they live makes religion a ‘secondary’ issue for their integration. Rather, religiosity is a topic that Albanians in London relate to casually and curiously; they experience the freedom to choose their positioning.

**Flutura (mother, 43, London):** I like being a Muslim, but here in *kurbet* (Albanian term for migration) you cannot follow the traditions. When we were in Albania we used to buy nice things for the children and give some money to the beggars. Here I put some money in the charity boxes during Eid or Ramadan. Or I say to my mother that she gives from the money that I send her to the poor.

<sup>28</sup> Prior to communism, approximately 70 percent of Albanians were Muslim, 20 percent were Orthodox (mainly in the south) and 10 percent were Catholic (mainly in the north).



There is also a mentioning of the traditional connection with the Muslim religion and the customs that were revived in Albania after the fall of communism. As we see in the case of Flutura above, migration has been a cause for the interruption of her 'religious' practices in Albania which she tries to experience transnationally through her mother who lives there.

### ***5.1.5 The role of ethnicity***

Ethnic identification of the first generation appears in three main trends. First, most of the parents said they felt Albanian and they identified themselves as such. Self-identification can function as a means of 'measuring' ethnic identity (Jenkins 1997; Stephan and Stephan 2000), although these self-identifying narratives may be biased.

There are, secondly, parents who showed deprecation towards Albania and the Albanian identity. Thirdly, along with the general low importance they gave to ethnicity, some parents self-identified as 'a good person', referring to universal human values. Symbolic ethnic identification as Albanian seems to be marked by the act of being born in Albania and having lived there most of their lives. It is common among parents not to question their Albanian identity and to describe their identification against a uniform host-society culture without commenting on the sub-groups and diversity encountered in the environment where they live. Comments on culture and ethnicity of origin are at times marked by a 'loose' attitude towards the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the Albanian culture.

**Fatmir (father, 41, London):** Our culture has been mixed, five hundred years with the Turk (occupation) and then came the Greek, the Italian and the German. And it's even more mixed now because we are all over the place and we have mixed with all races.

Otherwise, the attitude towards ethnicity among the long-term first-generation migrants appears to be part of a broader 'identity work' that has taken place alongside settlement and integration in the host country. This is more recognisable in the case of the highly skilled migrants who remember this process as associated with changes and disruptions of the identification process. These recollections also point to a different attitude among the parents at later stages of immigration. The first-generation migrants who migrated to Greece and Italy in the 1990s were discriminated harshly. In striving for acceptance, some of them cut their ties with Albania, changed their names, got baptised and also baptised their children. Expecting better integration for themselves

and their children, some of them adopted completely the host country's identity. Some Albanian migrants in Greece were able to register as members of the Greek minority in Albania, and encouraged the children to identify as Greek. As Valmira recollects below, many parents have been on a long 'identity trip'.

**Valmira (mother, 38, Thessaloniki):** Of course these are not the early years. I would be lying if I said that it's the same as the early years, because many progressive steps have been made... although slow steps. I remember when I came for the first time to Greece, I saw how small the Albanian was. Basically how small it felt if you would say that you were Albanian. When I was hanging around in the beginning, since I was speaking in English they were asking 'Where are you from?' 'I am from Albania' and they would be looking at each other and I was asking myself 'What's going on... What is he saying with that look?'. And this way I lost all the respect that I had for myself and for Albania, for my parents, my relatives, my friends and for everything I had experienced and had learnt in Albania. I lost it completely, I 'deleted' it and it took a long time to understand that people are individuals who have their qualities and those not from Albania (foreigners) are not Gods! Everyone has his own merits and faults. It took a long time, it took a long time...

In Britain, parents faced far less pressure to hide or abandon the Albanian identity. The lines along which the Albanian community is identifying are also more unclear in the case of Albanians in London due to a shorter time of residence than those in Greece and Italy. Being a small minority among many minorities and the 'space' provided by the multicultural character of London make the first generation there 'invisible' when compared to Albanians in Greece and Italy. As a result, a symbolic attachment to Albania and appreciation of the Albanian and the host society's culture is experienced naturally, and the identity 'contraction' observable among parents in Greece in particular is not common.

In Florence, the process of acculturation and assimilation is already evident among the first generation. Although not ethnically articulated, Albanian immigrants are very receptive towards Italian ways and tend to embrace practices from the context where they live. King and Mai (2009: 207) found that 'the key aspect of Albanian diasporic identities in Italy is the co-existence of specific conditions of vulnerability with a strong drive towards assimilation'. In turn, this is a very rational way of identifying and belonging, based on everyday life and interests, on the one hand; and also on an affinity to the Italian culture and language even before migrating to Italy (see Mai 2005). In one case, a respondent called herself and husband born in Albania *per caso* (by chance), in order to express their open-mindedness and orientation towards the West, seen through Italy, even during communism. Photo 3 illustrates how the Italian culture and language has 'taken over' Albanians' assimilation in Florence.



**Photo 3:** Invitation of the Albanian community to participate in the Albanian national celebrations in Florence, November 2008. Note that the invitation is in Italian, as were the festivities themselves. The food served was a typical Tuscan menu.

The first generation in Thessaloniki and Florence also show receptiveness towards host cultures by integrating them in the family setting. This is seen in the way of cooking and arrangements of houses, although this is more evident in the case of the highly skilled and those coming from Albanian urban areas. In rural-origin families, the internal arrangement of the dwelling reflects the model typical of Albanian post-communist houses, with the *bufe* (the cupboard with decorative cups, mugs, pictures of relatives, vases, etc.) in the central part of the room and prominent sofas around the walls (see also Dalakoglou 2010).

## 5.2 The second generation

### 5.2.1 Teenagers and young people

Like first-generation migrants, teenagers, too, show multiple identities. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the literature on the identity of teenagers has focused heavily on the role of

ethnicity, despite research showing that the family, peer groups, schools and neighbourhood activities are important referents for the identity development of adolescents (Kroger 2007: 76). In line with this trend, multiple identities seem natural, although, as shown in Orjana's quote below, teenagers' narratives show that they define themselves largely through non-ethnic identity traits. Being a teenager or a young person seems to be of great importance and what mostly characterises them as persons.

**Orjana (girl, 15, Thessaloniki):** At this moment, teenager. This is the one [...] because... Well, OK. I am a teenager, I have my own problems. Everyone thinks that I haven't grown up yet; they don't give me that much importance.

On the other hand, being a student and hobbies such as being a musician, a sports person, or clothes and style are very important to other teenagers. Two examples:

**Lajmir (boy, 18, London):** I think since my main goal is the studies, I think 'student' is the most important. That's something that I do full-time; I also work, I organise events, I sing, but still that's the main thing. If I had to do only one thing, I would leave everything and would choose my studies.

**Rudina (girl, 18, Florence):** So... (I feel like) a fashionista (*smiles*). That's the closest to me and the one I care the most about. The clothes, the shoes... combine everything. I like it, I care about this.

A differentiated migration experience has also affected teenagers' identity. Differences between those who were born in Albania as opposed to the host country, and between older and younger siblings, are apparent. Loss of friends, harsher discrimination and more responsibility within the family make the older siblings and those born abroad more mature, and the teenager identity is not as developed or casually experienced as with the younger respondents. This is also seen in the tendency of the younger siblings to have more hobbies, while older siblings are more studious and pursue professions which are expected to generate a more secure financial reward. An Albanian mother in Thessaloniki describes the different emotional impact that migration has had on her two sons:

**Entela (mother, 42, Thessaloniki):** The elder one suffered a lot. He changed environment, when he came here he didn't know the language... And still, he came here in January and started school in the third year, learnt the language and at the end of June had all his grades 10s!<sup>29</sup> But he closed himself, he used to stay on his own. [...] Whereas the younger one came here at two years old ... so he didn't really feel the transition much.

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<sup>29</sup> Ten is the highest grade in Greek primary schools.

Related to the trend mentioned above, differences are observable between siblings in terms of autonomy and individuality. Those who migrated with their parents have a higher sense of responsibility and another experience of adolescence. The older teenagers also assume the role of a carer and mentor to the younger teenagers and at times mediate between the parents and the younger siblings who claim an adolescence like that of their native peers. The Albanian-origin teenagers, especially those who migrated with their parents and even more those who experienced the emigration of one of the parents and then joined with the rest of the family, feel they have grown up faster and earlier and are more mature than their native peers.

It is common for the children of Albanian migrants to experience restrictions in expenditure of their parents on their age-related activities and goods, for example, having their own mobile phone, having a bike, or going on school trips abroad. In many families children share a room. Some of them share the responsibility of raising younger siblings. Furthermore, different from parents' plans for economic security and expectations for a similar life-style to what they were used to in Albania, teenagers prefer an independent life when they come of age. This is also part of their assimilation process and an expression of an individual life-style as compared to the more collective and patriarchal style in Albania.

As a result, because of the way they are growing up, their increased agency makes the Albanian-origin teenagers draw a distinction between themselves and the natives. Lack of material goods, restricted entertainment opportunities, and discipline and restrictions from their parents tend to block their socialisation with the native youngsters, along with conflicts in the family. An excerpt from a focus group with teenagers of Albanian origin in Tuscany explores some of these issues.

**Klejdi (boy, 17):** I cannot really make friends with Italians. Can't quite connect with their conversations and all that.

[...]

**Dana (girl, 15):** Albanians are more mature, things are more familiar, whereas the Italians of our age are a bit...

**Xhilda (girl, 18):** When I was little yes, I made friends with Italians, I had *l'amica del cuore* (best friend). But then when you grow up you see you grow up in another way and you feel the distance.

[...]

**Klejdi:** It depends what you like. It's not that I don't stay at all with Italians, there are boys it's a pleasure to hang out with, they know how to have a decent conversation and everything. They are not children! There are indeed Italian guys who have these qualities. But the majority I don't like as characters. It's their mentality in terms of friendship, they are not real friends, they only mind their own business.

[...]

**Xhilda:** And then the way of entertaining. If you go out to clubs with Italians you just stare all the time, you don't know what to do. Whereas with the Albanian friends it's different, I have fun.

**Klejdi:** In my opinion, it's not whether they are Italians or Albanians. It depends on how people grow up, with what kind of difficulties... Superficial boys are those who have had everything when they were little, whereas boys who had difficulties have had to progress by themselves. They are more mature, more serious, they don't talk rubbish!

### 5.2.2 Gender

Gender is also one of the themes that is powerfully articulated in teenagers' narrativised negotiations between home and life in the 'host' country. 'Gender roles', so prevalent in post-communist Albanian society, seem to have been 'transported' by the parents to the host country, although there are cases when mothers make efforts to counter such gender divisions. Below are two perspectives by a mother and a teenager in London:

**Marjeta (mother, 38, London):** It happens sometimes ... that we respect more... well, it has remained from the old people that respect for the boys, for the brothers, is higher. But this creates conflicts with the daughter. She says 'Why mum? Girls and boys should be equal. Why do you consider more the boys and you neglect the girl?' Because we are still with the old way: the boys are to be respected (*laughs*). She always says: 'Why mum? He should respect me and I respect him in turn. The respect is reciprocal'. And I say: 'Firstly, because he is a brother, then he is older than you ... other people wish for a brother; you have them and you don't know their value'.

ZV: Being a girl, does it affect you or will it affect you?

**Era (girl, 14, London):** Yeah, a bit. I think it will, like you would mostly be at home doing like the ladylike work like jobs, housework, stuff like that... and if it's a boy it would be different 'cause you would be considered as a man of the house, but yeah, 'cause like ...yeah. I just ...I think it will affect me, but in small ways. If I was in another country like Albania, it would affect me more than it would here, but it still happens. [...] Like um...if my brother was ... he didn't like clean his room, it wouldn't be that like much of a big deal, but if I didn't it would, because I am a girl.

As seen in the quotes above, 'traditional' gender roles are generally vigorously opposed by the girls, while in the case of the boys the attitude is mixed. As Erjol shows below, some male teenagers follow gendered perceptions of marriage and parenthood.

**Erjol (boy, 17, Florence):** For example, yesterday I was with the guys of my group and there came two women that go around Tuscany and listen to young people and give advice to them. And when we were talking I was looking at her and told her '28 years old, with whom do you live?'. 'Alone' she said. 'So 28 years old you haven't married, you don't have children? You live on your own, you like your life? Sorry, but you go around like this?'

From my data I find that the education of the parents and their origins in Albania (rural vs urban) have a major role in the attitude of the second-generation teenagers. There were many cases when parents or teenagers made mention of same-age friends

and acquaintances who were engaged at a very early age, especially in London and Greece.

**Daniela (girl, 17, Thessaloniki):** I have left my family now and live with the family of my fiancé. I help with cooking so that they find food ready when they come back from work tired. I do the laundry, sweep and tidy up. All these. That's why I haven't started working yet. They work and I stay at home. [...] This is the everyday life of a woman, the housework and all. [...] I have chosen this: to stay home and be a housewife, have children and do the household chores.

As we can see in the case of Daniela above, engagement at an early age, which is always with someone from the same ethnic group, either living in Albania or in the 'host' country, results in the end of age-related activities, such as taking part in sports clubs. Sometimes, it is the cause for second-generation girls to quit education. Gender divisions within the Albanian family are thus reproduced in the host country, despite many girls acknowledging migration to Greece as an opportunity for a different life from that of girls in Albania.

### ***5.2.3 Religious identity***

Recent studies from the US show that religion both supports and gets transformed by the migration experience (Jones-Correa 2002: 235), while the children of immigrants are increasingly turning to 'inherited religion' as their primary source of identity (Chong 1998; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007). The attitude towards religion of the Albanian-origin teenagers, however, speaks of a different religious story. Across the three sites a number of my teenage interviewees answered positively to the question of being religious, although religion was hardly ever their primary identity marker.

In the two Southern European sites, references to religion include religiosity as a means to be accepted by their native peers, but in some of the cases religion seems to be genuinely associated with faith. As I noted in the previous section of this chapter, on the first generation, getting baptised often results from pressure from Greek and Italian acquaintances and the host society in a broader sense. Teenagers' narratives mention the role of godparents—often natives related to the family as employers or neighbours—as a source of support and as important for the families and their limited social integration. As a result, children in Greece and Italy have largely adopted the Orthodox and Catholic religions, respectively. They have been exposed to religion at school or have been active with Sunday school, they visit church occasionally (though not 'fanatic' about religion),

while their name-days are marked by celebrations in the families. They also show religious awareness and knowledge, which is often lacking in the parents. Two quotes from teenagers of Albanian origin in Thessaloniki and Florence:

ZV: Are you religious?

**Genti (boy, 18, Thessaloniki):** Me... a little bit. There is no need to go to church, to pray and do other things to feel religious. The issue is do you believe or not, is faith in your heart or not. God didn't ask us to build churches and to go and pray, he never asked such a thing. God asked us to reflect and understand our mistakes and to be good people; this is my logic.

**Aulona (woman, 24, second generation, Florence):** To tell you the truth I am not such a passionate believer. I believe in God, I pray to God and I believe in the main personages of religion... God is Jesus, the Virgin Mary... But that's all. I am not really a person that goes to church every Sunday. When I was little and we were living in Puglia, because in the small village where we were there was this tradition... so with my friends I would go to church every Sunday because there was this thing that if you didn't go... eh... whereas now that we moved here, if I go it's because I feel like going (to the church)... sometimes, not always; I am not that close... I believe in God, I thank him every morning. And I have this concept that it's not absolutely necessary to go to church to pray to him, to thank him... [...] Whereas my mum and dad are Muslims.

Especially in the Italian context, religious institutions and settings have been important sites for 'social time' for children and as sources of support for the parents, so—at least for some families—they have played a significant role in their integration. The sites and activities most often mentioned include religious education in schools, Sunday School, the church choir, Italian lessons and courses in the church, church dinners, gifts of clothes and help with accommodation. These have affected parents' and children's awareness and perception of religiosity, and increased somewhat their religious orientation. As Selim explains below, religiosity has also been inspired by a desire of parents for their children to experience religion, which was banned in Albania.

**Selimi (father, 66, Florence):** To tell you the truth, when our daughter was little we thought we didn't want her to grow up like us. Because we lived in an era when religion was banned. So we thought our daughter should grow up with a religion, so for this reason ... we decided that she became Catholic.

In Greece, religion is often highlighted by Albanian-origin teenagers as the crucial element of cultural distinction perceived by the host society, representing a barrier to inclusion and a basis for expression of racism towards them. Baldwin-Edwards and Apostolatos (2008: 9) maintain that, for the greater part of the twentieth century, both the Greek state and society have exhibited a very high degree of ethnic politicisation. Although the relationship between religion and ethnicity is 'intimate' (Hammond 1988:



3), in Greece the national ideology in Greek political culture and public discourse is based on a hegemonic form of Helleno-Christian nationalism. Religion, therefore, holds a great importance in drawing political, social and cultural frontiers between ‘us’ and ‘them’ and in constituting individual and collective identities. Moreover, although religion is mostly experienced as ceremonial, Helleno-Christianism becomes very important for the natives to define themselves against the immigrants (Xenitidou 2007). The quote below shows this from the perspective of one of my youngest interviewees:

ZV: Is your family religious?

**Maria (girl, 12, Thessaloniki):** It is, it’s Christian. My parents believe in Christ, they are Christians... They believe in Easter. We baptised my sister... all of us are baptised. And I think my parents got baptised so that they could get married, because if you aren’t baptised, you can’t get married. They got married here.

In general, the religiosity of the teenagers represents a ‘cultural discontinuity’ between them and the secularity of their parents. This is especially significant in Greece, less so in Italy, and even less in Britain. But often this generational religious discontinuity can be a source of confusion for the younger generation. Here Geri describes his ambiguous feelings towards religiosity:

ZV: Are you religious?

**Geri (boy, 13, Thessaloniki):** You mean Christian?

ZV: Whichever religion, I don’t know...

Geri: I don’t know, but my parents are Muslims. Well, me too. If my parents are, I will be, too. (*smiles*) [...] I would like to be Christian (*smiles*). Also Muslim, but I would like it better to be Christian, *I like it better*.

ZV: Do you feel Christian?

Geri: Yes, I do, I would like to be baptised but.... We will find a godfather and then we will see whether I will get baptised, if they want (family)... I like it better to be Christian; I don’t know why, but I would like to.

As a result, most of the teenagers in Greece and a good number in Italy have been baptised, as Christian Orthodox or Catholic respectively. By contrast, teenagers in London are freer to recognise their families’ Muslim background, although, like in Albania, the family does not actively ‘do’ religion. Eliana gives a fairly typical view:

**Eliana (girl, 15, London):** We do what they call *Bajram*... yeah, little Eid and big Eid, we do that sometimes because my grandparents are Muslim. And my parents are Muslim or claim to be Muslim, even though we don’t go to mosque. I was about to say church! (*laughs*)

ZV: So is your family religious?

Eliana: Not really. They are not really religious. I can’t really say that I am Muslim, because I eat pork, and I don’t really know much about Muslim, I know more about Christianity. But right now I don’t think I have a religion that I am really focused on. It is hard to keep up a Muslim religion, my grandparents were strict Muslims, had headscarfs, but my parents are not that strict.

Eliana's quote hints at the more nuanced views of religion which are possible in Britain with its pluralistic religious populations, especially in a big and diverse city like London where there are large minority-origin children of Muslim faith—something which is largely absent in Florence and Thessaloniki (or in Rome or Athens).

On the other hand, the negative connotations given to Muslims in the public discourse make some parents and children distance themselves from the Muslim religion and identity.<sup>30</sup> A distancing from Muslim religion is also noticed in the articulation of the religiosity among teenagers in Florence, while references to religiosity in terms of Islam are almost non-existent among the teenagers in Thessaloniki. This is similar to other research showing that religious identity of the second generation is related to the social and historical context in which it emerges and it is by no means a static identity (Peek 2005). This leads to the final trend distilled from the interviews with teenagers, namely that interest towards religiosity generally decreases in late adolescence, matching the declining interest in religion of 'native' youngsters as they get older.

#### ***5.2.4 The role of ethnicity***

From what has been said above, it is clear that the process of identification of Albanian-origin teenagers across the three sites of this study displays various trends. The strongest is represented by teenagers who distance themselves from the Albanian identity and I will analyse this dominant trend in due course. First, some other patterns. Some of the teenagers show a measure of symbolic attachment to the Albanian identity, accompanied by an interest and some knowledge about Albania and its culture. This symbolic ethnic identity (Gans 1994) is also expressed as a reaction against a kind of negative identification imposed by other teenagers of the host country, including instances of discrimination. In this case, there can be a symbolic identification with Albania and Albanian identity, but the teenagers have fundamentally adopted the customs and habits of the 'host country'. This pattern is mostly evident among the children of migrants originating from urban areas in Albania, and those with educated

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<sup>30</sup> These negative connotations have increased after the 7/7 events, when British citizens of immigrant descent and of Muslim religion bombed the public transport in London causing many victims. See Cole and Maisura (2007) for more on the implications of such events.

and skilled parents. They feel attached to Albanian cultural traditions, such as traditional dance (see Photo 4), and are willing to engage in a discussion of Albanianness ‘being in their blood’.

**Manjola (girl, 18, London):** I follow Albanian tradition; my family taught me so. I am very close to my father who teaches me the Albanian tradition [...] We in Britain, it seems to me, keep more the Albanian tradition than the families in Albania.

There is also a hybrid identity being constructed (Bhabha 1994), at times not recognised or consciously acknowledged, across the three sites. Genti (boy, 18, Thessaloniki) articulated this in a rather neat way: ‘I feel like I have a mum from Albania and a dad from Greece; something like that’. But there are broader influences too. Teenagers’ hybrid identity is based on drawing from everyday cultural practices and the combination of the host-country and home-country culture, youth culture and other global cultural developments. The ‘ethnic narratives’ of these teenagers refer to age-related experiences, like the way of dressing, favourite music and friendship circles, as characteristics that mark their daily ‘ethnic’ experience. This also resonates with Barth (1994: 14) who defined the cultural content of ethnicity as analytically organised around two orders: *the overt signals or signs*—the external features through which identity is often shown, such as dress, language, house-form, or general style of life; and *the basic value orientations*, such as those on morality and excellence by which performance is evaluated. For both levels of Barth’s typology, a distinction should be drawn between explicit self-identification and the underlying identity processes where both overt signs and subtle signals are constructed and redefined. The primordial ethnicity—both Albanian and especially Greek—is referred to when a stance is taken and external categorisations are discussed or resisted. Pan-ethnic identities, European in this case, are also engaged as part of the self-identification process and ‘nationalistic’ avoidance, showing a relation to wider contextual issues.

Identity shifting is also very common, usually evident in those teenagers who are comfortable talking about ethnic identity and those who do not experience an identificational impasse because of the stigmatisation of Albanian ethnicity. Some interviewees revealed both an openness towards assimilation as a strategy to integrate (usually in Greece) and an interest in keeping the culture and not forgetting the roots, as Anna shows below.

**Anna (girl, 16, Thessaloniki):** I believe that we should keep this unity we have, because living in Greece we inevitably take Greek as their culture. But we shouldn't forget our identity, that is, we shouldn't forget our roots and who we are in reality, because this is not good. I mean, you take others' culture and you forget your own. That's why it is good that there are these [ethnic] organisations because they remind you of who you are and where you are from.



**Photo 4:** Second-generation teenage girls performing traditional Albanian dance in a community gathering at an end-of-year party in July 2010, London.<sup>31</sup>



**Photo 5:** Albanian flags and Albanian symbols painted and prepared by second-generation children in London in the *Shpresa* Organisation national celebrations, November 2007.

<sup>31</sup> This photo is courtesy of *Ardhmëria* (The future), an Albanian and Kosovan organisation in London.

Another general tendency of the teenagers is to downplay the importance of ethnic categorisation; indeed, some of the teenagers distance themselves completely from this kind of topic. Hall (1996: 169) maintains that ‘we are all ... ethnically located and our ethnic identities are crucial to our subjective sense of who we are’. Challenging this assumption, most of my teenage participants responded that they do not identify themselves ethnically.<sup>32</sup> As Kleo explains below, in some instances human values are referred to as frames shaping their identities, such as being ‘a person of all groups’, being ‘a good person’, and so on.

ZV: Do you speak at home about Albanian culture, Greek culture? Do your parents make a difference, do you?

**Kleo (boy, 18, Thessaloniki):** We don’t distinguish between cultures. I am not a person that pays attention to culture. I won’t distinguish between Greek, Albanian or English culture. I don’t deal with this kind of thing, culture. The culture of one person is same everywhere, that of being a (good) person. That is the main culture: to be a (good) person.

Following Werbner (2010), bodily expressions and ordinary customs are seen as indicators of ethnicity; although they are also an expression of deeper underlying understanding and experiences of individuality and autonomy versus the discipline and hierarchy advocated by the parents. On the other hand, as Altin points out, the way of socialisation and a tendency towards sharing versus an individual way of behaviour among the teenagers is an expression of Albanianess.

ZV: You said you identify with Albanians and Albania. Why is that? Where do you see your commonalities?

**Altin (boy, 16, London):** I mean, because this is England, so there is English people, so if there was one or two Albanians then of course you will try and be close with Albanians; you can stick together, you can fight off enemies together, you know what I mean? You can help each other, so... Being Albanian, if I am Albanian and you are Albanian then we have more in common, we have hobbies in common, we have favourite food, favourite whatever [...] Culture, you know... for example um... Albanians, if I buy food, if I buy chicken and chips for example, I will always, if I am with another Albanian, or even with an English person, I would always say ‘Do you want some? Take some’, you know. English people, they are not really like that. If they have something, they will eat it themselves, do you know what I mean? Just small things that make a big difference, stuff like that.

Ethnic identification can also be situational, with the same teenagers assuming any of the three main stances (Albanian, host-country, hybrid) on different occasions and when discussing different topics during the interview, as Darina illustrates in the following excerpt:

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<sup>32</sup> Which is not to deny that Hall may be right, in the sense of ethnicity being ‘assumed’ and ‘subconscious’ and thus ‘unspoken’ in the interview setting.

**Darina (girl, 13, London):** I can be English, I can be Albanian, I can change like that; it's no problem for me. [...] I behave English when I am at school or when I have an interview with my headteacher... Yes, of course, I speak English to them. Or when I go to the job centre with my mum, for something similar... or for the *British* (passport) that we went and did those things... (I was) English, I spoke English without a problem. And Albanian when I am here (she is speaking of the premises of an Albanian association), or when I am in Albania ....

Across the three sites, family, weddings and community or 'collectivity' are considered as the main markers of Albanian culture. As a result, solidarity within the family and among kin is one feature that the teenagers refer to when claiming identification as Albanian; this is the case for both boys and girls. Ethnic identification can also be conditioned by the setting, such as visits to Albania and the connection that the teenagers have there with family and kin. Indeed, the high appreciation of family in Albania strengthens the propensity to feel and identify as Albanian, contrasted with the individualised life and solitude experienced in the country where they live. Ethnic identification as an Albanian can also be related to the fact (for some respondents) of being born in Albania and the roots drawn from there. This can be acknowledged alongside a rational belongingness to the host country because of the opportunities there and a civic responsibility towards the country of residence.

**Erjola (girl, 14, London):** I feel Albanian mostly because my parents are from there, I know a lot of Albanian people, I have been there, I have aunties and uncles and so on. [...] I think I feel Albanian mostly when I go there, 'cause here you get so used to other people from different backgrounds and so on, and you kind of forget about yours and you hear other people and it is mostly English. And when I am here I mostly feel English. When I do feel Albanian it is mostly when I am with my family, at home, my Albanian friends' house. And obviously I am Albanian.

**Aldo (boy, 16, Thessaloniki):** I would be better described by the name Albanian because I like the name Albanian better, because it is where I was born and it will always follow me like a second name, the place I was born. I don't think I am Greek, because I came to Greece. I believe that this is a place that gives me work, gives me life and that I shouldn't create problems or obstacles in this place, but I should work and make money. But the first thing for me is to have my fatherland first.

Often, a positive appreciation of the ethnicity of the country of origin is associated with a preference for a boyfriend, girlfriend or future partner of the same ethnic origin. This is sometimes also the case when the teenagers show double-identity and belongingness. Symbolic identification as an Albanian in general co-exists with a rational appreciation of host-country belongingness, based on opportunities and better living standards. This symbolic identification is more evident among children in London. This may be related to the fact that most children whom I interviewed were

recruited through Albanian organisations; it is also true that the funding that Albanian organisations have in London is focused on the promotion of ethnic identity, while the pressure to assimilate and discrimination are not the same as in Greece and Italy.

The way that the ‘host’ country’s identity and culture are perceived by the teenagers in each of the three national/city contexts is also important. There is a marked difference in the way teenagers refer to the host-country’s ethnic and national identity. This is articulated in strong primordial terms in Thessaloniki, with teenagers recognising the high appreciation given in the Greek public discourse to antiquity and the ‘sharp edges’ of Greekness. In Florence, as we will see more specifically in the next chapter on integration, there are strong references to the local culture and its universal value. In London there is a perception of a fluid English culture, with a strong influence from the other cultures and not holding to old or embedded traditions and conventions. Darina, Fabiola and Xhilda each, in turn, shed some light on these differences in their extracts below.

ZV: What do you know about English culture?

**Darina (girl, 13, London):** Um... English culture? They love football; eggs, beans, sausages in the morning, sit on the couch and watch TV... (*laughs*) What do you want me to say? They love the pub... That’s it, because I am not interested much in the culture.

**Fabiola (girl, 13, Thessaloniki):** I believe they had since ancient times a well-known civilisation, with Plato, but now they have degraded into whatever... Because they had this civilisation, it doesn’t mean that it is the same now. They ‘give themselves airs’ because they think it is the same now, but it is not. They speak continuously about their history, ancient times, and all that rubbish they say about the history...

**Xhilda (girl, 18, Florence):** When I go to other cities and I tell them I live in Florence... ‘Ah, *Fiorentina*...’ I speak with a Florentine accent and they like it. ‘But I have Albanian origins...’ ‘Ah, they say, you are *Alba-Toscano*... si...’. They don’t call me Alba-Italian, but *Alba-Toscano*.

In London, Albanians’ geographical dispersion and the fact that, in schools, Albanian pupils are only very small percentages, means that their ‘fluid’ and ‘light’ identities as Albanians also reflect a fragile identificational capacity, especially when faced by very strong ethnic and religious identities performed by other minority groups in London, supported and even affirmed by the schools. Albanians have no racial distinctiveness or a typical ethnic business niche which, coupled with a ‘loose’ organisational and community life, leaves the children with no stable ‘ethnic reference’. A very drawn-out regularisation process created uncertainty, while the stigma associated with refugee status created a more concrete identification impasse. Discrimination and bullying

experienced at school also appear as important reasons that cause hiding of identity and rejection of Albanian identity. On the other hand, this outcome may also be interpreted as an attempt by these teenagers to find their own niche. Being dispersed and consisting of a small minority in a very mixed multicultural environment makes Albanian teenagers keep a low profile in terms of ethnic identification.

**Lola (mother, 39, London):** In the beginning there were many young people who didn't want to admit that they were refugees, they didn't want to admit their Albanian identity. They were trying to pretend they were British, or there were cases when they were under the influence of other communities; for example, in Wood Green there are many Jamaicans and the young people ... didn't have that attitude to say 'I am Albanian' and to stand up.

A contraction of identification strategies and rejection of the Albanian identity are important features of the identificational processes of the Albanian-origin teenagers in Thessaloniki. This is not to say that the symbolic ethnic identification is lacking, as we note from the mother-and-father quote below, but this is much less common compared to the teenagers in London.

**Jorgo (father, 53, Thessaloniki):** You can ask our daughter 'Which is the most beautiful language in the world?' She will say 'Albanian!'. And which is the most beautiful country in the world? 'Albania'.

**Monda (wife, 50, Thessaloniki):** Our daughter was six years old when we took her for the second time to Albania. We were on the bus, when she asked 'Are we getting close (to Albania)?'. 'Yes' I told her. 'Where is our border?' and I showed her. 'Here?' she asked and she sat down and kissed the ground. All the people on the bus started laughing.

Lamont and Molnar (2002) and Wimmer (2008) see avoidance of ethnic categorisation as a boundary-blurring strategy of ethnic minorities to counter racist stigmatisation, while 'universalising' general human values or references to local urban lifestyle are deployed to counter the perceptions of sharp ethnic divisions. However, a distinction should be drawn between the primordial and the more situational forms of ethnicity (see Kibria 2002). Both avoidance and self-identification in ethnic terms are referred to externally and primordially articulated ethnic identities, which in general are not questioned or challenged. This is not to say that a consciousness of the politics of such distinctions is missing, as Joana tells us below. However, self-identification and the related strategies here are very rational, expected to change over time and conditioned by the attitude of the host society, the economic conditions of the country of origin and the opportunities available in the future.



ZV: From all these qualities that we mentioned, which one characterises you?

**Joana (girl, 16, Thessaloniki):** That of a teenager!

ZV: Would you say that in another time you would choose another category as the most relevant?

Joana: Yes, I would. I would choose Albanian in future [...] because the more time passes, the more Albanians are liked better here in Greece, because now we still have a little bit of racism...

The situation is different again in Florence. The process of identification of the second-generation teenagers is characterised by a more ‘linear’ assimilation, following the same process evident among the parents as described above, with less contraction of ethnic identification processes and an impact of locality on these processes. From the quote of Aulona below we also see the expression of a ‘cosmopolitan ethnicity’ (cf. Warikoo 2004: 383 on the ethnicity of Indo-Caribbean teenagers in New York), although the social conditions faced by Aulona and other second-generation Albanians in Italy are very different from the super-diverse environment in New York. We also see that professional identity is strong among the second generation who are successfully integrating in the labour market.

**Aulona (woman, second generation, 24, Florence):** First of all, I am a designer. And then Albanian; I don’t deny it, in the end I am proud. OK, I do feel Italian, because I have grown up here. I combine both cultures, almost fifty–fifty... and I am glad that it’s like this. And when I went to France, although I stayed there very little, but seeing their culture... The more cultures I can combine, the better it is, I like it. Like the Italians say, I feel a citizen of the world, more or less...

On the other hand, the second generation experiences the ‘hierarchy’ within the various despised categories of immigrants and minorities and this affects their general perception on their origin. While the negative articulation of the Albanian identity creates an identity contraction or a lack of interest in cultivating Albanian culture, the term ‘extra-communitarian’ (*extracomunitario*), stigmatised as an umbrella term for all residents in Italy who originate from underdeveloped countries, creates another ‘identification phobia’ among the teenagers. These hierarchies are also observable in the attitude of the Albanian-origin teenagers towards current and future partners. Teenagers who feel integrated in Florence and identify with the national or local culture are against the choice as a partner from their own ethnic group or from other discriminated ethnic groups in Italy, such as Moroccans and Romanians. In this last aspect, they display a high degree of assimilation into mainstream (racist) Italian norms.

Across the three sites, schools are important institutions that impact the ‘content’ of ethnicity for Albanian-origin children. The process of ‘discovering’ ethnicity is coupled with becoming conscious about the negative articulation of Albanianness in the

host'country's public discourse, experienced in the micro and meso levels of institutional settings. These instances are experienced as confrontations in early years of schooling and exclusion on the basis of ethnicity, these being harsher for children who arrive at or after the school age. The stigmatisation has wider connotations that include 'Albanian' as the 'other', the 'different', the 'immigrant', the 'Muslim', contributing to a politicisation of Albanian ethnicity in a broader sense. The national media and its role in 'launching' and further elaborating these connotations feature prominently (see King and Mai 2002, 2008 on Italy). Although 'racism' is part of the teenagers' narratives as part of the lay jargon, in substance their narratives support Anthias' (1992) argument that racism is not necessarily built on explicit racial categorisations, but by using the ethnic category as a building-block it is materialised in exclusionary practices towards groups defined on the basis of racial and ethnic categories. The quote below of Blerim speaks for itself.

**Blerim (boy, 13, Thessaloniki):** Because I was from Albania, they used to insult me: 'You are Albanian!'; they used to beat me up. Everyone was against me. But after that, from the third year onwards, because I changed schools after that, some people left, some came, people changed and now they stopped. Now I am the same as the others.

In many instances an 'anti-Albanian' articulation has been internalised and further developed among the second-generation teenagers themselves. Images taken from the media and stereotypes suffered at school have created a negative perception of the teenagers towards Albanian migrants in the host country and towards Albania in general. This is seen in the attitude of the teenagers towards co-ethnic classmates, especially when they are newly arrived from Albania and have not yet acquired sufficient language skills. Intra-group exclusion is also practiced towards relatives or other first-generation migrants. As most Albanian migrants have very humble jobs, children associate Albanian identity with a poor and not-so-interesting lifestyle, and with uneducated and uncivilised behaviour.

As a result, one of the main features of the ethnic identification strategies of Albanian-origin teenagers in the three sites consists of a distancing from their own ethnicity, striving to cross the ethnic boundary to the host society, but facing insurmountable difficulties, living thus at the edge of the boundary. Helplessness and an 'identification limbo' characterise the identification narratives of Albanian-origin teenagers, especially in the Greek context, who speak the host country's language as

their main or only language, who have adopted the religion and are heading towards assimilation, but are forbidden a Greek identity. Changing the positioning of boundaries is hampered by a weak *ethnic agency* — the ability of people to change the conditions around them, especially the way they deal with their positioning in a society or with discrimination, by relying on the idea of belonging to a certain group of people, by the belief in a shared common past and common destiny, and the assertiveness that comes with this belief. The change of the boundaries' meaning is made impossible by the resistance of the Greek society and its ethnocentric Greek identity. As the account of Maria shows, this forbidden identity is experienced as alienating and disempowering.

ZV: Do you see yourself being part of an ethnic group?

**Maria (girl, 12, born in Greece):** I don't think so. Basically I wouldn't like to be part of an ethnic group. But often this can't even happen. I can't say 'my country'... that Greece is my country, that this is the history of my country, and that this is the religion of my country... I can't say this. This would have been good, but this is not possible. [...] Let's say, the teacher says 'Now we will do history'. I can't say 'Oh, the history of my country'. Because the other children will hear and they will say 'She went mad! This is not the history of her country. This is the history of *my* country' [...] Yes. Greece is not my country. But neither is Albania... It is not possible for Albania to be my country, because I know neither the language, nor the traditions, nor the history, nor anything from religion. I really know nothing from the history and traditions... So I constantly feel like I am somewhere at the border: I can go neither that way, nor this way!

The absence of an ethnic agency disables the strategies for countering stigmatisation; the same absence seems to negate the creation of a reactive or adverse identity in its classic definition. This is mostly observed in the case of boys, who employ the role of the 'reckless', asserting a kind of existence by breaking the rules, but again by not referring to any collective ethnic frames. The recognition of discrimination in the case of the girls shows at times the converse trend: a clear distancing from discriminative attitudes towards Greeks or any other people on the basis of ethnicity.

**Lela (mother, 36, Florence):** In many things, my sons feel Italian. But it's enough that just a small thing... for example, when they hear something on TV or when the police stop them. Or in a nightclub when they show their identification document and 'Ah, you are Albanian'... Then they have this nervous reaction and they take their motorbike helmet they write '100% Albanian' or '*skiptar*'.<sup>33</sup> This is all at a time when they feel Italian, but friends, institutions, whatever happens, tell them 'You are Albanian; you are not like me!'. And it's there where this nervous reactions comes from, when thinking 'So I am Albanian!' but with the frustration that they are Albanian but they do not know the culture, the history and the Albanian language.

**Arjana (girl, 17, Thessaloniki):** (I am) Albanian and a person who doesn't want to have hate for the Greeks or any other people, because that's not how I think it should be. Even if a Greek hassles me, it's not for me to react, I don't like these things; it's part of my character that I don't like to

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<sup>33</sup> Misspelling of *shqiptar*, which means Albanian.

fight. I want to show that even though they are racist towards Albanians, I am cultured and this is my attitude; if you want, don't speak to me anymore.

Reading the literature on ethnicity from a 'generations perspective', one line of argumentation has been that ethnic identity changes 'quantitatively and qualitatively' (Le Espiritu 1992) in different directions, over time and generations. There is, however, in my sample a difference between the first and the second generation, and more interestingly between teenagers and their siblings (see also Song 1997). Most of the teenagers interviewed had younger siblings, and in a few cases I was able to interview siblings, either separately or together. The older children, generally born in the early 1990s, who came with or joined their parents in the first years of migration, tend to have a very developed agency, as sometimes they had to share some of the parenting duties with their parents. Certain features of 'migrant identity' (Waters 1994)—being self-sufficient, studying harder than the others, being more goal-oriented and achieving the main goal of their parents' migration plan ('a better future for them')—seem to weaken in the younger siblings. This difference is clearly pointed out by Vilma below.

ZV: Do you see any differences between you and your younger sister?

**Vilma (girl, 16, Thessaloniki):** Yes, there are differences between me and my sister because she has become just like the Greeks. She always has to ask my mum about her lessons, like 'Mum, can you have a look at this?' Greeks don't do their homework themselves; they have to ask their parents. I tell her 'Try to do your lessons yourself; you will make a mistake, but you will learn for the next time'. She is the type that needs to ask mum. She is still very young, but it seems she is a bit insecure about what she does.

Another account from a parent in Florence:

**Lela (mother, 36, Florence):** When they (two sons) fight, the older one beats his chest and says 'I am Albanian!'. He has this patriotism, I don't know where it comes from because he came here at five years old. And jokingly I tell him 'But what do you know of Albania? What kind of Albanian are you?' ... Or he has this protective attitude towards me because he is the man of the house... there are some things which make me think there must be something in the DNA. (*smiles*)

## 5.3 Intergenerational transmission of identity

### 5.3.1 Transmitting 'Albanianness'

Intergenerational transmission of Albanian identity and culture between the first-generation Albanian migrants and their children has taken place according to three main

trends. First—but only in a few cases—children report that parents actively encourage learning about the history of Albania and about customs and wedding traditions. Secondly, there are cases when parents have consciously decided *not* to transmit their ethnic identity to the children. This was mostly where the parents themselves were experiencing an identity contraction, either because of harsh discrimination and/or as a way to fully assimilate into the host society. In this case, parents chose not to teach Albanian to the children, nor take them to visits to Albania, nor teach them Albanian customs. Nevertheless, the decision not to transmit Albanian identity, especially where language is concerned, is usually regretted by the parents who subsequently show an enhanced cultural awareness when compared to the first years of migration. However, the consequences that this earlier attitude has had on the teenagers are in many cases irreparable. Teenagers find it hard to learn Albanian at an older age, while many of those who were taught to identify wholeheartedly with the host country's culture also refuse to make efforts to connect with the parents' past.

The third trend is represented by Albanian migrants of the first generation who expect their children to maintain a symbolic identification as Albanian—to preserve some customs and respect for traditions and institutions, especially the family. Across the three sites I found a genuine interest of the second generation in knowing the folk culture of Albania—the old traditions, costumes and tales. Skanderbeg is by far the most popular historical figure in the narratives of the parents. Some teenagers in London are, indeed, quite ethnically 'aware' and 'involved', despite their ethnic identification being only symbolic. There are cases when the teenagers take the initiative to research the history of Albania, or get active in cultural causes such as the protection of the Albanian language.

**Donika (mother, 45, London):** Yes, I often speak to them about Albanian culture. My husband tells them how we were raised and how we lived, but I tell him: 'Please, they don't understand'. I tell them about Skanderbeg, my husband sometimes about Enver Hoxha, but I don't like politics. They do like to hear about Albania in general; the youngest one, my daughter, asks me to tell her about the old songs and folkloric music...

Intergenerational transmission (and also disruption) takes place also through *food*. These 'mixtures' are not always welcomed by the children, although they are invariably quoted as expressions of double identity from the side of the parents. Some teenagers explain their double identity and belongingness through the food that is prepared and

consumed at home, while those who reject Albanian identity also take a stand and dismiss ‘ethnic’ cooking as a principal activity in the Albanian family.

**Mirjeta (mother, 36, Thessaloniki):** As for the cooking and food, they will like it one time and another time they prefer to eat something else. You know those things we used to like when we were in Albania, for example, *trahana* or *papare*,<sup>34</sup> the children are like ‘ewww!’.

**Era (girl, 14, London):** When we are at home, we speak English, and then we speak Albanian as well. I don’t know, we do a bit of both in language, food, everything. Like one night we could have chips and one night we could have ... I don’t know, something Albanian, like *pilaf* ... when it’s Eid or whatever... When it’s Christmas we have a turkey, but we have also *baklava*<sup>35</sup> like Albanians and it’s kind of mixed, if you know what I mean.

**Rudina (girl, 18, Florence):** No, we cook very Italian, like pasta, things like that. Not Albanian food, or sitting there and cooking for hours, like in Albania, we don’t have that... (except) *baklava* (smiles). We make my cousin who lives downstairs cook us *baklava*.

As parents experience strong discrimination and negative stereotypes, they avoid putting much emphasis on ethnic identity. Discussions on Albanianess and Albania are also avoided due to the loaded meaning of ‘Albanian’ and the very negative connotations attached to it. For some, transmission of ethnic identity partly takes place by counteracting indirectly the bad stereotype that exists about Albanians in Italy.

**Clara (mother, 41, Florence):** When he [son] was going to school when he was little, he was coming back home crying; he was saying ‘They call me “*Albanese*”. I don’t know why they insult me!’. Because at home we tell him that we are *Shqiptarë*.<sup>36</sup> I had to explain to my son that *Albanese* is the translation of *Shqiptar* in Italian. Just like the *Italiani* are called in the US, so the Albanians are called *Albanesi* in Italy. It was then he realised what was happening. Because listening to the TV and others speaking, he had thought that *Albanese* means criminal!

Keeping a positive attitude towards Albania and Albanianess in general and not cutting ties in face of stereotypes is sometimes the best that parents can do in order for the second generation not to completely lose contact with their roots. Sometimes parents, especially the highly skilled ones, use indirect means like books and positive documentaries on Albania to trigger interest or increase knowledge of their children about Albania and its history and culture, while the DigitAlb service is present in many families and serves the same purpose. Therefore, when parents get engaged in the transmission of ethnic identity, they focus on ‘core’ elements or myths (Malcolm 2002), such as the language being a very old one in the Balkans. Other parents point to the

<sup>34</sup> *Trahanas*—food used for breakfast, similar to a handmade cereal. *Papare*—a famous sweet in central Albania.

<sup>35</sup> *Pilaf*—steamed dry rice, usually served with meat. *Baklava*—a sweet pie, typical dessert for special occasions.

<sup>36</sup> *Shqiptarë* is the Albanian translation for ‘Albanians’.

positive changes in Albania, such as the rapid development of tourism. There are also cases among the highly skilled parents who take a more proactive approach and try to challenge their children's feelings of inferiority because of their origins. Drawing on a bigger cultural repertoire they refer to important historical events and offer examples of a symbolic value by putting the modern discrimination of Albanian identity in a broader context.

**Pali (father, 48, Florence):** I have continuously tried to liberate her (daughter) from this kind of complex, basically for her not to be afraid (to admit her Albanian identity), although her country of origin is not liked, and there is nothing to be extraordinarily proud about in being Albanian. There are many good Albanian qualities, which should make one feel good. Among others, she also had an American friend. Her answer was: 'Dad, being American is something valuable, being Albanian is not that valuable'. [...] So yeah, she had this regret for being Albanian.

Parents also recognise the enormous difference between them and their children's generation due to their very simple childhood, starved of resources and entertainment, which impacts the 'content' of intergenerational transmission, and expectations from the side of the parents. Agroni speaks very passionately below about these issues:

**Agroni (father, 42, Thessaloniki):** We Albanians don't have culture [...] And besides what to teach to the children? The oldest one comes back from school at 4.40 pm, what to teach her? She will have to do her piano lesson, to have a shower, to do her homework, so when can I teach her the Albanian culture? We had more free time when we were young in Albania, and besides there were different conditions. I used to care for my sister who was younger than me. My mother used to go to work, those were the laws of Enver (Hoxha)...

I observed substantial differences in terms of the intergenerational transmission of identity across the three sites. In Britain, a conservative attitude towards Albanian culture reflects partly the more 'traditional' North Albanian origins of most Albanians there, but can also be understood as a reactive stance towards a very different culture and environment and the perception of impossibility to embrace it. These differences create a cultural closure, in contrast with the 'Southern' cultures in Greece and especially in Italy, with which Albanian first-generation migrants are more familiar. On the other hand, the problems of youth in the London suburbs are a real issue for the Albanian parents who put parenting top of their social functions. Holding on to the Albanian culture is also seen as a way to protect the family and the children from social problems which teenagers in the host country usually face.

As a result, the intergenerational 'gap' is more evident in Britain. The feeling of alienation of the parents, who suddenly find out that they have to know the place where

they live, is expressed especially in their inability to understand the youth culture in Britain. Parents in Britain are far more insistent in keeping the Albanian culture, which is often equated with strict discipline and having a 'normal' family-centred life. By contrast, in the two Southern European sites, Albanian parents are generally very open towards the host society's culture, as long as respect for the family, education and hard work are appreciated by the second generation. Intergenerational transmission is most direct and linear in the case of Albanians in Florence. According to Phinney and Vedder (2006: 182), 'acculturative pressures, beyond the effect of normal developmental processes, contribute to differences between immigrant adolescents and their parents [...] Thus the intergenerational discrepancy is larger in the presence of what might be called an acculturation gap, that is, when adolescents lean towards assimilation and parents wish to maintain their own cultural traditions without assimilating'. The acculturation gap is small in Florence due to an affinity to the Italian culture and language that parents felt even before migrating to Italy. Some children were given Italian names even when they were born in Albania, such as Mario, Aldo, etc. As shown in the quote of Michelino, below, parents' assimilation helps in softening the intergenerational divide.

**Michelino (father, 46, Florence):** Of course, he (adolescent son) has his own mentality but I give him leeway because I know the mentality of Italian children. I cannot stop my child, to separate him from his peers and give him our Albanian mentality when he is making his life with the Italians. He has total freedom from us parents [...] We understand him, despite our tough life that we had before, we still know everything, although he thinks we don't. We pretend we close an eye, but we still keep an eye on him.

Differences across the three sites are also observed in terms of parents' and teenagers' attitude towards inter-marriages. In general, parents in Greece and Italy are open towards relationships and inter-marriage of their children and the locals, despite their preference for the children to marry an Albanian. Albanian partners are preferred for the children not so much to preserve ethnic identity but rather to suit the family's status and economic situation. On the other hand, some of the highly skilled urban-origin parents actually prefer their children to marry natives. By contrast, parents in Britain are very much against inter-marriage with the locals. The element of race, which is not so prevalent in Greece and Italy, comes up as one of the most challenging topics for the parents in London. Among parents in London there are also cases where transnational marriages of their children with Albanians back in Albania are



contemplated. There are also instances of arranged marriages at an early age for the girls, usually insisted on by the parents so as to prevent inter-marriages, especially those with people of other races. As Qerim says below, parents ultimately dread inter-marriages of any kind, expecting such relationships to involve unhappiness for their families and divorce for their children.

**Qerim (father, 46, London):** This may be a mistake, but I have reached the point and have told my son: ‘Even if she was the worst of Albanians, that’s who I want you to marry, so that you stay together’.

As a result of the parents’ attitude, many teenagers in London are under pressure to have Albanian partners, as Lajmir shows below. This view is also based on a perception of an insurmountable incompatibility between a non-Albanian partner and their family’s reaction.

ZV: Do you have a girlfriend? I just wanted to know her ethnic origin...

**Lajmir (boy, 18, London):** OK, at the moment, no. But only with Albanians, period! Simply I don’t want to mix the race, for the family’s sake.

### 5.3.2 *Language*

The Albanian language is considered the most distinct feature of ethnic identity.

Language is often quoted as the main feature of Albanianness, as part of the family tradition and the means to connect to Albanian relatives. Language is transmitted as a resource or as part of identity, but often not accompanied by other elements of Albanian ethnicity or belongingness. Many Albanian parents consider the Albanian language as the main common feature and also show an appreciation of it as a resource of cultural distinction. This attitude often comes as a mature reflection of parents after many years of life in the host country. For instance, during the first years of immigration parents recall having very little time to spend with the family. The difficulties they themselves were encountering with the host country’s language also played a role in not putting pressure on their children to learn or retain Albanian.

The transmission of language has been affected by the migration experience and the stage that parents are at when children are growing up. This is particularly evident in London, where the Albanian first generation is very ‘behind’ in terms of language proficiency. In Florence and Thessaloniki parents learnt the host country’s language

earlier and quicker although most are still not very proficient in reading and writing. In London the involvement of teenagers in the process of regularisation and paperwork has been one passive way of them maintaining the language.

With few opportunities for learning Albanian through formal language classes, language is mostly transmitted in a passive way, through everyday communication at home, which makes the children's language informal and dialectal, depending on the parents' region of origin in Albania and their level of education. Other less common means are limited readings in Albanian, the Albanian media (DigitAlb) and interaction during visits in Albania. However, due to differences in the host-country language proficiency of the parents, this process is fragmented. Moreover, Albanian language proficiency decreases among younger siblings, along with the improvement of the host language skills from parents, and also because siblings speak in English, Italian or Greek amongst themselves.

Language proficiency can play an important role in parent-child relations and contribute to the shaping of power dynamics within the family. From the quote of Lida below, we also see that there is a transnational shift in the positionality of parents and children because of the language, which impacts on the migration experience in the host country and the transnational experience in the 'home' country for the parents and children respectively. It should be mentioned once again, however, that there is a difference in the attitude of the highly skilled first-generation migrants who invest more in learning the language of the host country. This not only enables them to give better support to the children with their lessons, but in general it increases the social capital that parents transmit to the children. I asked Lida what language she uses at home.

**Lida (mother, 46, Thessaloniki):** Both. I had to learn Greek because I couldn't speak when I went shopping. Now I know how to speak and also to read a bit, but I can't write. I actually learnt more from the children. They learnt quickly at school and I picked up a lot from listening to them. They used to laugh at me because I used to make many mistakes. But guess what? Now I am their translator, because they don't speak Albanian, so for some words and expressions they have to ask me.

The intergenerational transmission of language is also affected by discrimination and is part of the overall strategies of integration in the host society. Parents who migrated in the early 1990s preferred to have the language of the host country taught to the children (Zinn 2005). However, more than a premeditated choice, the disruption in intergenerational transmission of language seems to be the decision of inexperienced

migrants under the impact of strong discrimination in the first years of settlement in Greece or Italy, where more vital issues were given priority. As discrimination is not as strong nowadays, and as the second generation comes of age, the lack of proficiency in Albanian is acknowledged as a barrier both for transnational experiences and for other plans, like return, or other potential projects related to Albania. Coming of age, the second generation starts regretting its full assimilation and lack of skill in Albanian, which prevent them from interacting with the home country and experiencing the ‘simultaneity’ (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004) otherwise natural to their transnational condition. This is especially the case of teenagers in Florence where assimilation of the second generation is most evident. Sometimes this regret is also materialised in a feeling of reproach towards parents for their failure to transmit the language.

**Lela (mother, 37, Florence):** When they were little they didn’t mind (not knowing Albanian), but now that they are older ... and are confronted more often with Albanians, because there are many Albanians of their generation and more or less they speak Albanian ... I see now they would like to speak Albanian. But they speak really badly and they blame it on me. And I say that for me it was fundamental that I teach you Italian. Because that meant for me that the children could be integrated in the institutions and for example be able to stay after school and socialise with the Italian children. And besides the priority of immigrants is to work and pay the rent.

The transmission of ethnic identity and especially that of language is also enhanced by the presence of relatives and grandparents in Italy (see also Levitt 2009). Increasingly, the grandparents visit and, at times, co-habit with their children and grandchildren in Tuscany. In the Italian context this is increasingly common and with the naturalisation of Albanians in Britain the extended family is more present there also.

However, while King and Vullnetari (2006) demonstrated the importance of the ‘migrating grandparents’ in providing care to the grandchildren in their study of Thessaloniki, my study shows that the role of grandparents is broader. The first impact is shown in the retention of language. Grandparents do not speak Italian (or Greek etc.) and cannot learn it, so this encourages the family members, including children, to speak Albanian. Furthermore, as grandparents feel far more attached to Albania, they want to watch Albanian TV. Sometimes the arrival of grandparents has been the reason for Albanian migrant families to buy the satellite package offered by DigitAlb. The presence of Albanian media in turn has improved the language proficiency of the children, as we will see more specifically in Chapter 7.

### 5.3.3 *Ethnicity at a micro level: the family*

Since parent identity is one of the main identity traits held by the first generation, the family consists as perhaps the most important value. Respect for the family is one of the main normative values that the first generation strives to transmit to the second. Against an individualised and materialistic culture of the receiving society, parents hold on to family and kinship solidarity as important values that will ensure happiness and stability for their children. The intergenerational transmission of these values to adolescent children has sometimes taken place, however, against the fragmentation of the family in migration. As a result, the intergenerational transmission is very much affected by the way the bonds and boundaries within the family are played out.

The importance of the family is very strong too among the teenagers, although in some cases they also adopt a more independent and ‘casual’ idea on marriage and family. Here are two examples from different ends of the age-range of my second-generation interviewees:

ZV: So what would be your main future life goals?

**Darina (girl, 13, London):** To finish university, to become a dentist, to have my own clinic, to buy my own house, be happy... Um, maybe have a family, I don't know... I like the single life... just stay with my family, my mum and dad, to have them for a long time...

ZV: Are there conflicts between you and your parents and of what nature?

**Sidorela (woman, second generation, 22, Florence):** (At present), the way I live it's OK for my parents. But maybe there will be problems in the future because I would like to go abroad for some time, but parents want children to stay at home! So they would like that I live in some place close to them so that they can see me almost always! Yes, conflicts of this kind.

On the other hand, compromising on issues of independence, casual dating and nightlife has been used by the parents' as a strategy against an open conflict of values with adolescent children, or a loss of interest of the second generation towards parents' values systems and the family in particular. In Thessaloniki and Florence, parents are open to children adopting new cultural practices and the host country's ways of behaving; in general a combination of the two traditions is expected from the children, but parents do insist on the preservation of respect for the family. As Dora shows below, parents sometimes struggle to transmit a sense of respectable status and authority. Although issues of emotionality and bonding do not take precedence in immigrant families, they are more observed in the case of the families of the highly skilled immigrants.

**Dora (mother, 43, Florence):** We have tried to ‘shrink’ a little bit and to come to their level so that they understand our existence, because we cannot cancel our past! We need to preserve our past because it is a beautiful past. They (the children) know very well from which family they come from. Because they remember the feasts at home with all the relatives, grandparents and everything... And the values we had... so when we are at home I put the DVDs of their birthdays so that they can see themselves, but also the grandpa and grandma that passed away, the relatives that are far away, some cousins... because it the feelings and the emotions that make you live, because life is not the pub. Life is not the disco...!

Within the context of a ‘healthy family’, other matters, such as ideological and cultural issues, and especially gender roles, are discussed and redefined. Mothers take care that they transmit autonomy to the daughters while they try to prevent *machismo* and inculcate respect for gender equality in their sons. This is especially the case of Albanian parents in Florence. Some parents would like to pass certain symbolic traditions to the children, but see these traditions within the framework of family life and the collectivity more in general, rather than as fostering a distinct ethnic identity in their children. Self-identification as Albanian is thus related to family traditions and a healthy family life rather than referring to the group’s identity.

#### **5.3.4 Life-style values and cross-generation tensions<sup>37</sup>**

Apart from the intergenerational transmission of the ‘core’ elements of ethnic identity and important institutions such as the family, the communication between the two generations takes place through everyday negotiation of values and the shaping and reshaping of everyday life practices. In general, across the three sites parents praise the host-country culture for its good manners—being ‘cultured’ was associated with the meaning of having ‘*kulturë*’ under communism, which referred to having good manners and being presentable. This is not to say that intergenerational conflict does not take place. There is a typical ‘intergenerational disruption’ because of the impossibility of parents to catch up with the changes taking place in the family because of the impact of social and economic conventions in the host country, usually referred to as a ‘different life-style’. At a *micro* level, however, parents notice the difference between their idea of good behaviour and responsibility, and children’s adoption of the host country’s individualistic attitude, rejection of authority in the family and lack of appreciation of

<sup>37</sup> I must note that despite this aspect being important in terms of intergenerational transmission, this is not a project that falls in the field of social psychology and so cross-generational tensions are not the main focus of this study. However, the data are testimony to feelings and experiences that my participants have expressed in terms of generational issues.

the sacrifices parents have made in order to achieve an improvement in material comfort.

ZV: Do you speak at home about Albanian and English culture and the behaviour of the children?

**Fatmir (father, 41, London):** Every day, every day... something happens with the children and we say 'We are not English!' or 'We are not African' [...] For example, when someone comes home, you should stand up to show respect, whereas when I enter my son's room I see the girls and boys with their feet up on the couch saying 'Hiiii'; they just look at me once. They don't have respect, they throw things here and there. We used to have culture, maybe because we didn't have much, I don't know! We used to keep things with care, to clean them. Whereas nowadays, they don't care, 'no problems, I will take another one' they say. This has made people lazy and has affected culture and everything else.

This kind of conflict is especially lamented by daughters, who just want to have a social life like their host-country peers. If parents oppose this, the children put it down to the 'Albanian culture'. Anna is a typical case:

ZV: Are there topics where the opinion of parents differs from that of the children?

**Anna (girl, 16, Thessaloniki):** Sometimes... when I go out, because I see my friends who are Greeks, their parents are more free, more laid-back... They return home later... But mine instead are... typical Albanian parents. For example, 'Come back on time', 'Where did you go?' 'Be careful' 'Don't have boyfriends' 'Don't do this; don't do that...' The classics! So it is only on these topics that we sometimes have conflicts.

Boys also get reproached on issues of sexuality, appearance and nightlife, as we can see in the quotes of Alfonso and Dora below. In some cases parents find it hard to accept the boys' nightlife, even when they are in late adolescence. This puts considerable pressure on both parents and teenagers.

ZV: Would you say your parents would like you to behave in a certain way?

**Alfonso (boy, 15, Florence):** You could say that. For example, when I wear big trousers, 'Go back and change!!'... when I wear hip-hop loose trousers. Sometimes I get ready for school she goes 'Why have you worn these?' Sometimes when she is not paying attention I just run out of the house quickly (*smiles*).

**Dora (mother, 43, Florence):** We also had arguments because my husband had that idea 'Be careful with the girls, the one that you get to know, that's the one you should marry. I don't want you to change girls like the Italians do. We are not Italians!' That's what he asks from them; 'Choose a good girl, and don't play her around, because they are all the same'. And that's where the arguments started, because it's not easy, it's actually very difficult. And then 'Not Italian, but Albanian'...

Those second-generation teenagers who reject the Albanian 'identity' show a judgemental attitude towards Albanian culture. Parental discipline and rules are often mixed with Albanianness. As a result the intergenerational conflict at times creates a

reactive identification of the teenagers with the host country's culture. While discipline and the strict attitude of parents are considered important features of the Albanian culture, the quote below shows also how ethnic identification, or at least the choice of the ethnic label (in this case 'Greek'), is related to the main issues in the everyday life of teenagers and the way they are handled in their family.

**Genti (boy, 18, Thessaloniki):** Definitely Greek... Greek. Because I have been here since I was eight years old and it's difficult for me to have the Albanian culture. I don't think the Albanian culture is inferior, but I feel more like a Greek boy. And that's why we have debates with our parents all the time. For example, they reproach me and tell me 'You are always going out for coffee', basically things like this that I do, understand? The cultural differences between countries. Here teenagers go out every night to clubs and tavernas... 'What are these people doing?' my mum says. 'How can they go out every night?' I used to tell her 'I am coming back at 2–3am.' 'At 10.15 you should be home!'. But I used to tell her my friends return at that time. I still have many problems because of this, not only me but all the children that have come here. Because they have grown up here in another way [...] Being Greek it's more... It's like you are free. Greek parents and children don't have that distinction between them.

The issues of discipline and sexuality are especially sensitive in London. Parents' lack of social integration makes them over-protective and cuts the children off from the social life of their peers. This is even more emphasised because of the lack of social and emotional support that parents in Britain face due to their lack of extended social networks and recency of arrival.

### ***5.3.5 Migrant identity and the communist past***

Another problematic theme is the transmission of what I described early on in this chapter as the migrant identity—the ambition to achieve and excel through hard work. In general the migrant status is not particularly empowering for the parents as key actors in the transmission of this value, especially if they have become de-skilled through migration. Whilst some teenagers appreciate their parents' sacrifice and empathise with the 'migrant identity'—which in turn favours a more linear intergenerational transmission of certain values—in many cases children do not welcome the migrant identity discourse. An opposition is created between simplicity and hard graft that the parents are used to (both in Albania and in Greece, or wherever) and the materialism of the teenagers. Consider the following quote:

**Agron (father, 42, Thessaloniki):** Look, there are two main factors. That system [the communist system] taught us many things in different conditions, but now the conditions are different, there aren't the same conditions. We were doing things because of fear, because of ideology, that's why

we had that self-containment, but nowadays you can't restrict the children because they have their lives, the mentality is totally different. One day they might even say to you 'You know what? Why don't you get out of my sight, because I have my own life, I do what I want!' But it's also this other thing, that we cannot provide the same living conditions that Greek, English, or German parents can, who have a secure life. We still don't know where we are! Although we are in Greece, a bit better than in Albania, and we aren't suffering for water and electricity, but financially... we can't afford much, so we teach the children with that poverty we grew up with in Albania. [...] But my daughter cannot understand the topic of communism. I have to explain to her the communist theory, the development, the good and bad sides, that it had a principle that everyone had a job, but there was no profit, understand?

Not always is this past known by, or transmitted to the children. In some cases, there is curiosity from the side of the second generation, but there are also cases when such narratives of the parents are resisted by the teenagers. The stories about communism are usually told in order to make clear the contrast between parents' past and children's current opportunities. Communism is usually described in highly negative terms because of the restrictions and lack of options. Yet some parents look back and appreciate the closeness between people and the collective culture, contrasting with the individual culture in the places where they now live. In some cases, certain issues related to communism are transmitted and they often fascinate the children.

ZV: What do you know of your mum's past?

**Rudina (girl, 18, Florence):** I know something, the regime under which people used to live. The communist regime, I know about her family, yes, more or less I know everything... The communist regime was constraining people to do the military service. All women had to attend military service. This has really hit me! How did she do that, I try to imagine. When I told my friend Francesca that my mum has done military service, she started laughing (*smiles*).

Parents often withhold certain information from their past, especially on the dire poverty and living conditions in Albania, as they feel it is difficult for the children to understand. In other cases, as Le Espiritu and Tran (2002) found with Vietnamese in the US, Albanian parents point to the difference in the material resources and opportunities to develop that their children have, compared to the way they grew up. In general, parents who have themselves experienced assimilation want their children to see only their new identities. Sometimes information from the communist past is withheld in order to avoid expressions of contempt and pity from the children, which would sadden the parents or make them feel ignorant and weak in front of their offspring. Another quote along the same lines:

ZV: What do you know about your parents' past in Albania?

**Egla (girl, 15, Florence):** Sometimes when my brother or sister ask many things, they always tell us how in Mirditë they used to carry wood, and they used to travel during the night because they



lived in the mountains, my mum used to work when she was young, and they didn't have whatever they wanted to eat, like us here. So when my brother asks for things, my dad says 'OK, I will get that for you, but think about the way we used to live'...

The issue of materialism is especially salient in the case of the Albanian second generation in Florence where it is embraced by them as a way to assimilate. This is a cause for an intergenerational 'gap', in both an emotional and a cultural sense. The highly skilled and successfully integrated parents actively challenge this attitude; they refer to global frameworks of understanding poverty and fighting materialism. A highly skilled parent in Florence, for example, took her teenage sons on a trip to Africa to challenge their demand for expensive clothes and their high emphasis on appearance. The difference with these experiences is that they are not only used in order to discipline or motivate the children; but parents are themselves coming to terms with materialism on the one hand, and the severe lack of resources and their materially poor past, especially during communism, on the other. Here Lela reminisces expansively on this point:

**Lela (mother, 37, Florence):** I have tried (to give my children a normal life) but not only by telling about the life we had because it's difficult. It's difficult for me to tell them that I saw a banana for the first time when I came to Italy! It's difficult for me to make a comparison of my childhood with theirs! It's impossible! It's unimaginable because they haven't lived that. [...] I can't make comparisons between my life and theirs because in any case when they came here they had TV, videos, things that for us ... I couldn't even think about them. There was only one TV in the neighbourhood; there we used to gather, all the children. Because there were only three 'authorisations' to buy a TV for the whole neighbourhood, so who would get it first?! And besides, the TV was bought with a 'lottery'! Forty people from the same cooperative used to contribute monthly to a common sum ... (*sighs*) I can never forget these memories because I treasure what I have lived, but it is incomprehensible to the children! It took some time for me to believe this myself and was wondering whether they would understand. But they used to respond to me: 'Mum, that's your life, things that you have done. It doesn't concern me'. [...]

While these findings have particular resonance in the case of the Albanian migrants and their children because of the communist past, they are compatible with other research in the field. Commercial consumption, hedonism and a re-articulation of identity through 'appearance' were found to be characteristics of the Italian society starting in the 1980s (Ferrero-Regis 2008). In turn, research on materialism and adolescence has shown that increased materialism is strongly related with peer influence and decreased religiosity (Flouri 1999). My own findings show once more the strong tendency towards assimilation of the Albanian youth, seen through the embrace of their peers' socialisation and consumption patterns.

## 5.4. Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the multiple identities of first-generation Albanian migrants and their children, and the intergenerational transmission of identity, taking a comparative and thematic approach. *My findings show that there are important differences in the experience of identity between the first and the second generation. While the first generation experiences its identity mainly around roles and status, the second generation's identity is mostly focused on age-related emotions and activities.* Nevertheless, there are important in-group differences. The usual distinctions apply here in terms of different socio-economic status, education and work position among parents, which in turn affect the way children perceive and experience their identities; these aspects are compatible with other research on the identification of the second generation (see Levitt and Waters 2002).

In terms of ethnic identification, however, one of the main results of my research is that: *the ethnicity of origin, as least in primordial terms, is not a main reference in the identification processes of the Albanian migrants and their children.* Other identity traits are much more important to the teenagers; references to the primordial ethnicity are determined by contextual characteristics and factors, rather than by parents' or the ethnic community's 'legacy'. The primordial ethnicity itself is perceived as a symbolic and external entity to which Albanian-origin teenagers have to relate in their everyday lives. These findings contrast with previous studies of other second-generation groups and countries, which have established ethnicity as at the core of factors influencing the identity and integration strategies of the second generation.

There are also important differences between the research sites, mainly related to the importance that ethnicity has in the public realm of each of the countries where the three cities are located. Despite these differences, among both parents and children there are consistent patterns of ethnic identification, varying from a symbolic attachment to ethnic identity to the contraction of identification and the denial or avoidance of Albanian identity. As the latter consists of a major trend among the second generation: *a recognition of 'blending of cultures'—an expectation that one would have when working with second-generation teenagers—is not common.* Especially in Greece, there is a contraction of the ability to relate to any of the 'cultural sources': the Albanian one is unwanted, as it is highly stigmatised in their everyday environment, and the 'host'

one is unwelcoming, with full membership and belongingness denied. This is explained by the role of actors situated in a social field on the process of boundary making (Barth 1969; Wimmer 2008). More specifically, Wimmer (2008) distinguishes between strategies that attempt to change the location of existing boundaries and those that do not aim at the location of a boundary, but try to modify its meaning and implication by challenging the hierarchical ordering of ethnic categories, de-emphasising ethnicity and emphasising other social divisions, or shifting one's own position in relation to the boundary.

Albanian second-generation teenagers generally show a weak 'ethnic agency' needed to perform the strategies that target the location of existing boundaries or modify their meaning by challenging the hierarchy of ethnic categories. The boundaries are externally erected and the strategies that require a group's ethnic action are not evident. What is more common is the tendency towards boundary crossing and repositioning, performed at an individual level and accompanied by an indifference towards other co-ethnics and referring to the negatively articulated 'Albanianness' as the reference for distancing. When positioning themselves along the boundaries, external categorisation and identification by others are the main frames which Albanian-origin teenagers refer to. According to Jenkins (1997: 61), 'a claim to ethnic identity must be validated by an audience of outsiders or others—because without such an audience the issue would not arise—but it seems to make little sense to talk about an ethnicity which does not at some point and no matter how weakly or tenuously recognize itself as such'. Discrimination appears as an important factor that shapes identification processes, a detailed analysis of which follows in the next chapter.

*Ethnicity is sometimes 'activated' during the intergenerational transmission, as a way for the parents to react to the intergenerational 'gap', which is generally wider in immigrant families.* This dynamic process has parents as the main actors. The findings also show that there are some values and institutions that are transmitted and others which are consciously withheld by the parents. Highlighting the difference between the primordial understanding of ethnicity and the experience of ethnicity in everyday life is important also in the case of the intergenerational transmission. As Kibria (2002) maintains, most of the research on the second generation has focused on primordial ethnic identity, which is indeed what is referred to by both parents and children when reactive identity or avoidance and rejection of Albanian identity are articulated and experienced. Nevertheless, ethnic identity and its transmission are understood and

experienced as major factors related to Albanian migrants' and children's everyday lives, especially in relation to 'host' institutions and the public realm. The impact that this understanding has on migrants' and their descendants' perception of their identity depends on their socio-economic status and represents also gendered patterns (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992). The factors affecting external identification – the 'host' institutions and the public realm – are also discussed in the next chapter, which focuses on the processes of integration.

## Chapter 6

### INTEGRATION

This chapter focuses on integration and, following the model of the previous one, is in three main sections: the integration patterns of the first generation, then of the second generation, and the intergenerational transmission of integration. Each section draws material from the three sites of this study and is written comparatively and thematically. Since integration is conceptualised as a process, rather than an ‘outcome’, I describe and analyse patterns, dynamics and strategies of integration by the two main groups of participants across the three cities. The intergenerational transmission of integration discusses the process of transmission distinguishing two main strands: the impact of the parents’ settlement history on children’s adaptation and integration, and the transmission of the migration and integration project.

#### 6.1 The first generation

I make a basic distinction between structural and social integration, following the established literature reviewed in Chapter 4. Under structural integration I consider, in turn, legal, labour and citizenship dimensions. Following on from the sub-section on social and cultural integration, I then consider how gender and discrimination impact on integration processes.

##### *6.1.1 Structural integration*

###### *6.1.1.1 Regularisation and interaction with institutions*

Since one of the main goals of migration was economic improvement, Albanian migrants have experienced a significant structural integration, especially in terms of the labour market. This process has been highly conditioned by legalisation, widely considered as the first step towards integration. For many Albanians, however, ‘getting papers’ has been a long process, dependent on institutional and economic factors and

followed by more complications in terms of actual implementation (Glytsos 2005). Across all three sites, the lengthy process of regularisation and uncertain residence rights have affected migrants' strategies of integration and feelings of belongingness, while creating stressful spatial immobility and affecting migrants' psychological well-being.

Nevertheless, there are important differences in regard to history of immigration and the regularisation process in each of the three countries. While migration to the three sites has been mainly irregular (King 2003), the different legislative and policy frameworks in place in each of the countries has affected migrants' regularisation and, subsequently, their integration. In Greece and Italy, Albanian migrants migrated illegally and over a longer span of time than in Britain. They got regularised after a few years while creating networks with other co-nationals and sometimes migrating and re-migrating back and forth to Albania. The most successful regularisation 'story' is that of Albanian migrants in Florence, reflecting three waves of Italian regularisation in 1995, 1998 and 2002. Migrants here recognise the role that the rights to apply for long-term residence, for family reunification and for the Italian citizenship have on their perception of integration. As King and Mai (2004) found with Albanians in Lecce and Modena, Albanians in Florence are moving rapidly towards structural integration. As a result, they show a high degree of incorporation, especially structurally and occupationally, appearing as a 'mature' immigrant group that experiences settlement and starts to conceive itself as a minority.

In Greece, the issue of papers is one of the major factors affecting integration. This is also related to the contradiction that migrants feel: on the one hand being long-term residents in the localities where they live; on the other, having an insecure legal status. Moreover, Albanian migrants experience a different treatment when compared to migrants of, for example, Russian origin, both in formal terms and also informally, through interaction with institutions and state structures (Psimmenos and Kassimati 2003). Indeed, the unsettled situation with residence papers is associated with feelings of humiliation, exploitation, dehumanisation and imprisonment. This is on top of migrants' heavy workload, apart from other consequences such as high expenses and worry about the children's future. Unlike Albanian immigrants in Italy, this uncertainty blocks claims of participation in the host society. As Agroni's quote shows below, regularisation and residence rights also impact belongingness, civic responsibility and engagement.

**Agron (father, 42, Thessaloniki):** Let me tell you what our real problem is. If we could feel some kind of security in the Greek state, in terms of papers I mean, we would be very happy here. Because we have escaped the suffering we had in Albania, the children are growing up here, and we want to adapt to this state. Just like it is in Germany or Italy, where you can get the citizenship, it doesn't matter if you are Albanian or whatever. You can vote in the local election for the road where you walk everyday, because you are where your job is. Albania for us is like a remote, foreign country! Because you are where you eat, where you pay your contributions, it's there where you can raise your voice! [...] But we have been here for twenty years and we don't have papers.

In Britain, the Albanian community is mostly composed by those who migrated together with their children at the end of the 1990s. Albanians arrived in Britain when the political discourse was already characterised by a stigmatisation of asylum-seekers and their alleged impact on the health and welfare system (Hampshire 2005). The routes that the Albanian migrants followed to enter Britain were limited to claiming asylum as Albanians after the pyramid crisis in 1997; claiming asylum as Kosovans after the refugee crisis in 1999; entering illegally through smuggling (usually in the backs of lorries); and more recently, though family reunification.

Nevertheless, the Albanian community in Britain is now a 'settled' community. The family amnesty of 2003<sup>38</sup> and the subsequent naturalisation of Albanian migrants in the mid-2000s were the important events that marked this process. The majority of those who now reside in the UK claimed asylum, but the consequences of this choice were more challenging than first predicted. The serious repercussions for their integration in the UK developed throughout the period of settlement, which lasted on average six years. The first years of arrival are described by the immigrants as years of great uncertainty, fear and stagnation. There was a feeling of fatality, a 'suspended' life and psychological persecution during the numerous interviews experienced as part of the process of applying for refugee status. This was reflected in participants' refusal to be voice-recorded yet another time. A typical example:

**Flutura (mother, 43, London):** Wait a minute: will you write my name and other details? [...]... because we have had a terrible time with interviews and papers... Oh, we have filled sacks with papers and interviews and we don't know... We are terribly scared of interviews!

As migrants themselves also recognise, Albanians in Britain had a different starting point also because of the material support they received from the state. Arriving in

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<sup>38</sup> Family Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) Amnesty, introduced by the Home Office on 24 October 2003.

Britain as asylum-seekers made them part of various social assistance programmes, which significantly improved the family's access to welfare.

**Qerim (father, 46, London):** I am satisfied with the way this country handled our situation; they have treated me very well, even when I was with a 'negative'.<sup>39</sup> [...] Because we came here for economic reasons and they gave us the opportunities to achieve something. I came here in 1998 from Italy. [...] Even though I remained here though I was sent the 'negative' they still gave me a house, nobody stopped me in the street, they gave us help for our children... I am grateful. I know the ones who were returned [to Albania] would speak differently. But they forget that they came here with nothing and returned with their pockets full. We came here with all the others like little children and they let us 'grow and stand on our feet'. For me England is a second mother.

The cost that Albanian migrants paid for their naturalisation was, however, very high. They remained for years cut off from their families—a traumatic experience especially for those who had never migrated before. Many of them faced a life dilemma—whether to stay and continue the nightmare of waiting for the refugee status or 'crack under pressure' and return. The grief of the memories related to regularisation is especially emphasised in those cases when migrants lost very close family members and had to decide whether to go and see them for the last time or attend their funerals, performing thereby important family obligations according to the Albanian culture, or stay and further their goal of settling in Britain.

**Mimoza (mother, 39, London):** We had too much pressure, too much time waiting, waiting endlessly... It was so, so bad! [...] yes, I lost my sister six years ago and I couldn't go [to her funeral]. At that moment I wanted to withdraw my application [for asylum] to go back. I don't know what kept us here! I couldn't go...

This process also had serious impacts on some migrants' health. Migrants and community activists recollecting the memories of those years tell how dispersal, detention, false alarms of them being returned and the time of waiting for years for the 'brown envelope'—the outcome of the application for the refugee status—were traumatic experiences. Migrants suffered stress and depression during the application and the questioning at the Home Office.

And yet, despite the negative consequences, the choice to come to Britain as asylum-seekers enhanced these migrants' integration in other respects. In contrast to Albanians in Greece and Italy, Albanian migrants in the UK were very much in contact with state structures throughout the process of settlement and were subject to many systems of support. These also included better access to information and opportunities for education and language training. Moreover, there was no pre-established ethnic

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<sup>39</sup> 'Negative' is the term Albanians in Britain use for their asylum request being refused.



community, and hardly any chain migration, so this first wave of migrants came into direct and immediate contact with different parts of the host-society structure. In retrospect, this process of ‘socialisation’ with institutions was empowering and helped them in learning some of the social and political rhetoric of the country.

The serious problems with regularisation made Albanian migrants move towards naturalisation, although there is a tendency to emphasise the instrumental character of citizenship; feelings of belongingness are usually downplayed when the decision to naturalise is discussed. Migrants’ narratives refer to the benefits of having the host country’s citizenship in terms of avoiding the hassle and expenses of paperwork and stress of residence documents, securing of freedom of movement.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, citizenship is also seen as a means to secure ties with the host country in elderly life and to make return to Albania a choice both for them and for their children.

#### *6.1.1.2 Integration in the labour market*

Because of the lack of legal status, many Albanian migrants initially worked ‘in the black economy’ and got very badly exploited; yet this was rarely voiced as discrimination by the first generation because the possibility to work was taken as a valued opportunity. Many of them had employment as their main goal, so that they could improve their financial situation; therefore they took every opportunity to work during the time they could stay in the host country. The situation with working conditions improved significantly after they gained legal or refugee status and, in some cases, full citizenship. For those who are still in an irregular position, however, the reality of labour-market exploitation persists—this is especially a continuing problem in Greece.

There are some differences in the attitude towards work between the initial migrants and those arriving later. Bardhi recalls how a naïve materialistic urge and curiosity for a less-materially restricted life was an initial push for his migration to Greece.

**Bardhi (father, 43, Thessaloniki):** Many friends of mine came to Greece, and were telling us how Greece was. Many positive things, they were talking about high wages; for example, after two or three weeks of work you could buy a TV whereas in Albania you would have to work forty years for that! A CD player or tape recorder, or a pair of jeans meant something big for us in those days.

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<sup>40</sup> The attitude towards freedom of movement may have changed after the visa liberalisation for Albania of 8 November 2010.

Over time, financial prosperity and economic security generated feelings of belongingness, which are contrasted both with symbolic belongingness currently to Albania, and with their past life there. As the migration process ‘matures’, migrants are empowered to express their opinion on the pros and cons of their decision to migrate. For instance, the difficulties of the integration process and the immediate need to work have affected the family planning of the immigrants. In many families of migrants who migrated in the early 1990s there is a considerable age difference between the siblings. Some immigrants have decided not to have children because of the impossibility to properly provide for them.

In general, there is some upward mobility in the labour market, especially of those who were educated in Albania and/or come from urban areas, although their main jobs are related to sectors that cover migrant issues, such as in the health, welfare, legal or education sectors. However, there is also a de-skilling process that many parents went through, which is remembered painfully.

**Monda (mother, 50, Thessaloniki):** Although I wear plastic boots and gloves, I am still known as a high-class lady! One should not lower her personality or morality wherever she is. Sometimes you may feel down though... I fell into pessimism after I had an operation... and was asking myself, why did I leave my job in Albania? I was a teacher, why did I have to leave the job? I had only one child, I could have taught him better values probably, I don't know... I regret that I came here ... firstly because I cannot work in my profession, secondly in this country we have remained without a pension! And we are not settled yet, we don't have papers...

Integration in the labour market differs significantly across the three sites. Variations are mainly related to differences in accessibility to the educational system, the characteristics of the labour market and the nature of the opportunity structure. Some of the migrants experienced de-skilling and expressed contempt for not being able to enter education to back up qualifications taken in Albania with other qualifications in order to get an office-based job. The education and training system in Greece is particularly inaccessible, while many highly educated migrants in Florence have managed to ‘convert’ their degrees, a process facilitated by their familiarity with the Italian language. In Britain the education system is even more flexible.

Integration in the labour market also depends on the structure of employment in the respective cities. Although a dream for a better career was one of the factors that inspired migration, the highly skilled who migrated to Thessaloniki find it very hard to

realise their goals, as Monda related above. Or consider, for example, migrants with an artistic training. In Thessaloniki their sector is underdeveloped. In Florence there is the converse situation, as the art sector is very developed, but less so other segments of the labour market for high skills. In London, there is a distinct polarisation between the highly skilled and the low skilled (Kostovicova 2003). However, after the regularisation was completed, a category in the middle was created with people that own their businesses. The British labour market is also more flexible and more experience-based than in the other two countries, providing opportunities for vocational training and voluntary work, which are absent in Greece. The main obstacle to the structural integration of Albanian migrants in London has been the lengthy regularisation procedure, reflected also in delayed social integration. Instances of exploitation in the labour market are very common, expressed usually as very low wages, as in the words of Eliana:

**Eliana (Albanian girl, 15, London):** My parents... it was very hard for them. 'Cause they had to work at very low, low, low wages, beneath the low wages [i.e. minimum wage], 'cause they didn't know anything. And they had to work extra hard; some were paid £100 a day and they were paid £25, 'cause they didn't know any better. They still don't know the laws, what's right and what's wrong; they know the basics like not stealing and all that, not that they would break the law, but I am saying... They didn't know at the time; they didn't know about human rights. So they were unfairly treated. So they had to work extra hard. And they had the Home Office, passports to get.

Among the three sites, Florence appears as the city with rather particular elements that affect migrants' integration in the labour market and beyond. Firstly, Florence is appreciated by both parents and children as a special place for their integration, due to its left-wing orientation and its reputation for being accepting towards immigrants. Florence offers a dynamic and flexible labour market and, therefore, many opportunities to the low-skilled, due to its tourist activities and the surrounding industrial enterprises. It is also noted for having more work opportunities for women, such as work in restaurants in the city centre. Its tourist orientation, however, limits job options in other sectors and does not offer many opportunities for mobility to the professionals. In general, however, the opportunity structure of Florence is appreciated—both for the economic prosperity of the first generation and the potential mobility of the second generation. Because of these assets, Florence is also seen as an important city in the north of Italy; therefore it has been a target for migration within Italy of Albanians who initially settled in the south. Moreover, due to its cultural heritage and international

reputation, Florence is also an inspiring destination for artists, especially painters. The highly skilled parents see Florence as a good location to raise their children, due to its rich cultural capital.

However, Florence is one of the most expensive places in Italy to live, and this creates issues with housing. Problems with housing in Florence have been documented long before Italy and Florence became immigrant-receiving areas. According to King (1987: 127), many Italian cities have long experienced housing issues; Florence was one of them, with 30,000 people demonstrating for housing reform in 1968. The situation is even more problematic for the Albanian immigrants, since they experience discrimination in the housing market—as immigrants and as Albanians. Long-term immigrants are increasingly buying flats in order to escape the extremely high rents, but also to avoid discrimination.

On the other hand, successful participation in the labour market has caused a change in public opinion towards Albanians in the two Southern European cities. This is recognised by the migrants and is attributed to their high participation in the labour market and contribution to the economy. Cases of collaboration and joint ventures between Albanian immigrants and locals are a sign of such participation and in turn enhance feelings of integration. The arrival of other immigrants and the consequent increase in the multicultural composition of the host countries have reduced the ‘visibility’ of Albanians as an immigrant group, as explained first by Clara in Florence, and then by a discussion group of fathers in Thessaloniki.

**Clara (mother, 41, Florence):** In the beginning my brother, who knew very good Italian, would call for a job: ‘Hello, I am looking for a job’. ‘Where are you from?’. This was the first question! ‘Look madam, please don’t hang up. I am a good person and have a good work experience...’ ‘But where are you from?’. ‘I am Albanian’. She would hang up immediately! Whereas now things have changed. You go and present yourself and say, ‘I am from Albania’, and the employer says ‘It doesn’t matter (where you are from)’. It’s sufficient that you have the required qualities (for the job).

**Ismail:** They [native Greeks] have started to see the Albanian with a different eye, not like they used to see him in the beginning. And this is due to the Albanians themselves.

**Neritan:** They have changed it (the attitude) because we (Albanians) work a lot! Albanians are the most correct and hard-working people here in Greece. Although they tried very hard and with all means ‘*të na bëjnë rezil*’ (idiom: to give us a bad a reputation), we showed who we are!

### **6.1.2 Social integration**

#### *6.1.2.1 History of immigration and impact on social integration*

In general, Albanian migrants have prioritised their economic goals over social integration. As a result, their narratives on social integration are much more limited compared to those on regularisation, family or children's education. Participation in cultural events or organisations and clubs is minimal, apart from a few activities of the immigrant organisations, mainly of a cultural nature, in which some interviewees said they took part. Social integration seems to be negatively affected by a lack of networks and of efforts to create them.

**Anila (mother, 35, Florence):** Can I tell you something? In fourteen years that I have been living here, I have started this year to go to the cinema because I go with my daughter. Because my husband works every day; on Sunday we are home, what to do first? We have to stay with the children, we have to do the family shopping and this and that... So basically our economic conditions haven't allowed us any kind of entertainment. We do beach holidays in Albania, we are limited in our expenditures for clothing, not to mention brands... We don't have any kind of entertainment.

There is a lack of investment in creating relationships with the locals, which subsequently is acknowledged as a missed networking and integration opportunity. In some cases, long-term first-generation migrants acknowledge the negative effect of their initial minimal contacts with the locals on their later reluctance to invest time in establishing relationships with them, despite acknowledging the change overall of the attitude of the host society towards immigrants, and Albanians in particular.

As a result, belongingness is mostly felt towards the family. Only rarely do migrants refer to wider friendship circles. Contact and interaction with the 'locals' is mostly through work. Across the three cities, but especially in London, migrants make a differentiation between native and Albanian friends. While Albanian friends are intimate friends, native friends are seen more as casual friends with whom they mostly socialise in the public realm. Friendships, especially in the case of the mothers, mainly take place through family visits to homes. In many cases, the patriarchal attitude of Albanian men towards their wives is an obstacle for the creation of networks and social integration in general. Albanian men are against socialisation with other families, apart from their kin or very close friends, and suspicious towards socialisation with natives.

This attitude spills over also towards the socialisation of their children, especially the girls, as Flutura explains:

**Flutura (mother, 43, London):** I try to send her (teenager daughter) everywhere so that she does not remain ignorant of life. But my husband doesn't always agree. You know how Albanian men are! When I used to go to the college to take English classes, he used to get nervous. Now he has started with my daughter; he asks why I have to send her there.

Social integration differs a lot across the three cities. It is more developed in Florence, and the least in London. One of the main reasons for this 'delay' in London is the recency of arrival there coupled with the lengthy regularisation process that migrants went through. A direct effect of this process has been a disinclination towards learning the language, while the isolation and the feeling of stagnation created by the same process blocked the social interactions of the Albanian immigrants with both the locals and co-nationals. Hence in the British case, we can speak of a social integration impasse, which persists despite the emerging success regarding integration in the labour market.

**Mimoza (mother, 39, London):** Now we are adjusted to this society, but for five or six years we suffered a lot. We didn't have papers, we weren't allowed to work! It was very bad because I wasn't used to being like that, just staying at home doing nothing. I was used to going to work and having a free life. That's why I think it was not good (migrating to Britain). But now I am working, my husband is working, the children feel English. That's why we are staying, but we are still not happy with this.

Social integration in London was also affected by the dispersal policy the migrants were subject to upon arrival, which inevitably affected the establishment of relationships with the locals, although dispersal was in many cases followed by internal migration towards London. Interviewees report that they do not have friends or acquaintances apart from a few other Albanian families. Because of the absence of chain migration, the number of relatives or kin they have in Britain is also small. Hence, there is a general feeling of solitude and isolation because of the lack of a supporting kin structure that the first generation used to have in Albania.

Although most of the interviewees, both in the case of parents and children have now received British citizenship (the '*British*', as they call it), there are cases of migrants who reside on leave to remain of a duration of one or three years and have to reapply again, and a minority who are still waiting for the outcome of their refugee application. These 'uncertain diasporans', as Kostovicova (2003: 64) calls them, are the most

vulnerable group as they feel isolated and left behind also from the rest of the community, those who got the *British*. In Greece and Italy, Albanian migrants have more relatives because of the chain migration in both countries. Partly for this reason, social networks and, in general, social integration are based on and organised around the relatives and co-villagers who have migrated at different times to the same country or city.

Social integration is also affected by differences in patterns of settlement and spatial segregation. In all three cities Albanian immigrants are generally rather dispersed. In Florence and Thessaloniki many immigrants live in the centre of the city, but some have moved to the suburbs, because of high rents in the centre. In Florence, this sometimes follows an initial experience of living in the city centre as a newly arrived migrant employed in the tourist sector. While immigrant neighbourhoods are not so typical in the two southern cities, there are nevertheless existing spatial divisions of social geography on the basis of social class and the concentration of the well-off parts of the cities' inhabitants in particular areas. These are areas where Albanians do not live. Interestingly, the more working-class suburbs are represented in the narratives from Florence and Thessaloniki as 'normal' native neighbourhoods, where an immigrant could integrate discreetly. In these areas there is thus a more direct contact with the 'mainstream', which affects the overall course of integration.

In London the situation is somewhat different: here, too, the Albanian population is dispersed, but over a much wider distance given the vast scale of this city. There are some relative concentrations, for instance, in outer East London (Ilford, Dagenham, etc.), but—another difference—Albanians in London also live in a variety of different ethnic contexts, some in predominantly 'white' working-class estates, others in highly mixed, multicultural neighbourhoods.

#### *6.1.2.2 Cultural similarity and difference*

Perceptions of cultural difference, and of similarity with the culture of the host society, also play a role in the experience of social integration. In general, the two Southern European cities are in contrast with the perception Albanian migrants have of culture and socialisation in London. But differences are also noticeable between Thessaloniki and Florence, the latter standing more in the middle of a continuum between the 'Southern' culture of a community, centred on family, kin and traditional norms on

gender, and the 'Northern' European culture based on individuality and equality. An important phenomenon in terms of social integration, especially evident among parents in London, is the 'lagging behind' of the parents. Migration has created a 'social integration delay' since parents became, through their migration, 'disintegrated' from the societies of origin and were unable to socially integrate in the host societies. There is also a difference between the reaction of migrants from rural areas and those from the urban ones in regard to the relationship with locals. Those from urban areas show a higher predisposition to establish relationships with the locals—both natives and other minorities.

The process of adjustment of the first generation of Albanian migrants in London was characterised by culture shock. Once the goal of settlement was achieved, Albanian migrants found themselves in a multicultural environment characterised by a mix of people of different races and ethnicities and, also, by individuality and social phenomena like single-parent families, drugs, gambling, teenage gangs and murders—all of which were unusual in Albania. This has made parents concentrate on the family and on the education of the children, rather than on attempts to establish relationships with people in the areas where they live. But this is not the whole story, for migrants also appreciate the multicultural environment of London and the presence of people from all over the world, which makes it less hostile towards foreigners. A feeling of anonymity and comfort thus characterises many migrants' experience in these neighbourhoods, which is enhanced by the lack of marked social stratification in such areas.

Migrants in Thessaloniki, in turn, feel more a continuity of their culture and traditions. This is sometimes expressed through references to pan-ethnic identities, such as references to the Balkan culture, pointing to the similarities between the Albanian and the Greek way of life. Albanian immigrants in Florence likewise feel an affinity towards the Italian culture—something they felt even before migrating to Italy. As a result, the appreciation and adoption of social and cultural values found in the host society, followed by a certain strategic mimicry or assertive adaptation (see also Romania 2004) is more natural for Albanians there, as Tony explains below.

**Tony (father, 41, Florence):** I can't say I learnt so much from the Italians, because as far as I can see we are similar as people, it's not the difference between the Middle East and Italy for example, I think it's the same way of living, of thinking, that's how I see it. I haven't had difficulties to get into the Italian way of living. And I have followed the way of imitating them, not because they know more or are better, but because I live here. So I have learnt to lie a little like they do, to be



less faithful like they are, so that I can live with them. I have stopped thinking like a pigheaded (man) and start asking what was said, why it wasn't done that way!! [...] So some harsh traditions we inherited from communism I left behind, and I got what I liked in the Italians, the tolerance... I don't know whether it is because they are Italian or because they haven't lived under dictatorship... but on tolerance they have taught me something.

Other parents, however, point to what, in academic terms, we might refer to as the liminality of Florence as a tourist destination, which makes micro-level interaction and socialisation with the locals more difficult. The character of Florence as a tourist destination is not new. In fact, Adamson (1993) describes the same patterns in his study on Florence at the beginning of the twentieth century, with the transformation of Florence into a 'Mecca' for foreigners, to the resentment of the ordinary inhabitants of the city. The same insight is also found in the Albanian immigrants' narratives, wherein Florence is seen as 'cold' and 'commercial', and is contrasted with the values that Albanian migrants appreciated back home, in particular the collectivity of life and lack of social stratification. The appreciation of liminality is a sign of integration itself, related to a feeling of permanence and settlement that migrants increasingly experience, against the short-term nature of newly arriving migrants and tourists.

#### *6.1.2.3 Immigrant and ethnic organisations*

The role of ethnic or immigrant organisations across the three sites is multiple, although it differs between countries, while the intensity and the variety and type of their activities changes also over time and between different organisations in the same country. The main function consists of bringing together the Albanian community based on its distinct features and needs in the respective country. Organising community gatherings on the occasion of national celebrations or cultural events with Albanian artists are typical activities. Language classes, both in the host-country language for the first generation and in Albanian for the second generation, are a common purpose of such organisations.

While a transnational orientation brings about their formation, these organisations contribute to immigrants' structural and social integration (see also Fauser 2007; Schrover and Vermeulen 2005). This is both through concrete projects tailored and funded for these purposes, but also through providing a meeting point for the immigrants of both generations where networking and socialising take place.



**Photo 6:** Celebration of the Flag Day by the Albanians in Florence, November 2008.



**Photo 7:** Albanian mother enrolling her children in the Albanian language classes organised by association 'Ardhmëria' (The Future), London, February 2008.

In London, for example, mothers take the time that children spend in the class learning Albanian or practising traditional Albanian dances, to prepare Albanian coffee and chat about their everyday problems. In Thessaloniki, women who met through an organisation decided to meet on 8 March every year and celebrate Women's Day together, in the way they used to do in Albania.<sup>41</sup> In Florence community life is more haphazard although there are many more cultural events with Albania as a theme, affected by the emphasis on art and history in Florence in general. These organisations are important also for the connection they establish between the parents and the different institutions. They can take the role of the mediator between the family and the school or social services. This role is especially important in London where parents cannot speak much English and the families do not have relatives and social support.

However, the impact of such organisations should be evaluated in relation to the low level of organisation of Albanian immigrants across the three sites. Many parents express explicit mistrust towards Albanian immigrant organisations and their leaders; some blame their mistrust on irregularities in these organisations. Competition and lack of cooperation among different Albanian organisations in each site also contribute to lessening their impact. Agron explains:

**Agron (father, 42, Thessaloniki):** Organisations are of no value here, nobody considers them; nobody recognises them because of the structure they have. They take funding from the EU through various programmes and don't do much. [...] They are like the political parties in Albania, divided just like the parties there.

Instances of getting organised with other co-ethnics are low in Thessaloniki and Florence, although there may be a bias in the case of London, since the recruitment of many participants took place through Albanian organisations. Nevertheless, as Schrover and Vermeulen (2005) observe, the activity and prosperity of the immigrant organisations depend on the political opportunity structure and the character of immigrant community. In line with this argument, the character of organisations in London is more 'ethnic' and those of Thessaloniki more of an 'immigrant organisations' type. The existence in London of a previously settled Kosovar community which is more prone towards organisation, seems to play a role in this regard.

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<sup>41</sup> Women's Day is a very popular holiday in Albania since the communist regime's times, when it was known as Mother's Day.



**Photo 8:** Demonstration organised by the Albanian organisations and a local anti-racist organisation in Thessaloniki on the right to citizenship of the second generation in April 2008. There was very low participation from the Albanian community and no participation by the second generation, despite them being the subject of the protest.



**Photo 9:** Albanian migrants and their children celebrating Flag Day in Florence, November 2008.

Meanwhile, the discourse on multiculturalism has been adopted by Albanian community leaders and activists in London in their efforts to establish a solid community life. This lobbying is perhaps still naïve when compared to the discourse of the old minorities and their lobbying for public resources on the basis of a reified community culture as described by Baumann (1996). Nevertheless, the Albanian diaspora in London imitates the minorities' action and, in the words of Brubaker (2005), sounds rather as a 'stance' or 'claim' of the new Albanian lobby-in-the-making to be counted as one of the many constituent communities of London's multicultural population. A similar attitude is noticed among parents and children who acknowledge the achievements of other minorities, which inspires their integration strategies.

Against a 'generous' space, support and funding that Albanian organisations face in London and opportunities to affect the local authorities' activities, immigrant organisations in Thessaloniki are dependent on EU funding. In contrast, in Florence there is hardly any 'functioning' organisation and the community gets organised mostly on an *ad hoc* basis and for major national celebrations or spectacles with Albanian artists. Albanian migrants acknowledge the lack of organisation and the need for such organisations as a centre where they can put their requests, where the children can socialise and learn Albanian.

**Clara (mother, 41, Florence):** Albanians in Italy feel like orphans. There is no place where we can go... or you register an injustice done to you or someone else... or even the TV when they say racist things towards Albanians... there is none that can raise the voice for these things!

### **6.1.3 Gender**

The integration process has played out differently for men and women, especially in London and Florence. An important differentiating factor has been the histories of immigration and regularisation in each host country. In Greece and Italy, men generally migrated first; women followed later. The consequent regularisation of women has had an important empowering affect on them, which in turn affects the attitude women assume towards gender relations within the family. The discriminatory gender-effect of regularisation is especially evident in Thessaloniki where women do not always have independent residence papers due to their work in the domestic sector. They are thus dependent on men. Hence changes in the perception of gender and divorce are far less



marked, although it should be noted that my sample of first-generation migrants in Thessaloniki contains more rural-origin and low-skilled migrants compared to Florence.

The traditional division of gender roles ‘inherited’ in Albania, and reproduced in Albanian immigrant families, have been themselves a factor that has affected the different perception on integration held by men and women through the impact these divisions have had on structural integration. This is because the typical roles within the family—man as the breadwinner, woman as the child-bearer—have exposed men and women to different segments of the host society’s structure and have impacted differently their socialisation and social integration. Another factor that has played a role is the ‘gendered’ qualities of the labour market for migrants. For example, in Greece and to some extent, too, in Italy, the jobs accessible to Albanian migrants are construction for men and domestic work for women. In many cases, men in construction work with other co-nationals or immigrants from other countries, learning little about the culture of the places where they live, sometimes also lagging behind in language learning. Domestic work—cleaning, childcare, care of elderly etc.—gives women a more direct contact with parts of Greek and Italian society.

In London, where men and women often migrated together, the gendered encounter with the labour market was patterned in a different way. Men took up employment soon after arrival. In general, migrant men had more than one job, which left them little time to explore opportunities for education or socialising. This worked differently for women as they stayed with children and worked part-time, while attending courses in further education colleges and taking classes in English. These differences had consequences, which started to appear more clearly once the vital issue of status was resolved. In contrast to the findings of King *et al.* (2006b), the migration experience has in some cases impacted on the perception of gender roles in women, which has led to tensions in the families and subsequent divorces. Mirash explains his view of the situation:

**Mirash (father, 39, London):** England has helped Albanians, but it has also damaged them. The Albanian family has been damaged. I know 30–40 cases of people with children divorcing and divorce is becoming a normal phenomenon. The wife says to the husband: ‘Fuck off, you’ve got no chance to touch (beat) me!’ or the husband, father of five, goes to the nightclub!

First-generation Albanian migrants in Florence feel the migration experience has had a great impact on their identities and vision of life in general, with men and women referring to different experiences. Mothers in particular point to the possibility to adopt

plural roles beyond that of wife and mother. Being able to start a family and bring up children away from kin and shape it according to the nuclear family's needs, standing up in front of their husbands and their in-laws, interacting with institutions, developing an independent work relationship and learning a new working and spending culture are all experiences that mothers mention as significant. These experiences were built around their own decisions or participation in decision-making in the family. Men, meanwhile, acknowledge the differences in their idea of the world, their conceptualisation of relationships and interactions in general, by learning more about tolerance and communication, humility and a new way of life, although this division between genders is not always clear-cut.

Nevertheless, the way and degree that integration is experienced in Florence differs significantly between mothers and fathers. Women tend more towards assimilation. They find the migration experience empowering, by 'finding themselves'. They become more active and accumulate human and social capital independently through their work experience and interaction with locals. Although the education system in Italy is inflexible and makes it difficult for highly skilled parents to convert their diplomas and get into education, mothers took also opportunities to get qualifications by taking courses, for example in inter-cultural mediating, social work, etc. Men have lagged behind compared to women on these major transformations experienced. Instead they have tried to hold on patriarchal concepts of family and marriage. The conservatism of the fathers, coupled with jealousy and the assumed right to restrict and control the wife and the family, hinder the possibility of other members of the family interacting and integrating with locals and co-ethnics.

#### **6.1.4 Discrimination**

Discrimination occurs in various domains and settings. The Albanian language appears as the main factor of 'visibility' for Albanians since there are no specific 'racial' or significant cultural differences (see also Colombo *et al.* 2009a). Media has been a second major factor in the emergence and worsening of discrimination, more evident in Greece and Italy. In London this is more downplayed. There are many instances in the narratives when parents refer to the negative behaviour of Albanian immigrants in the early 1990s and the role that illegal status and the long waiting time for regularisation

had on this behaviour. Others acknowledge the critical attitude that some natives take towards discrimination against immigrants.

However, discrimination is not a uniform phenomenon. Apart from changes in time, there is also a difference between generations in the way they experience discrimination. The first-generation migrants recognise more easily that discrimination against them both as migrants and as Albanians exists; they narrate in more detail these instances and relate to them directly. As the quote of Lida shows below, some adults accept a certain subordination and stick to their migrant identity while justifying these 'costs' of their migration decision with the prospect of a better life for their family. In other cases, an individualist approach towards identification and a lack of ethnic agency, as explained in Chapter 5, makes Albanian migrants not always sensitive and reactive towards discrimination, as Marios explains below.

**Lida (mother, 46, Thessaloniki):** There may have happened an injustice, but I have just stepped back, I haven't been aggressive. I haven't shown my real feelings to that person, because we are in a foreign country. This is not our country, we have come here for a better life, a different and more beautiful life, but we can't make the laws here, basically we cannot behave like this is our country. It will never become our country!

**Marios (teacher and community activist, 50, Thessaloniki):** For example, there was a football game between Albania and Greece in Tirana and Albania won and so Albanian migrants here were celebrating, and some fascists, nazis and nationalists, with the tolerance of the police, attacked them. Thessaloniki's mayor made some declarations like 'Well, they have to respect the country that gives them food to eat, they have to keep a low profile and they have to learn that you can only be born Greek; you cannot become a Greek!'. But here there are many, many Albanians that respect the way he makes politics! They have told me this is the way that he must do it. They tell me 'I understand him. If I was him in my country, I would do the same thing'.

There is, however, a difference between the low- and the highly skilled in the way they experience and interpret discrimination. The highly skilled tend to be more analytical, relating their explanations to wider economic and social processes in the host country and to historical factors, national identities, the performance of Albanians as an immigrant group and their personal characteristics and aspirations.

**Dora (mother, 43, Florence):** Whenever I entered a family (as a domestic worker) I would be thinking how I should behave. I didn't know the language and would wonder whether I would be able to present my true self, because I used to suffer this 'Albanians... Albanians...' especially because I couldn't express myself, I didn't know anyone, so I knew it would take time. Because I had noticed that to be an Albanian or a Moroccan meant that you had a (bad) name on your shoulders, you had an extra responsibility.



Migration experience and instances of discrimination among these long-term migrants get recollected and interpreted within an experience of multiculturalism and inter-ethnic relations, and also a type of a 'new wisdom' gained through migration itself. This is associated with an analysis of the change over time of the positionality of the main actors that led to a different social categorisation of them as migrants and Albanians as a group. Here is a critical and insightful voice on this issue:

**Demir (father, 52, Thessaloniki):** We Albanians, probably incidentally, have made two revolutions in Greece. The first revolution was the economic revolution. [...] The second process was the help we gave to soften the racism that was cultivated for hundreds of years by the Church and politics. So basically we Europeanised them! If you would compare the xenophobia of 2008 with that of 1992, the difference is huge. In those years you couldn't speak Albanian because people would pick up the phone and call the police!

In other cases, migrants' empowerment and social mobility are also seen in their recognition and deployment of social hierarchies or categories in the host society. On several occasions, Albanian immigrants distinguish themselves from other more recently arrived migrants (and also internal Italian migrants arriving from Southern Italy). On the other hand, migrants recognise the bitterness of the 'new' discrimination now occurring as more subtle and indirect, experienced as an individual's 'acceptance' by the natives 'as an exception to the rule', rather than referring to the positive performance of the Albanian migrants in order to challenge existing negative stereotypes. Resonating with the findings of King and Mai (2008: 189) on other urban settings in Italy, Pali has a typical story to tell:

**Pali (father, 48, Florence):** There is a phenomenon that happens... and you are made to feel like you lack something, when someone looks at you in some sort of way and while you are thinking he is being gentle, he says 'what a pity you are Albanian'. You see, when they want to make you a compliment they say to you: 'You don't look like an Albanian!' [...] This is what people say to you here as a good word, but this is the worst insult, the worst slap (in the face)!

As hinted above, there are differences in the reasons for the occurrence of discrimination across the three countries. In Greece and Italy discrimination because of nationality is very strong. Since discrimination is based on a racialisation of difference, as mentioned in Chapter 2, the Albanian ethnicity is the basis for the occurrence and experience of discrimination. In Britain the status of refugee and the claims on public funds are seen as a major cause of discrimination directed towards Albanians. In Greece, a salient ethnicity and a very fragile multiculturalism create in the parents a

feeling of being excluded but also ‘disallowed’ to belong. As Triandafyllidou (2000) observes, discrimination in Italy is likewise perceived as being caused by a strong national identity based on a magnificent cultural heritage, here related also to the particulars of the city. As a result, discrimination in the labour market on the basis of origin in Greece and Italy is blatant. Most of the Albanian migrants are segregated in low-profile jobs and in specific sectors of the labour market. As mentioned above, there is a clear typology of a division of men in construction and women in domestic work, most strongly evident in Greece. This segregation is automatic based on origin, while skills and previous education are not recognised. Occupational mobility is blocked by discrimination; or at least, access to the opportunity structure is significantly reduced as a result. Interactions with work colleagues are one setting where discrimination repeatedly manifests itself. I asked Demir whether he socialises with his workmates after work:

**Demir (father, 52, Thessaloniki):** Yes, I do. But these Greeks have a strong taste for joking. Once we were gathered to have dinner together, when one of the friends of my work boss started to call: ‘Hey, donkey’. I didn’t answer, but he continued ‘Hey, you donkey?’. When he got fed up he said ‘Demir?’. ‘Yes’, I answered. ‘What’s up?’. ‘Well, it’s a while I am calling you, but you don’t answer’. ‘I didn’t hear you calling me. I heard you calling a donkey and was wondering how come this man knows how to communicate with donkeys. You must have something to do with their kind’, I answered, and the whole table exploded in laughter.

Discrimination in London seems to be more subtle, less verbalised and directed towards Albanian immigrants mainly on the grounds of being foreigners and asylum-seekers or people on benefits. Professionals, on the other hand, mention as a source of discrimination their successful integration and the increase in competition in the labour market, which is resented by the natives.

**Mimoza (mother, 39, London):** In fact, living in London, it’s not bad; they are used to a lot of people (from different countries). But some people... they are jealous, because we go to school, we learn, we are able to find jobs. You know in a way, they don’t like us... you can see it in their face; they don’t like it. Not that they talk in a bad way, but I can see that they are a bit jealous. [...] first is being a foreigner. And the other: if they see that you have a qualification and able to find a job, some people may be jealous—‘Why do you come here and get the job?’

Similarly, discrimination experienced in Florence is described as more subtle. Participants used the term *razzismo sottile*<sup>42</sup> as an indirect expression of their subordination as migrants and as Albanians. This is encountered in the public spaces, in parks while they try to socialise their children, in celebrations in schools where parents also participate. There are also cases when parents, especially mothers, say that it is also the Albanians themselves who do not make an effort or are sceptical and insecure about their reception by the Italian side, which in turn blocks their socialisation.



**Photo 10:** ‘No to immigrant camps/ghettos, not in Florence nor elsewhere’: anarchists’ graffiti on wall surrounding secondary school in Campo di Marte, Florence, November 2008.

Nevertheless, across the three cities, discrimination seems to have changed over time, along with the integration of Albanians in each country. Recently, a more positive representation in the public discourse in the host countries is noticeable, which has a positive impact on migrants’ perception of their integration. This is noticeable in Italy in positive documentaries on Albania or in general political support offered by the Italian government to Albania in the process of EU integration. In Greece this is less evident; however, as Mirjeta points out below, examples are not missing.

<sup>42</sup> The Italian for ‘thin’ or subtle racism.

**Mirjeta (mother, 36, Thessaloniki):** I must say that recently we haven't heard the TV speaking badly about Albanians. Quite the opposite, there have been two movies on Albanians, and the characters were positive, the actors themselves were Albanians. They were focusing on immigration and the Albanian migrant was portrayed as hard-working, loyal, although a bit high-tempered, like the Albanian is, but in general good.

## **6.2 The second generation**

In this second main section of the chapter, I follow a similar structure as before, taking first structural and then social integration, and dividing each of these into a number of component parts, before discussing instances of discrimination.

### ***6.2.1 Structural integration***

#### ***6.2.1.1 Educational experience and performance***

Studies on the second generation have found that educational performance affects the second generation's structural and social integration in schools and their future integration in the labour market (Crul and Vermeulen 2003a, 2003b). Although it depends on several individual factors—such as age at arrival, prior schooling, parents' education and stage of integration, language skills, number of siblings—the migration experience as a whole has impacted on their school integration. Integration in schools was especially difficult for children who arrived at school age and had to start a 'new' education without any language skills.

In general, Albanian-origin teenagers have little support from their parents in terms of help with lessons and discussions on education choices. This is related to parents' long working hours, lack of experience with the educational system in the host country and lack of proficiency in the language. This is especially the case of the teenagers in London, who on average were older when they migrated. Older siblings or cousins living in the host country are the main source of support with and advice on school studies, given that parents are unable to help. Lack of language proficiency from the side of the parents makes it difficult for them to give to children help on most subjects, although some are able to cope with maths. Independently of their language skills, parents find it very hard to help children beyond elementary school, because of differences in the education system and general lack of specialist knowledge of the host country. Some of these issues are raised in the following quote.

ZV: How do the children do at school?

**Donika (mother, 45, London):** Unfortunately, I couldn't be of much help to the older ones. Sometimes the second son is a little jealous and says: 'How good, mum, that you can help Jessica. When I was doing the same grade you couldn't help me. You couldn't instruct me or buy me books...' I try to explain to him that at that time I didn't know the language and when you don't know the language it is embarrassing to go to the schools and not be able to speak.

In general, the educational performance of the Albanian-origin teenagers across the three sites is rather positive, with most of the participants reporting that they take average to high grades, with girls outperforming boys and showing a higher appreciation towards education. There are a few cases of teenagers who are top-performing students and take part in school councils and youth campaigns in London, are sports and dance champions and winners of international fashion competitions in Florence, and one teenager that participated in this study also 'carried the flag' in Thessaloniki as the best student in the school.<sup>43</sup>

Teachers are crucial in the teenagers' progress in schools. Naturally, experiences are varied. In general, relationships with teachers are more positive than those with the other students, and there are fewer instances of discrimination reported from the side of the teachers than from students. For their part, the teachers I interviewed reported good experiences with Albanian-origin pupils. The vital role of teachers is illustrated in the following conversation:

**Altin (boy, 16, London):** Teachers are very important. If you have a good teacher, you learn. Um ... Extra lessons maybe, but we already do that, because now we gonna have a week off for half-term and my teacher says he will be at school during that week, so if anyone wants to come into the school and do extra work, coursework or whatever, he will be there to help. So really, I think that's very good.

ZV: OK. Are your parents able to help you with the lessons? Have they been helping you before?

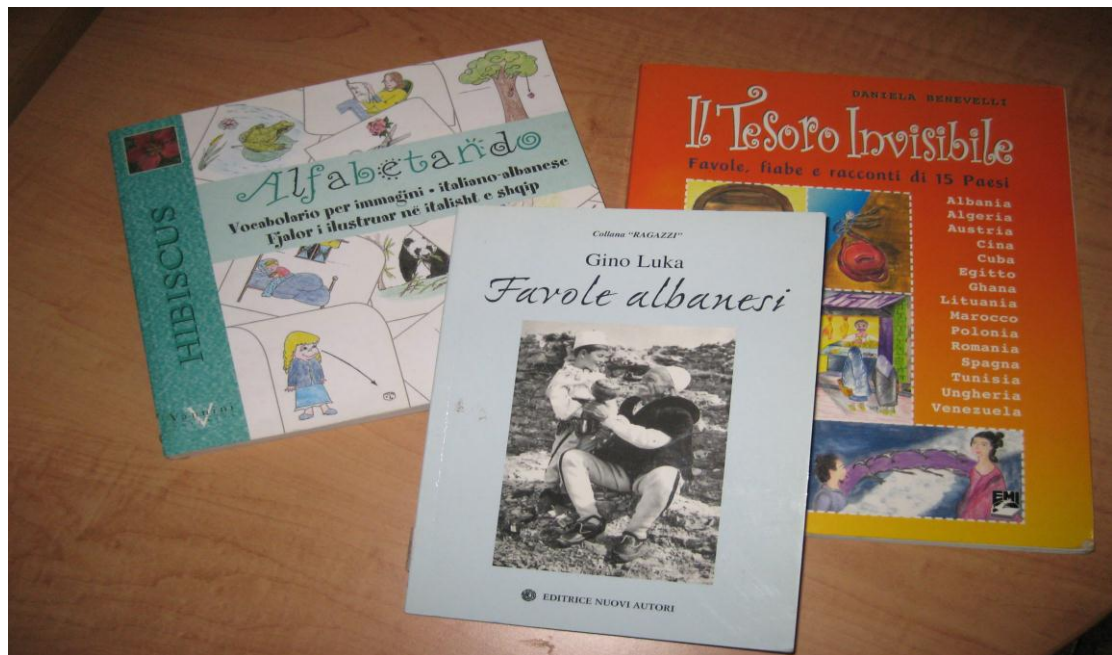
Altin: To be honest... I mean, they are disadvantaged, they can't speak, read or write English as well as me. So really I don't need their help. They can't really teach me anything I don't know, you know... um... so only teachers really can help me.

However, there are important differences between the three cities in terms of their educational system and the provision that each system makes for the immigrant- and minority-origin students, including the way that diversity is acknowledged in the educational curriculum and by the teachers. In Thessaloniki there are intercultural schools where children of minority origin go to study, although these schools are open to natives as well. There are also projects that support bilingual teaching assistants to

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<sup>43</sup> For insights into the significance of these 'flag-carrying' ceremonies see Kapllani and Mai (2005); Tzanelli (2006).

work in schools and help minority-origin students with their learning. In Florence there are three intercultural centres in different areas of the city where trained teachers and bilingual assistants help students of minority origin to study Italian.<sup>44</sup> Photo 11 shows some of the resources available at one of these centres. In Britain many schools have an Ethnic Minority Achievement Unit with trained teachers and sometimes they hire bilingual teaching assistants, who have been crucial in children's initial integration in schools.



**Photo 11:** Resources used in the Giufà centre in Florence for the learning of Italian by children of foreign origin

There are also differences in the way in which parents and teenagers appreciate the quality and reputability of education in the host country. While parents have their reservations on the general attitude towards education in all host countries, and especially on the level of discipline that children are subject to in schools (too lax in all cases!), parents in Greece express serious concerns on the quality of education. Both the parents and children in Thessaloniki make strong references to *frontistiria*—private courses on school subjects that run in parallel to the mainstream educational system—as an obstacle to the teenagers' performance at school. The private courses are impacting

<sup>44</sup> The centres are called Giufà, Ulysse, Gandhi. For more information see <http://www.comune.firenze.it/centralfa> Last accessed 16/06/2011.

on the quality of education in Greece by making it almost indispensable for students to sign up for them, while also affecting the attitude of students and teachers towards mainstream education. Immigrant families have to deal with the lack of resources to sponsor parallel learning. In 2006 a family was quoted €2,700 per year for five subjects in a *frontistirios* for a child to learn after school, before deciding not to enrol the child there. Since the private courses are especially important to prepare for university entry exams, they have to be factored in as an expense for immigrant families who wish their children to pursue higher education. Therefore parallel private courses are the cause of serious inequality in the education of immigrant-origin students when compared to the natives.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, they can be expected to translate into inequalities in the chance to enter higher education and then the labour market for certain qualified jobs. Here Anna delivers a devastating critique of the Greek state education system:

**Anna (girl, 16, Thessaloniki):** Now that we have *frontistiria*, we have this idea in our head that ‘good that there are *frontistiria*’... So we go to school, because we have to go to school, not to go there to learn. Basically we have *frontistiria* so we go to school to spend some time with our friends. We have *frontistiria* and we have this idea that we will do well, we don’t quite need the school. [...] So basically we go to school uselessly, we don’t learn. The teachers also behave like ‘Let’s finish with the book because we have to finish it’ and that’s it. They don’t want to go too deeply with the lessons and teach us. They do the lesson because they have to do it.

Another factor that creates disadvantages for the non-native pupils is the construction of the educational curriculum. Many teenagers explain that subjects such as the Ancient Greek language and other subjects focusing on history and religion in Greece are very difficult for them to grasp, and impossible for their parents to provide help with. More importantly, these subjects are also crucial for the scientific route of the educational system leading to university studies. This hierarchical Greek system invites an interpretation through the work of Bourdieu (1989, 2004), who considers family support and scholarly culture and curriculum as two main sites of the aesthetic habitus (Fowler 1997: 47), where cultural capital is accumulated.

Differences are apparent also in the attitude of the teachers towards minority- and immigrant-origin students. Once again, the Greek evidence is most revealing—in a negative sense—on this point.

**Entela (mother, 42, Thessaloniki):** The behaviour of the teachers towards our children depends on the culture of the teacher, on his kindness. Some teachers are fair, some discriminate against

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<sup>45</sup> This inequality can be accentuated by the existence of private, or semi-private schools, obviously not accessible to immigrant-origin children, due to high cost.

our children, they exclude them, they don't see them with the same eye. I remember one occasion when my son was attending the gymnasium. The teacher had asked a question and he had raised his hand. 'Although I was raising my hand the teacher would not ask me. In the end I asked him: "Sir, I have been raising my hand all the time, why don't you ask me? I know the answer." "OK, tell us what you know." And then he turned to the students and said to them "Aren't you ashamed that an Albanian knows better our history?" I told him: "Sir, it is true that I am Albanian, but I am studying in the Greek school, I am studying the same books!"'".

In Florence and London unfair treatment from the teachers is reported by the participants to be experienced as more indirect, mostly through them posing a 'double demand' towards the immigrant-origin teenagers, picking on them excessively or, conversely, ignoring them and favouring interaction with the 'native' students. However, there is also a tendency I noted for teachers to be too positive on the educational and overall performance of the Albanian-origin teenagers, displaying a kind of political correctness since the group is stigmatised in the countries under study.

I close this section on the second generation's educational performance by quoting from some of the teachers whom I interviewed. First, as Jorgos explains, and very much compatible with my observations during fieldwork, even in the cases when the teachers are keen to acknowledge and promote diversity, teenagers lack the agency and, at times, the interest in engaging in such initiatives, preferring a low profile in order to secure invisibility.

**Jorgos (teacher, 42, Thessaloniki):** The immigrants' children themselves avoid opening such discussions [about diversity]. They don't want discussions like these to take place... On my part, many times I tell them in class, because I believe it... that it is a richness that there are kids from different countries, who speak different languages, who have different cultures; it's a resource, because it's like having an orchestra where they play violin, guitar, drums, saxophone, instead of having an orchestra that only plays...violin or only the guitar. But there are no structures within the school that will bring this difference out as an advantage.

The role of teachers in the classroom and of their ideological perception of diversity can be great and it reflects the general idea of diversity in the country, based on ethnocentricity in Thessaloniki, a more local identity in Florence, and multiculturalism constructed around large groups of old-established minorities in London. There is also a difference related to the number of Albanian-origin students in schools, with big groups in Thessaloniki and Florence hiding their presence by not counteracting discrimination, and very small groups in London schools being almost invisible against large numbers of highly diverse minority-origin students. Below, Paolo gives a rather extreme view of the 'superiority' of Italian and Florentine culture, whilst John, in London, articulates a more balanced view of the situation of Albanian pupils in his school:



ZV: Are there discussions in the class about diversity?

**Paolo (teacher, 57, Florence):** Yes, there are. For example, I am personally Euro-centric, so I think that the Western culture is superior [...] So basically I don't think that all cultures are the same... like American anthropology claims. I insist on the classic culture, on the terms of civilisation, of political freedom, of equality between individuals [...] I think that the Renaissance is the basis of global civilisation. The students are in Florence, so I try to teach them the Renaissance (*smiles*). I am sorry, but this is how I see it.

**John (teacher, 44, London):** We used to have two Albanian community workers and they were fantastic people. But now we find that we have less need of somebody with that particular community connection and we cannot afford as a school to hire a community worker for every small group of students, which is a shame. Do we have Albanian celebrations? No. We've had international evenings in the past where we've encouraged families to come in and do things, but we haven't had that much of a focus on the Albanians.

**ZV:** Why would that be?

John: Partly I think because there aren't as many Albanians as say the Turkish and the Indians. They don't seem to also... there aren't... they don't seem to be any really well-known festivals that are associated with the Albanians and that's because... before... you couldn't get into Albania. It was very much a closed country under what's his name? [ZV: Enver Hoxha] Yeah, it was very, very strange. OK, there isn't a lot of people that know very much about Albania. Even now, where things have opened up a lot more, it's still not a country that a lot of people know about. If I say to friends outside teaching, for example, 'Where is Albania?' They would say 'Well...?'

While there is a striking contrast between the views expressed by the teachers above, it is worth mentioning the difference in the immigration and multicultural policies between the three countries and the 'political correctness' that characterises the British education system that prevents the expression of racist views—sometimes mentioned also by teenagers themselves.

#### *6.2.1.2 Future employment plans and transition to the labour market*

Both girls and boys across the three cities lay emphasis on securing good jobs that bring about financial security. Matching parents' expectations and making them proud of their children's achievement drives them in pursuit of educational success.

An interesting phenomenon is the choice or preference of teenagers for what might be regarded country-specific professions, such as Formula One driver or fashion designer in Florence, positions in the corporate banking and legal services in Britain, and doctor or teacher in Greece. Of course, these jobs are not nominated by all respondents in the three respective cities, but they were sufficiently typical to create a place-distinctiveness. There are also many cases when boys and girls prefer gender-typical jobs such as mechanic or plumber for the boys and hairdresser and secretary for

the girls. Often, high ambitions for specialised and lucrative jobs have to be sacrificed for more pragmatic choices.

Many Albanian-origin teenagers attend technical and professional institutes or vocational training, seen as a route to earlier and 'safer' employment, while in a limited number of cases, some boys follow the construction strand of these institutes so that they can continue work in the construction firm of the father. This reflects the growth of private enterprises of Albanian immigrants, especially in Florence and Thessaloniki. In a few cases, the 'normal' jobs related to immigrant status (labourer, domestic cleaner etc.) are viewed with contempt by the second generation.

There is, however, a difference in teenagers' expectations in terms of their future chances in the labour market. Youngsters in London expect fair treatment in the employment stakes and a career in accordance to their educational performance. This is in line with the general expectation that a good education translates into good chances of employment and earnings. In the other two the situation is different, due to the economic problems that Greece (especially) and Italy currently face. In general, there is an emphasis on the 'high-return' professions, such as lawyer, working in a bank, or having their own business. Linguistic assimilation is considered an important factor for progress in the labour market in all three countries. The next two quotes provide typical responses to questions about careers in the London setting.

ZV: OK, in the future you said that you want to become a dentist, so you definitely want to go to university.

**Darina (girl, 13, London):** Yes, definitely, without a doubt. [...] because I like to know that I am secure like...I like to do things for myself, so that I can be someone in life, not just like any person; I wanna be somebody, yes. So to work for myself, and make my parents proud of me ...

ZV: Do you want to go to university?

**Era (girl, 14, London):** Yeah, definitely, 'cause I want to have a good career, I don't want to end up having a normal average plain job, 'cause England is just becoming more and more expensive and you will need a good job to have a good life. You can't be anything like a cleaner to live properly (*laughs*). You gonna need good education.

In contrast to London, teenagers in Thessaloniki and Florence anticipate discrimination in the labour market, beyond the difficulties they expect to experience when trying to access higher education. As mentioned in the previous section, transition to the labour market for the second generation in Italy is expected to be facilitated by the acquisition of citizenship, but most of my respondents had not yet reached that stage. Setting the issue of citizenship aside, we have already noted how, especially in

Greece, but also to some extent in Italy, the structure of the secondary education system creates inequalities in terms of access to higher education, which are then perpetuated in career pathways. Furthermore, in both Southern sites, parents mention nepotism and corruption in the host society as a phenomenon which would make the advancement of immigrant-origin people even more difficult, due to their lack of networks. This is one of the reasons why many second-generation Albanians in the two Southern sites are contemplating future migration towards North-Western Europe. By contrast, in Britain, parents and children are optimistic about the possibilities offered by the education system and the flexible labour market.

Nevertheless, the wider international research on the second generation and transition to the labour market has increasingly reported unequal treatment and an incompatible job status with educational performance, the former being lower than expected (Fibbi *et al.* 2007). Heath and Cheung (2007) propose three explanations for differences in the progress of minority-origin people in the labour market. The first is the dominant conception of nationhood, which usually varies between ethnic and civic. Next come patterns of social reproduction, such as rigid class structures versus meritocracy. The third explanation is the economic structures and conditions, such as the presence of a de/regulated market economy. Since these factors are different across the three sites, it remains to be seen what the future of the Albanian second generation will be in terms of labour market integration, when it comes of age.

#### *6.2.1.3 Attitudes towards citizenship*

Attitudes towards citizenship by Albanian-origin teenagers can be grouped into several trends. Firstly, citizenship is widely quoted as a source of better opportunities. These consist of freedom of movement and integration in the labour market in the host country and elsewhere in Europe. Especially in Florence and Thessaloniki, many teenagers see citizenship in instrumental terms, as a means to facilitate future migration. On the other hand, there are many teenagers who see citizenship as a new status which acknowledges their legal and civic obligations towards the 'host' country, where they will stay. Another trend is represented by those teenagers who feel citizenship gives them a full right to identify as British, Greek or Italian and to ultimately justify their feelings of belongingness to the 'host' country. This represents how a deeper connection with citizenship is instrumental to the erasing of any recognisable difference, especially in

relation to institutions. Here are three quotes, two from London and one from Thessaloniki, that articulate some of these very real feelings.

**Ilda (girl, 14, London):** If I didn't have my passport, people would call you an immigrant, they would make fun of you at school, they would find out somehow, and I would feel really... left out. I really wanted my passport; so... I couldn't wait until I got it.

ZV: Do you want to get Greek citizenship?

**Anna (girl, 16, Thessaloniki):** I do, because it would be easier for me. So basically, I will have the qualifications for a job. If they see Albanian passport... citizenship, they will take a bit more reserved attitude, they will be more distanced. We say there isn't racism, however there is; we all are a bit racist, in all things. But if you are Greek, they see you differently... To me it would mean simply a paper. It is just a paper, it is not anything else; it doesn't change anything else; because I have the Greek culture, the Greek manners, I have taken them essentially because it is here that I grew up...

ZV: What does it mean to you being a British citizen?

**Altin (boy, 16, London):** To me, all it means is that I won't get kicked out of Britain, I can go travel all around the world, because a British passport is very... has got a high status, you know.

There is also a claim on the part of teenagers to have the 'new' citizenship as the institutional recognition of their assimilation, as research conducted in Italy has shown (Colombo *et al.* 2009b; Riccio and Russo 2011). The Albanian second generation is quite vocal in its claim for Italian citizenship, although not so much in the public realm.<sup>46</sup>

ZV: What would it mean to you having Italian citizenship?

**Aulona (woman, 24, second generation, Florence):** It's just about papers, because I have already integrated both cultures... both the Albanian and the Italian. I wouldn't feel any difference really; I feel Italian and also Albanian. But citizenship would help me in terms of bureaucracies, more than in terms of personal affairs.

Similarly, teenagers in Greece see Greek citizenship as a source of rights (free movement, not paying money for red tape), but to them it also has a more symbolic meaning: an acknowledgement of them being part of a Greek society, which they are constantly reminded they are not. This inevitably creates resentment among those who experience harassment because of their Albanian citizenship, as Genti explains below.

ZV: Why do want to apply for the Greek citizenship?

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<sup>46</sup> Rete G2—The Network of the Second Generations in Italy ([www.secondegenerazioni.it](http://www.secondegenerazioni.it))—has in general very few posts from the Albanian second generation, although they are the biggest second generation group in Italy. I got no response to my post asking to meet Albanian-origin teenagers and youth, although the post received hundreds of hits during my stay in Florence.

**Genti (boy, 18, Thessaloniki):** So that I am free! So that I don't pay all this money and that I can go everywhere I like! I want to go to Albania, just go, not to wait until the order is released by the police. So that I can go to England, to... wherever. We are like slaves! It's not only the freedom, but also all these years that I have been here. You are the same as the others, why should you be singled out by the others? Why? Because it has happened when I have been with a group of friends, two Albanians and three Greeks walking down the road and the police stopped us 'What are you doing here? Show us your ID'. The Greeks show their ID and then us the Albanians, and they say 'You three go home; the Albanians come with us!' Why should I feel this? It's such a bad thing!

#### 6.2.1.4 References to the city and locality

Cities are becoming increasingly prominent in the literature on the incorporation of foreign immigrants (Brettell 2000). Their previous relative omission is related to an assumption that has for a long time framed migration studies, namely that nation-states are homogeneous entities. As a result, data taken from research in cities have been considered as representing the situation in the whole nation-state (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2009: 183).

Structural approaches dominate studies of immigrants' incorporation in the cities, with research mainly directed at ethnicity, policy agendas and immigrant groups' characteristics. Cadge *et al.* (2009: 3) attempted to bring culture into the study of the city as a context, noting that the economic characteristics of localities have been given far more importance than their cultural resources. They found that the way incorporation is conceptualised and advocated from officials and stakeholders in the city is related to variations in how cities create and deploy their 'culture armature'. However, they did not study this role of the city from the perspective of the immigrants.

The findings of my study show that there is a difference between the two generations in the way they refer to the city and locality. Parents evaluate the city in terms of the perceived success of their migration project. It is the second generation that gets more engaged with discourses on 'city identity' and culture, making also reference to localities within the city. Therefore, different generations have different understanding on space and appreciation of cosmopolitanism (Szerszynski and Urry 2006).

The time factor and stage of incorporation may also play a role in this respect. My findings show that aesthetics and cultural capital are important to the long-term immigrants. It is interesting to note that Kosic and Triandafyllidou (2003)—one of the very few studies of Albanians in this kind of context—researched coping strategies and identities of the Albanian immigrants in Florence and found no reference to that city's particularities in their respondents' narratives. Sometimes parents' narratives of

belongingness and culture were related to the cultural distinctiveness of their towns of origin in Albania, showing a ‘translocal’ appreciation of urban culture (Brickell and Datta 2011). As Farije explains below, the distinct identity of these urban centres is seen as a core element of the Albanian culture.

**Farije (mother, 45, Florence):** In our culture we had well-known towns, like Përmet or Korça... Towns that would be in the same line and standard with the European or global culture. And then we from the south (of Albania) had a tradition of emigration, so we were more cultured, in the way of working, dressing... We had that, we were more advanced than the others...

The significance of the local urban setting is particularly evident in the case of Florence. The tendency towards assimilation is enhanced by the city’s special status within Italy. This is reflected in the eagerness of Albanian immigrants—both of first and second generation—to embrace the distinctive local and regional identities, to aspire to be ‘*un fiorentino proprio*’, a ‘real Florentine’. Parents and children said that they identify with Florence and Florentine identity and culture, seeing it as a reputable culture and a famous and distinct location and accent in Italy.

Florence is also appreciated for its cosmopolitan atmosphere, which creates opportunities for acquiring new skills, such as learning foreign languages, but also offers an ‘experience of the world’ to the immigrants. Its great reputation creates an emotional belonging and an easiness to be called home. The qualities of space and its beauty intensify this feeling of belongingness. Furthermore, although the cosmopolitan orientation of the second generation still finds Florence too small, it nevertheless stimulates interest in history and art and an eagerness to become more cultured.

However, the lack of Italian citizenship is an important factor that diminishes the perception of incorporation, making these immigrants feel excluded from the ‘right to the city’ as a political space (Lefebvre 1996: 147–59). The right to the city is also diminished by the experience of discrimination. Discrimination is seen as a relative and personal experience and its perception differs depending on the level of interaction and the type of relationship attempted with the locals. As a result, certain spaces in the city centre are not open to immigrants. Indeed, some are characterised by brutality and harshness, like the *Questura* (police office where sojourn permits are issued) and the regularisation process (Triandafyllidou 2003), which have little to do with universal cultural values.

In contrast with the perceptions on the city in Florence, parents and teenagers in London relate more to the borough and its composition and character. There is also

more reference to the ethnic composition and the different social conditions in different areas in London. ‘Super-diversity’ (Vertovec 2007) is experienced as ‘estranging’ by the parents, while the unsafe living conditions are mentioned as barriers to social integration of both the first and the second generation. Below, Donika and Era make rather negative comments on ‘their’ particular areas of London, the working-class suburbs of Barking and Plumstead.

**Donika (mother, 45, London):** In the beginning when we came here, this (Barking) was a very bad neighbourhood. If you saw a police car driving at high speed, surely it was headed towards our neighbourhood (*smiles*). This last 2–3 years has changed a lot. However, it is still full of black people, Polish and Albanians. We see policemen around when they arrest people and stuff them in the police cars just like pigs. But now we are used to having policemen around; we even greet them (*smiles*).

ZV: And why did you say that Plumstead is not really a great place?

**Era (girl, 14, London):** ‘Cause I consider it boring, compared to the bigger areas like London, being in London you wouldn’t compare it to Plumstead, it’s small. It’s really... like, here in the road there is only chicken and chips shops and Chinese shops. It is not a good place, it’s not posh... I don’t know, it’s not rich.

References to the city and locality are much less common in the case of Thessaloniki, although acknowledgments of it as a big urban space with possibilities of entertainment for young people do occur.

**Endri (boy, 18, Thessaloniki):** (I am) from Thessaloniki. I think... um, Thessaloniki has a life, you can go out, you can do many things; you can play... enjoy night-life. (I belong) to Thessaloniki ... it is here I am used to now, I don’t know Albania... it is here I grew up, here is where my friends are... I feel better here than in Albania.

City and locality can also have more nuanced meanings for the second generation and their parents who originate from the rural areas in Albania, which is especially the case of the sub-sample of the participants in Thessaloniki.

**Fran (father, 49, Thessaloniki):** For example, when I was young I only rarely went to the city, but now I have become an inhabitant of Thessaloniki! Whereas my son has no problem here; he can return home at 10pm after he finishes football training.

Fran notes the different perception of space between him and his son because of his origin from a remote village in Albania, while many teenagers, as in the quote of Endri above, recognise the different life-style in the city and their adaptation to urban life.

## 6.2.2 *Socialisation and integration*

### 6.2.2.1 *Social integration in schools*

School is obviously a key institution for the socialisation of minors, and this is particularly so for children of immigrant origin, since for them socialisation out of school may be difficult. Aldo sums up this point perfectly:

**Aldo (boy, 15, Thessaloniki):** At school you learn many things, you spend some good hours and you learn interesting things, especially me who is not Greek... It is better for me, who hasn't been born here, that I go to school and learn the language and learn Greek history. I believe that without school there would be no life for Albanian children in Greece!

Shared values in terms of education are one important criterion for socialising in school. Older siblings, and in general those who accept their immigrant origin, often take educational excellence as a criterion in choosing their friends. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, because of ethical considerations it was impossible to interview teenagers who had quit school and had a bad relationship with their family. However, the narratives of those interviewed do reveal that there is a section of Albanian-origin teenagers across the three cities who have poor educational performance and are subject of disciplinary measures from schools. Some of them have also had problems with the police. Substance abuse, participation in gangs and non-amicable escape from home are some of the phenomena in London. In Greece and Italy there is more the issue of Albanian-origin boys who create their own groups as part of a reactive identification and bully other students.

Instances of social exclusion and discrimination from peers at school are common. Sometimes educational success is a cause for jealousy from the native children, which can result in physical harassment.

**Maria (girl, 12, Thessaloniki):** One day we were playing volleyball. One of the children put his hands together like this and hit me on my head, so not with the ball but with his hands, like this. 'This is because you are good in English', he said.

There is a difference, however, in the degree to which children of various origins make friendships with each other. This is especially so because the composition of schools and the presence of minorities is significantly different between London and the other two cities. In London it is common for the Albanian-origin teenagers not to have many



co-ethnics in the same schools since the Albanian community is geographically dispersed. Therefore, the positioning of the Albanian- and minority-origin students is different in each of the cities. Darina, Maria and Angelo explain:

ZV: What is the atmosphere like at school?

**Darina (girl, 13, London):** We are four girls that stay together: it's me, the other is Somalian, one is English and the other is South American; so we are all *different cultures* (in English) [...] sometimes when I see those of African origin or the English that stay together as a group, sometimes I feel, like, empty inside because I say 'How bad I don't have one Albanian here', but anyway... But I do have Albanian friends out of school.

ZV: Do children of different origins make friends with each other?

**Maria (girl, 12, Thessaloniki):** In most of the cases they don't. They mostly make friends with those from their own country. When some new child comes that is from another country, like from Albania, other children who are from Greece don't behave well with him. They laugh at him [...] Towards those from the developed countries, let's say if someone is German, in that case there isn't racism. There are Germans at school; there aren't English, but if there were, there wouldn't be racism towards them. There are Germans and no one says anything, actually they are the best-liked. This happens only with children from countries that don't have a good economic condition, I think.

**Angelo (boy, 17, Florence):** In my case, having come here at the age of two... they have always considered me an Italian, understand? Not a foreigner; I have never had such problems. But if someone comes... it depends how he behaves. If he is a normal person among the others then there won't be any problems. If instead he starts fussing a bit, the others start 'thinking' about it, understand?

Children who arrived at school age and had to start education without language skills were often a target of bullying. Despite being 'white' they were 'visible' because of a different way of dressing and looking, which are very important factors for the socialisation and 'acceptance' of teenagers in schools.

ZV: I would like to know something about your school experience.

**Eliana (girl, 15, London):** Now it's fine, I like it. And they won't know that I am Albanian at school and they don't mind that now. And I have lots of Black friends and stuff in school. [...] In the beginning, because I was new and I didn't know English... And it came to the stage that I had to move school, because the students there were so horrible. 'Cause I was new and I had short hair as well and I didn't look like the others and they would sort of treat me differently; treat me like 'woooo'. I got to the stage when I was really upset with that school, so I moved to a different school. And in that (new) school there were Albanians as well, so I could communicate and I had a translator. So that school was better, so I stayed in that school... and they treated me the same...

Racist discrimination and exclusion are very sensitive issues in the British educational system, and the teenagers are more aware of their right to react. Those in Thessaloniki are more submissive and see their silence at times as the cost of future acceptance by their peers. In London, teenagers recognise the importance of the mixed ethnic

composition of schools for their ‘smooth’ integration. The majority of the children interviewed report that they make friends easily with other minority-origin children due to the affinity they feel due to their immigrant origin, but also in terms of cultural particularities, such as parents’ strict discipline and pressure on education. They say that the other minority-origin students are easier to socialise with and make them feel more welcome.

ZV: Has your origin been a source of problems at school?

**Altin (boy, 16, London):** No, my friends... we all joke about, because all my friends we are different, one black, one mixed-race, one Asian, you know... we are mixed as a group. [...] Can I mention them? Khan is Asian, Bob is mixed race, King is Black; we are all mixed, but we all stay together. There are other groups that stay with themselves, but they don’t start trouble with anyone else. [...] So we all mess about, have jokes with each other: ‘Oh, you are Albanian; you are Bangladeshi, you know, whatever... African...’, but we only joke about. I have never got into a fight over racism in school.

In contrast to the ‘openness’ of inter-racial friendships in London, in Florence these instances are more subtle, while in Greece harassment and exclusion from peers at school is blatant and widespread. One interesting trend is the attitude of Albanian-origin teenagers towards students of the same origin, especially new immigrant-origin children in schools. There are two main reactions. Some teenagers who have experienced assimilation and hide their Albanian origin tend to exclude such children and stick to their native peers and their own assimilated peer group, as Marios describes below.

**Marios (teacher and community activist, 50, Thessaloniki):** ... even the kids, I don’t know, they very easily look down on the others. They’re very proud if they’re good, they’re good students, you know, A-grade students. They’re very proud if a Greek child asks them to come to their birthday party or something, because you know parents ‘Ah, she’s Albanian, but she’s a good girl; she’s the best student in the class’, she finds it flattering and she goes there and she looks down on the others (of same ethnicity) very, very easily.

There are, however, cases in all three cities whereby the already settled second-generation teenagers become the main support and the best friend to the newly arrived children, whom they help in learning the language and offer a lot of support with the lessons and integrate them into their peer group. This is both towards the Albanian-origin children and children coming from other countries.

**Blerim (boy, 13, Thessaloniki):** When I was in the first and second year... that’s what I remember on every occasion... when someone came from Ukraine, they all started laughing at him and insulting him. And I told them: ‘Stop it! That’s what you did to me and I don’t want this

to happen to anyone anymore!’ And they let him alone, and allowed him to make friends with us... I don’t let them offend others anymore... But they didn’t know what they were doing those times...!

#### 6.2.2.2 *The role of the peer group*

It is one of the core arguments of my thesis that literature on the integration of the second generation has been overly concerned with the role of ethnicity and has overlooked processes of socialisation and the role of friendships and peer group on integration. Studies that have included the role of the peer group are very limited (e.g. Wessendorf 2007a). I found that friendships are considered very important by the second generation, impacting their lives on various levels, varying from daily experience to generalised feelings of belongingness in the ‘host’ or home country.

In all three cities, the social life of the teenagers is limited because of the financial limitations that immigrant families face. Therefore, socialisation with native peers out of school is obstructed by different standards of living and modes of social activity. In general, the presence of the extended family and cousins of the same age in the ‘host’ country makes up for the lack of peer-group friends.

However, socialisation and having a strong peer group are often powerful means of feeling integrated. The composition of the peer group also conditions the feelings of identification as the importance of the peer group is usually paramount when compared to the abstract discussion of ethnic identity. As a result, teenagers who identify with the culture and identity of the host country and consider themselves integrated look for and in general have native or well-integrated Albanian-origin friends.

On the other hand, socialisation is appreciated by the teenagers as being dependent on their personality. Being ‘cool’, i.e. being socially skilled and successful in age-related activities, can overcome the barriers of socialisation based on ethnicity. There is also a growing ‘wisdom’ among the teenagers who see that the attitude of the natives towards immigrant-origin people varies and that hiding their identity is not necessarily the best way to integrate. Two examples:

**Maria (girl, 12, Thessaloniki):** A child that comes from Albania to Greece makes friendships only if he is good at sport... He has to be good at sport, have many friends, know the language, and be good-looking. [...] This is enough.

**Erjol (boy, 17, Florence):** I know many Albanians that say Italy sucks, after having been here for many years. They say they want to go back to Albania. No, Italy doesn't suck, it depends if you know how to integrate or not. That's it. It depends on the type of the person, it depends on your networks, it depends on how one speaks to people. And on how one is ready to integrate.

Patterns of socialisation and peer-group composition are also affected by the attitude of the parents. In general, socialisation with natives is encouraged by parents because it is seen as a source of social capital for the children or a way to make up for the lack of social capital transmitted from the parents. This attitude of the parents is in sharp contrast with research on other immigrant groups (e.g. Panagakos 2003 on Greeks in Canada). These friendships are seen as ensuring or improving children's social integration. By the same token, socialisation with peers from the same ethnic group is sometimes resisted by the parents. Some parents are also worried about male solidarity and gang behaviour among Albanian-origin teenagers. In London, many parents were worried about their children associating with black peers, because of the latter's perceived link to gangs and violence.

**Donika (mother, 45, London):** When we came here, my husband ... he used to say to our oldest son: 'You shouldn't stay with the blacks, neither with the Kosovans, nor with the Albanians'. I used to argue with my husband, and say that maybe our son should choose his friends himself...

The main difference between the three fieldwork sites in terms of socialisation and the role of peers is the accessibility of the native-origin peers. In Greece Albanian-origin teenagers repeatedly speak of the difficulty of socialising with Greek peers not only because of the prejudice of the native teenagers towards immigrant-origin peers but also because of strong opposition to these kinds of friendship by the Greek parents. There is also a parallel tendency to distance from Albanian-origin peers because of the strong stigmatisation that is associated with Albanian immigrants. With the passing of time, Albanian-origin teenagers in Greece are mindful of the change of the attitude of the host society towards immigrants and towards them. They appear as politically aware of this change and the impact it has on their positioning in the Greek society.

In London, teenagers have friends of different nationalities. Indeed, often other minority-origin teenagers are the best friends of Albanian teenagers. This trend is explained by the teenagers as a way of sharing understanding for the strictness and discipline expected by their parents. Many of the teenage girls I interviewed in London told me that they are cut off from after-school clubs and activities, school trips, birthday

parties and all the other activities that are not strictly related to the educational curriculum. A few reported that they do not have any friends, apart from a few relatives and cousins of a similar age.

ZV: Do you have a life out of school, friends, do you go out?

**Ilda (girl, 14, London):** Most of my time is spent in school; when I come home I do my homework, I watch TV, I eat, I go to sleep. [...] I can't really go out. I am not really allowed. My mum, she doesn't like me going out everywhere; you know how places are sometimes. But I don't want to go either, I don't know, there is nowhere for you to go. I have got my aunties here, my mum's brother is here, and I have got cousins here... like two of my cousins are here, yeah so... I don't really think I need anyone else but my family.

London's complex social geography and spatial-ethnic segregation (and mixing), plus the striking social stratifications experienced there, expose the Albanian-origin teenagers to many people from deprived and underprivileged backgrounds, which are resented by the parents.

**Flutura (mother, 43, London):** The oldest son used to go out to the park and it was hard to bring him back home. He goes out with English boys every Friday. I am actually a bit annoyed because of this; you know, English people here are '*bërrnut*' (rubbish); poor, with divorced parents... Worse than us!!

The culture of teenage gangs and drugs in 'rough' areas of London has already caused serious issues with teenagers' social integration and their educational experience. On the other hand, some teenagers explain how the lack of goal-oriented peers has an impact on their motivation. This experience, especially problematic in the case of boys, shows the impact of segregation in immigrant and working-class areas and the effect of peer pressure on depressing the motivation of immigrant-origin students to aim for social mobility, common to the American literature on the downward mobility of some groups in the second generation (Zhou 1997a). In the final two quotes in this section we hear from a father and a teenage girl about the challenges of friendship and peer pressure in the 'difficult' environment of inner-suburban London.

**Fatmir (father, 41, London):** My oldest son is now in college and works at the same time. In the second and third year of high school he was rewarded as the best student with a gold medal. But the next year he made very bad friends and lost interest completely in school. In one year! Most of those guys were black, because 90 percent of the students in that school are black. I don't mind that, my own friends are black. Luckily I noticed in time because here it is very easy for the children to end up in trouble. One of his friends was killed two months ago...

**Eliana (girl, 15, London):** It is just the way England is; the environment here is closed... Not everyone welcomes you, especially in this area; it's hard to live. 'Cause if you are different, then it is going to cost you a lot to be different or to even have the guts to try and do something different here, it is difficult ... Because there are teenagers with their weed and their crack here which is... and they will try to put you into stuff that you don't want to do. Especially now that like people are at school, girls are at school, smoking, drinking; I don't want to get involved in that. It is easy to get involved into it, it is harder to not get into... If you say no, they will get angry with you.... You never know what people here will do!

### 6.2.2.3 *Immigrant and ethnic organisations*

In general, the degree of participation in immigrant and ethnic organisations of the Albanian-origin teenagers is related to parents' attitude towards such organisations. Ethnic organisations are approached by the parents when they want their children to learn Albanian, which in turn improves parents' networks and children's social life. Independent initiatives by teenagers are lacking. Indeed, there are many cases of interviewees who do not know of the existence of Albanian organisations in the city. Nevertheless, where it does occur, participation in immigrant and ethnic organisations affects identification and integration in various ways. As Darina shows below, it helps in fostering a distinct Albanian identity and the learning of languages and traditional Albanian dances (see Photos 12, 13).<sup>47</sup>

ZV: Why do you come to the Albanian classes?

**Darina (girl, 13, London):** I just like the idea that something ... is done. Because Indians and Africans, they have their own thing, so I said to myself 'I should go, too and see ...'. I am also keen to learn; I would like to learn better.

**Eliana (girl, 15, London):** I go to Albanian classes, because I learn something new, I meet new people, different place to be; it's just a different thing to do and I like it. And dance obviously.

Ethnic organisations can also help in countering discrimination. The activities of such organisations make up for lack of socialisation of the teenagers, constrained by the conservative attitude of Albanian parents towards their children and their fear of problems of youth and crime in London. Albanian weekend classes meant a lot to some of the teenage girls, like Darina and Eliana above. Apart from the symbolic attachment to Albanian language and identity that they confirm in their narratives, the social aspect of such activities appears as important. Moreover, these organisations can also be a way

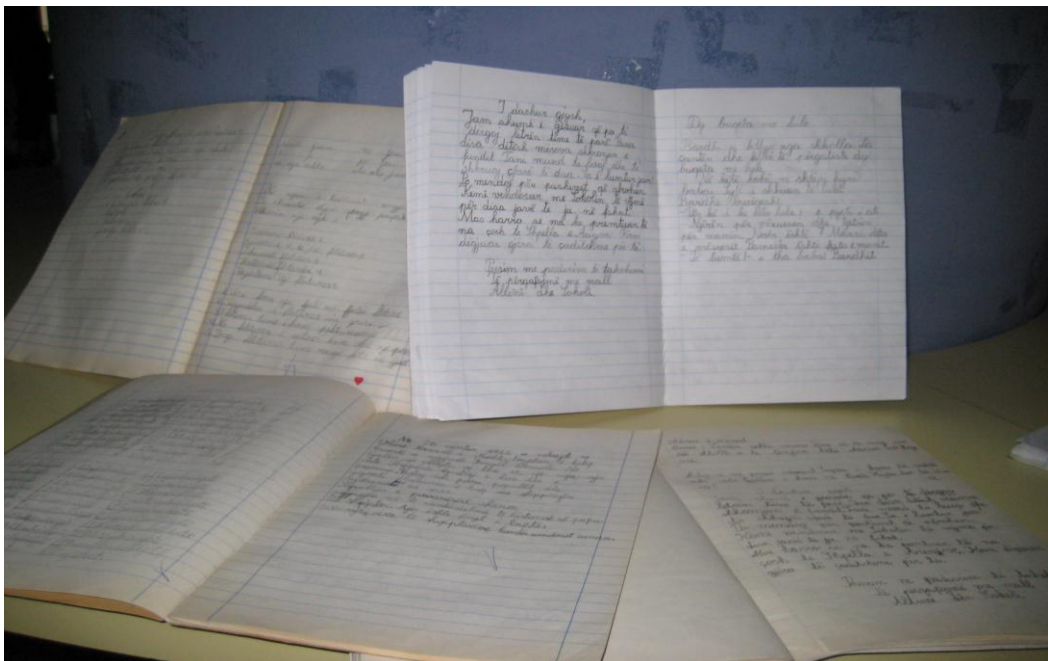
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<sup>47</sup> Representatives at the conference 'The promotion of the collaboration between Albanian diaspora in the UK and the central and local authorities for local development' organised in London, 10 June 2011, mentioned that only about 1 percent of the Albanian-origin children go to Albanian weekend classes.

of practising elementary organisational and entrepreneurial skills and may be a starting point for some of the children in terms of artistic activities.



**Photo 12:** Second-generation girl leading traditional Albanian dance in a community event in Thessaloniki, June 2008.



**Photo 13:** Children's notebooks of Albanian language class organised by the association 'Mother Tereza' in Thessaloniki.

## **Vignette 2. Sites of socialisation: Albanian organisations and youth in London**

Today I was invited to a party organised by an Albanian organisation in London for the teenagers. For some time I had been planning to visit an Albanian business in London, and this was also an opportunity to do that, too. The restaurant in East London that was hosting the party looked much like the restaurants in Albania: the way the tables were arranged, the banknotes attached at the bar (thought to bring financial gains according to superstitious people), the Albanian TV - BBF channel which promotes commercial Albanian music - was in the background and the food was Albanian.

A group of boys arrived first. They were of Kosovan origin; quickly the oldest opened his laptop and was trying to set up the WiFi. When the girls came, they sat in the other corner, completely indifferent to the boys. A father came and wanted to see for himself who he was leaving the daughter with. The more teenagers were arriving, the more the pattern was becoming evident: girls and boys sat or stood apart and did not talk to each other. 'Where are you from?', a 12-year-old boy of Kosovan origin asked me. 'From Albania', I answered. 'Hey girls, this girl is from Albania'; he tried to start a conversation with the Albanian girls nearby. They shouted at him in a rather evil and insulting way and then completely disregarded him. 'They are not girls, man. They are dogs! Whoof!! They are vicious, man!' he said, referring to the rough response from the girls. An Albanian mother in her late 30s approaches me:

'Do you see girls and boys apart? I don't know... I don't understand! In my time, we used to make friends, kiss and hug the boys of our class or neighbourhood. But here (in London) only the mountain people [she means the highlanders from northern Albania] have come. They don't let the girls go out, not to mention socialise with boys. I asked one of the families I know whether his daughter was coming to this event; he was totally against it'.

At some point Besmir, the boy of Kosovan descent, set up his WiFi and had prepared a rap song and dance with his friend. He started to sing, everyone sat down to listen. The music stops and it is food time. The 'rapper' boy asked: 'Is this *halal*?' He wanted to know about the meat served at the party. I didn't know, but asked the bartender, who swore vigorously that it was *halal* for sure, since he was himself a Muslim.

I leave the party both enlightened and confused; certainly capturing these interwoven identities is not easy, while observing the interaction in these sites of socialisation is fascinating.

**22 December 2007**





**Photo 14:** Albanian- and Kosovan-origin teenagers learning Albanian traditional dance in the Albanian weekend school organised by ‘*Ardhmëria*’ (The Future), London.

### **6.2.3 Discrimination**

Across the three field sites the teenagers I interviewed experience the burden of a ‘stigmatised ethnicity’. Although to a varying and declining extent, the Albanian identity is still articulated in negative terms in the media and in the public discourse. ‘Albanian’ has become the personification of an inferior status and the Albanian culture is considered as bearing primitive, uninteresting and ugly features. This is why the teenagers dread the recognition of their ethnic identity since negative labelling has caused a contraction of their ethnic status and agency. Although the ‘anti-Albanian’ discourse is more strongly entrenched in Greece and Italy, it has also appeared in the UK, and has been picked up by the children in school:

**Darina (girl, 13, London):** Yes, once someone had written something bad about Albania in a newspaper, and I didn't like it. I was like, 'What was their problem?' [...] Albanians here in England ... They rob banks. Like 'What the hell?!' and this sets a bad view of Albanian people.

Discrimination works to block strategies of integration since being unaccepted makes teenagers retreat and stop trying to establish relationships with native peers. Discrimination, however, is not a homogeneous or standard experience, and apart from in-group differences, it is also experienced differently by parents and children. While parents have accepted the existence of discrimination and consciously or unconsciously have reacted to it with different attitudes and strategies, children find it puzzling and hard to accept. Rather than a state of denial, the reaction of the second generation arises out of the frustration of experiencing acculturation and the strengthening of ties and belongingness on the one hand, and on the other the resistance of the 'host' society towards them, which 'grants' acceptance only on the basis of an exclusive ethnic identity, thus preventing the formation of 'healthy' hybrid identities.

There are also age-related differences in the perception of discrimination: older teenagers personalise and internalise it more, whereas the younger ones see it more as external and exaggerated. As mentioned above, the older children comment on their parents' incapability to help them cope with the strong discrimination towards Albanians throughout the 1990s. This points to what has already been emphasised in the literature that the mode of incorporation of the first generation has a strong impact on the second generation, providing differing amounts of cultural and social capital and exerting differential pulls on their allegiances (Levitt and Waters 2002: 15). By analogy, I suggest also that the stage of incorporation can be very important. Younger children seem more relaxed towards language use, visits to the homeland, and show more interest towards Albanian language and TV (some of these issues are dealt with in the next chapter). Although the attitude towards Albania and Albanian ethnic identity is not always positive among the younger siblings, they show a better capacity in taking a stance towards their ethnicity and their identity in general.

There is also a gender difference in the way Albanian teenagers experience discrimination and harassment on the basis of their origin. In general, boys face harsher discrimination, both physical and verbal. They are also more vocal and reactive against experiences of discrimination. In the case of the girls, discrimination is mostly experienced in the form of exclusion and mocking. They are more prone towards hiding

these issues from their parents and usually under-report instances of discrimination during the interview—at least as far as I could tell.

Discrimination is also experienced in the field of love relationships or what is expected in future partnerships. On this latter point, two revealing quotes from teenagers in Florence:

**Klejdi (boy, 17, Florence):** To tell you the truth I haven't had problems. The first things I say are my name, surname and then say that I am Albanian. But it has happened with girls, to be fair, or with the parents of the girls more precisely, and because I was Albanian I would have issues with the father of the girls (that I was dating). But I haven't given it much importance... like it or not, I am Albanian.

**Dana (girl, 15, Florence):** For example, I was with a group of friends and an Italian guy comes and approaches me, out of interest... When he got to know I was Albanian, he left saying, 'Aww, Albanian! God, no!'.

The way discrimination is experienced and perceived by the Albanian-origin teenagers varies from one city to another. In both Thessaloniki and Florence discrimination is expressed by the natives partly because of the similarity they perceive towards the Albanian second generation—in appearance, behaviour and customs. This trend is evident partly because of the 'broad' space of contact that the second-generation teenagers have with the Italian and Greek natives. In the case of Albanian-origin teenagers in London, this contact is 'mediated' by the other minorities, so they have the possibility to make use of the 'spaces' created by the multicultural society of London. Another reason for this contrasting perception is the cultural similarity between the Albanian and the Greek and Italian cultures. Yet here is a paradox: racism appears stronger in the two countries where the cultural (and geographical) distance to Albania is less, whereas in London the cultural-spatial distance to Albania is greater, but discrimination is less strong.

Teenagers in Thessaloniki explicitly express their opposition towards discriminative practices, both as a general principle and in their selection of their friends, boyfriends or girlfriends, and future partners. As the parents also realise (see 6.1.4 above), children feature both as 'victims' of the first generation's arrival and problematic settlement within a 'homogeneous' host society, and as the strongest agents of boundary-blurring processes. The presence of the children in schools is on the one hand an everyday reminder of growing differentiation and heterogeneity in Greek society, while their educational success has sometimes caused significant 'ethnic identity incidents' by

initiating discourses of national, ethnic and racial identities, with the ‘rejected flag bearer’ having become the symbol of their discrimination in Greece (see Kapllani and Mai 2005; Tzanelli 2006).

Unlike the more explicit discrimination experienced in Greece, the second generation in Florence experiences a more subtle discrimination. Lela explains this in more detail in this lengthy quote:

**Lela (mother, 36, Florence):** When we came here in the beginning, we were people taken and thrown into a society we knew nothing about! Whereas these (the children) who are growing up here, I can’t really say that they, the poor children, don’t know about it, although there are certain things that they experience... many things that have to do with *razzismo sottile* (subtle racism) [...] (*sighs*) There are many children in schools, when they reach the age of 12–13 there is a kind of racism... because when you are little you don’t understand it... ‘Ah, how well you speak Italian! But now you are Italian, you are not Albanian anymore!’. It’s devastating for the children! This thing that you are Italian, you are not Albanian anymore.... So they wonder, ‘Am I Italian because I speak Italian or ... because you see me as Italian? And by the way, what’s this difference between Italian and Albanian?’ There are some painful things for the children (to cope with).

Teenagers in London are generally more relaxed and the perceptions of discrimination are less internalised than in the two former cases. There is a more understanding attitude towards difference and multiculturalism within schools and beyond. Achieving full settlement and citizenship in Britain and the wide range of opportunities expected ‘frees’ them from strong negative perceptions of Albanian identity.

ZV: What’s your attitude towards the Albanian community in the UK or worldwide?

**Altin (boy, 16, London):** Um...I think it’s good. Some Albanians are putting good work into their community, like setting up schools where my sister goes. She goes to learn Albanian, Albanian dance and all stuff like that, which is good. And then there are Albanians that break the law in England, America, everywhere. That’s not good, but you know... I think Albanians make the world (*smiles*) a better world probably... No one can say Albanians are bad for the community or for the world. I mean, that’s just stupid, everyone has a unique... has something unique that their country brings to the world, to the community.

## 6.3 Intergenerational transmission of integration

### 6.3.1 Parents’ settlement and impact on children’s integration

Consistent with other research, I find that the intergenerational transmission process of Albanians in Thessaloniki, Florence and London is strongly affected by the patterns of

integration of the first generation (Levitt and Waters 2002). As a general trend across the three sites, parents' lack of proficiency in host country's language in particular was voiced by both children and parents themselves as one of the main issues that the families faced. This forced the children to take up many of the parents' responsibilities in terms of managing family life, such as dealing with institutions, doing paperwork and connecting the parents with the outside world. The lack of language skills creates divisions between parents and children and sometimes also resentment among the children towards parents who cannot perform their parental role, especially in school in front of their teachers and peers, as Anna explains below. More importantly, the parents' inability to communicate and be self-sufficient has damaged parent-child boundaries within the family, as parents could not function and the children missed a role model or a figure of authority. This lack of experience of parents with the host environment and lack of language skills have sometimes made the children feel let down.

ZV: Has their language been a problem to you?

**Anna (girl, 16, Thessaloniki):** In the beginning, when I was at school and my mum and dad came to get the grades, they didn't know Greek so well and I felt a bit ashamed. I felt a bit bad. But now they know it well, I don't have a problem.

Especially in London, there are cases of strong 'gendered' perceptions of children's educational performance and future integration in the labour market. In general, mothers put an emphasis on the empowerment of daughters through education and a potential career, referring to their own experiences of gender oppression in Albania and within their marriages. However, their perception of gender divisions of labour and their choices for their children as far as careers are concerned reflect a need to earn a living for sons, and the possibility of longer-term career building for daughters.

ZV: How do they do at school?

**Lutfie (mother, 36, London):** They are boys and as boys they do OK; average. If I had a girl, I would push her more for education so she gets 'a job with a chair' (Albanian way to refer to office-based jobs).

ZV: Do they want to go to University? What job do they want? What do they want to become?

Lutfie: Mechanic, plumber, cook—jobs with money.

Parents' evaluation and expectations of their own and their children's integration are often related to their past and the way they grew up during communism. For many low-skilled parents, the best outcome of their migration project—economic security and security in the family—is mentioned as satisfactory, although as long-term migrants

there is in all cases a critical self-evaluation of their trajectory and the evolution of their economic and social integration in the host country. The welfare and progress of the children has been an important reason to migrate and in general parents have made heroic sacrifices and submitted themselves to very harsh living and working conditions in order for the children to have better opportunities. Some parents explain these sacrifices as self-denial—‘forgetting who we were’—describing a rapid and painful de-skilling process in order to provide the necessary resources for their children’s education.

It should be noted once again that the process of settlement followed a different course in the three sites of this study. Characteristic of parents’ migration history in Thessaloniki and Florence is that in general one parent came first, nearly always the father, and the rest of the family joined him after a few years. This allowed parents to get regularised, find stable employment, learn the language to a certain degree that would allow them to function and handle their everyday life responsibilities. This accumulated human and social capital prepared a smoother settlement path for the rest of the family and children.

In contrast, in Britain parents and children migrated together in most of the cases of those who are now teenagers and the subjects of this research. While parents were keeping their eye on the labour market and financial gains, worrying about the outcome of their status and coping with psychological problems, children had to adapt to the parents’ insecurity and to their incapability to function in the country where they tried so hard to settle. In some cases, this failure of parents to integrate, which then became a burden to the teenagers, developed remarkably the latter’s agency. The following set of interview extracts illustrates some of these issues.

**Qerim (father, 46, London):** There are problems between children and parents, but the role of parents should be great; all the vices of the children are parents’ deficiencies. My older son, now sixteen, slams the doors around the house, but that’s not him, that’s me coming home from work at 10pm and going back the next day to work at 5am for years and years when he was younger. Why? Because we were with a ‘negative’; my friend was taken from his house with wife and children at 5am and was deported (*sighs*)...

**Era (girl, 14, London):** I would like them (parents) to speak English ‘cause it would make my life so much easier. I wouldn’t have to translate for them, you know...all the time. I don’t know, when we go to solicitors, when we phone up important people, everything ... I translate for them, I do forms, housing and stuff like that.

**Altin (boy, 16, London):** We had to go and see different people, like judges; we had to go Croydon, the Home Office; usually I would go with my mum and dad, ‘cause I would help them with translating. I would have to always call, like when someone important would call, an English

person would call, I would help to translate that 'I am a foreigner...' or whatever, something like that. So yeah, it did get in the way of school.

### **6.3.3 *Transmission of the migration project***

In general, both parents and the teenagers are of the opinion that migration was a good step for the family, an opportunity 'for a better life'. Girls are appreciative of the migration of their parents so that they can live a life without fanaticism and restrictions. The only difference is in the case of teenagers of the highly skilled who experienced de-skilling because of migration; they express empathy, but at times contempt, for the parents' decision to migrate. There is a transnational appreciation of these opportunities by referring to the living standards in Albania.

**ZV:** What do you think about the decision of your parents to come to Greece: was it a good or a bad decision?

**Anna (girl, 16, Thessaloniki):** A good decision. If we were still in Albania, we would be like my cousins there: a bit poorer... OK, it is nicer there; they are more human, closer to each other, but they are let's say... live in poverty; here in Greece we... are a bit more comfortable, better-off. We are better here, so I think this decision was good.

Especially because of the sacrifice they submit themselves to in reaching and settling in the host country, parents are insistent that their migratory plans, which are very concentrated on the children and their education, have to work. Sometimes the very success of the migration project is equated with the realisation of children's education, the securing of financial stability and an overall 'better future'. This is illustrated in the following quote where Drita refers to her own low status in an effort to encourage her children to study hard in order that they can be upwardly mobile:

**Drita (mother, 45, London):** So far I am very pleased with the children's progress; I hope they will continue this way and I will be the happiest mother in the world if my children become someone. I tell them 'Look at your mother, how she is living on benefits, like a piece of... Even if I started work, I would be working as a cleaner, so please take my example and study hard!' And my daughter comes back from school and says she got a high grade I am in tears because I think I suffered but my children won't.

Therefore, parents put emphasis on the taking of opportunities, but also on a goal-oriented life, focused on achieving financial security for the family and providing a better future to the children. There are differences between children in their understanding of their parents' migration and sacrifice. Some teenagers, especially those who experienced the first years of migration of their parents while they were

growing up, bond with their parents and express empathy for the hardship they went through. Two examples:

**Albi (boy, 13, London):** I think it (parents' life) is very hard, because they have spent all this like stuff. They have been working to spend money on like a house. Every time she says they worked hard, I believe her. It is really hard to get a house in England, because it costs you a lot. I kind of feel sorry for them.

**Aldo (boy, 16, Thessaloniki):** My parents have come here to earn money and buy a house and make our future; we are not here to wander around and kill time as the Greeks do. We have come here from another country for a better future. [...] They want me to go to University because they don't want me to struggle and get exhausted as they did for so many years. They want to see me well-off, with a house, with an office-based job, so that I won't be 'under the sun' like they were when they came here.

Many parents try to 'dilute' the discrimination that their children face and, interestingly, as Monda explains below, they intentionally avoid inducing negative feelings towards Greece (in this case) to their children. On the one hand, this attitude shows a consciousness of the politics of identity, an acknowledgement of the existence of ethnic boundaries and an acceptance of the very porous boundaries around the Albanian 'group'. On the other hand, good parenting and children's prosperity seem to take priority over the collective identity and its recognition. There are also cases when parents find it hard to admit discrimination of themselves, and especially of their children. This is also a way to react towards a possible diagnosis of their decision to migrate as negative and harmful to their family.

**Monda (mother, 50, Thessaloniki):** We do not have this attitude... like pushing children to be against the Greeks, because if we would say to the children: 'The Greeks do this, the Greeks do that!' then the child develops hate, because these things are taken from the parents. We don't want the children to have hate; we let them grow with the culture of here. We will give them the Albanian culture, our family tradition, the love and not to forget Albania. Even when it comes to history, we tell them this is our history, this is how things stand. We don't know what historians and states do; that's their job. We are taught this way; they are taught in a different way, and everyone has his own right. We don't induce hate in children... No, no.

Since the perception of the success of their migration project differs among the first generation across sites, there are differences in the way they transmit their family's migration project to the children. Since the realisation of a better future for their children is held as one of the main goals of the migration project, the more the first generation gets its migration goals realised, and the more the second generation comes of age, the more the parents feel uncertainty and anxiety about their children's future in the host country. In Greece and Italy the main issues relate to structural integration; in



the former they are especially associated with an uncertain legal status and a very impenetrable higher education.

**Pali (father, 48, Florence):** Every time we used to have conflicts with my wife around the decision to come to Italy we would be saying: 'Our life is how it is, but we are constructing our daughter's future'. Sometimes this is also an excuse to justify our decisions... putting the welfare of our children first and feeling like a devoted parent. But then when we see that the interest of her generation here for education is zero we wonder whether this was a mistake. We ruined our future, we abandoned mother and father, our job and all the rest... and when we think that things could have gone differently, we wonder whether migrating was not a good decision...

In Britain parents express concern about teenagers' social integration and inter-marriages since there are positive expectations about structural integration due to the gaining of citizenship, a prestigious education system and a flexible labour market. Possibilities of return to Albania are evaluated and contrasted with the chances to enter higher education and get integrated in the labour market in the host country, while the difficulties of reintegration in the home country are an important theme in these 'British' narratives. Seeing the presence in the host country as an opportunity, these mothers in London comment on their children's complacency, individuality and autonomy as distinct values of the second generation, which do not meet parents' expectations:

**Mirlinda (mother, 34):** ...We enjoyed our childhood, we used to play outdoors, but our children stay closed in at home all the time.

**Arjana (mother, 32):** Well, our children don't lack anything. This is making them lazy and they are falling behind with the lessons. Here (in England) they have all the possible opportunities. I got engaged by my father at the age of 16 and then I had to quit school. It was really finished at that point!

**Mirlinda (mother, 34):** It is difficult to bring up children here; they have a lot of freedom. When we were children we didn't even think we could oppose our mothers! Here the child says everything in your face how he feels about something. I mean, we got married and we didn't know what that involved!

The intergenerational transmission of integration, however, can be disrupted by parents' return plans and their parallel investment towards return to Albania. This obviously conflicts with children's general aspiration and plans to stay in the host country. In general, the uncertainty over the poorly developed education system in Greece makes parents feel pessimistic about their children's future and their decision to migrate with their families, as Abaz describes below.

**Abaz (father, 44, Thessaloniki):** I am just worried about the future. The children are in a foreign country; will they finish school, will they work? What will they do? I am a bit worried about this. Sometimes I even think I made a bad decision for the children, probably I reduced their motivation; it would have probably been better if they were in their own country, in Albania. On

the other hand, I think that they are abroad, they are in Europe. Greece is now a European country, there will probably be an extra opportunity... I don't feel very certain, to be honest, about the children's future.

## 6.4 Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the patterns, dynamics and strategies of integration of Albanian immigrants and their children in Thessaloniki, Florence and London. Both groups' perception and experiences of integration have changed over time and in different stages of integration, making the idea of integration as a process central to our understanding of the phenomenon as a long-term 'outcome' of the settlement of immigrant groups and their descendants. Although the spatial and demographic context plays a significant role in shaping the differences in terms of integration across the three sites, we see that the socio-economic background and capital of the first generation affect the integration of both migrants and their children. More importantly, *the way the two generations conceive their integration is significantly different: parents and children strive to integrate into different sectors of the receiving society. In very broad terms, social and cultural integration is much more appreciated by the second generation, while the first generation puts most of its efforts into structural integration.* There is also a different appreciation from the side of the second generation of the *opportunity structures* when compared to the mono-dimensional appreciation by the parents of their migration project—aiming at economic prosperity and education of the children.

Related to these differences in the appreciation of integration is the way the two generations experience and are affected by discrimination. *While the first generation experiences discrimination on the basis of their difference to the native population, the discrimination towards the second generation is perceived on the basis of similarity.* By this I mean that the second-generation's physical, cultural and behavioural similarity or identity to peer-age 'host'-society natives causes the latter to partially 'reject' them, both in social spaces and in other spheres. This syndrome is particularly acute in Florence.

These differences between the two generations have also a spatial element. *Children have a different understanding of space and geography, and plan and evaluate their integration through different spatial frames of reference, such as their locality, neighbourhood or city, seen most clearly in the case of Albanian teenagers in Florence.*

Structural and cultural differences across three sites are shown to affect the way immigrants and their children perceive the possibility to integrate and experience the various processes of integration. The situation in terms of institutional arrangements with regard to education, labour market, housing, religion and legislation is different in each of the sites, supporting the comparative context integration theory (Crul and Schneider 2010).

In turn, referring to the distinction between *de facto* and *official* multiculturalism by Joppke and Morawska (2003), we see a difference in the way the Albanian immigrants and their descendants are positioned in the three cities. Two revealing examples would be the role of immigrant organisations and the school arrangements. Based on *official multiculturalism* in London, there is an a priori recognition on the part of organisations and schools of the rights of minorities to be recognised and cultivated. Yet, in schools, small minorities deriving from new migrations are partly overlooked, as this a priori recognition is usually directed towards old and sizeable minority groups. *De facto* multiculturalism is taking shape in Florence, seen in the local policies that promote interculturality, which result in a smoother integration in schools of the second-generation children, especially those that arrive at school age. In turn, as mentioned in Chapter 2, integration measures are usually absent in Greece, and local policies that enhance integration of immigrants and their descendants do not exist in Thessaloniki. The role of organisations is far less significant there too, as structurally speaking they are also more weakly catered for by the state.

The difference in the appreciation of multiculturalism is also shown in the integration trajectories of Albanian immigrants in each of the sites. Referring to the definition of Gans (1992), we see a rapid *acculturation* of migrants in Greece and Italy, shown more clearly in their religious identities, while the process of assimilation – the shift of membership from ethnic to non-ethnic social organisations and institutions — is much slower. This acculturation was mostly imposed by the assimilation pressures in the host society in the early stages of settlement and integration. Increasingly it shows signs of intentionality (Todd 2005) in later stages, showing more autonomy from the side of migrants who consciously take acculturation as a general strategy towards a more advantageous positioning in the host society, or feel remorse about the early-stage assimilation and identity change that occurred. This process, furthermore, has *gendered* patterns, more emphasised in the case of the first generation, with women experiencing a more rapid process of acculturation and integration in general.

Discrimination is an important barrier to integration, which obstructs structural integration, which in turn, supporting Gordon's (1964) view, becomes a barrier to social and cultural assimilation. This dynamic is more evident among the second generation. The tendency towards participation in non-ethnic institutions is also stronger among the second generation; however, this participation is obstructed by the low social and cultural capital transmitted by the parents and the general lack of resources.

In terms of trajectories or patterns of integration predicted by the classic assimilation and segmented assimilation theories, there is in general an upward mobility of the first generation across the three sites. In turn, there is very little evidence of ethnic embeddedness. Signs of ethnic embeddedness are mostly the case of the Albanian community in London, where there is evidence of pressure put on girls and expectations towards them from the side of the community. However, the issue seems more a gendered view on moral values rather than the typical ethnic enclave – spatially and socially segregated and organised around a common culture and/or ethnic niche, usually emphasising the differences with the host country's culture. *As regards the theory of segmented assimilation, especially in the case of the second-generation teenagers, the three clear 'outcomes' of integration that the theory predicts are difficult to assess, not least because the processes of adaptation and acculturation at this age are very complex.* Another important element that makes the theory only partly applicable is the lack of a 'transnational' element in the integration of the second generation, which is the focus of the next chapter.

## Chapter 7

### TRANSNATIONAL TIES

This chapter focuses on the transnational ties of the first and the second generations and their intergenerational transmission. It follows the general structure of the previous two chapters. The section on the first generation looks at return visits, ties through the media and technology, remittances, and includes a section on attitudes towards return, since these attitudes are framed and evaluated transnationally, based on feelings of belongingness and a more-or-less rational appreciation of opportunities in both the home and the host country. The section on the second generation follows a similar though not identical structure. We will see that the themes treated have their own particularities for the second generation, as well as reflecting the role of the parents. This role is the focus of the third section, which analyses the intergenerational transmission of transnational ties and focuses specifically on return visits and attitudes towards return.

#### 7.1 The first generation

##### *7.1.1 Return visits*

Although the transnational ties of the first generation take various forms, return visits have a special importance. This is because they concern visits to family and kin—a strong obligation in Albania. Return visits hold this importance even though they are less ‘frequent’ when compared to ties through media and technology which take place, in many cases, on a daily basis. Duvall (2004: 53) maintains that transnational studies assume the existence of connections between homeland and the receiving country, but the physical movement of migrants has been overlooked compared to other ‘transnational exercises’. Kibria (2002: 297) adds the voluntary element to such visits, defining them as short-term returns to the homeland for the purposes of tourism, leisure, seeing family and learning about its culture. Duvall (2003), however, sees these visits as

taking place within the wider diaspora; hence they have a broader role as linking numerous social fields and maintaining transnational identity structures.

There is an important point to be made here: for most of the first-generation Albanian migrants and a part of the second generation, these visits were impossible in the early years of settlement and childhood respectively. This is related to the history of immigration of this group and to certain objective factors that condition the performance and the patterns of return visits. Some of these factors include the delayed regularisation process, the phenomenon of chain migration and therefore the presence of relatives in the receiving country (less so in the case of the UK), the existence of ‘family hubs’ in other countries, the evolution and stage of incorporation, and the way this immigrant group is perceived in the receiving country. As Duvall (2003) also observes, borders and state policies have crucial importance. Due to the ‘illegal’ nature of much Albanian migration, return visits were not possible for a number of years. However, transnational ties are also shaped through memory and nostalgia, which is far more common among the parents.

**Lela (mother, 37, Florence):** When I go out for a walk, sometimes I feel so lost in my thoughts and I don’t know anymore where I am; I feel like I am taking a walk in Durrës. There are these moments when I have nostalgia and I feel like I am walking around in my country; I listen to people speaking in Italian and I feel like they speak Albanian. When I go to Albania, in a week I see so many things, so many changes and I miss so much the past, the childhood I spent there, my friends, everything. So I don’t find myself neither there, nor here.

Return visits have changed in terms of their meaning and frequency over the years. Once the issue of ‘papers’ was resolved, most of the first generation immediately undertook return visits, and continue to do so. A smaller number have interrupted the visits, or visit only very occasionally. The narratives of the parents (and children) show the high emotion of the first return visit to Albania, of getting to know the place and re-uniting with relatives after a long gap. The preparation for the return trips is generally described as a time of joyful anticipation for all concerned. The visits’ emotional character, inspired by longing and belonging, is a general feature, which is usually associated with other reasons that show an instrumental rationale of these visits (see Vignette 3).

### Vignette 3. Thessaloniki–Tirana return: a bus ethnography

I am on the bus travelling from Thessaloniki to Tirana, ‘replicating’ the trips I used to take as a student five years ago. From my time in Greece the movement of migrants is much greater. There are more travel agencies, which also keep the price low. A return trip by bus costs €56. At a travel agency in Tirana I was told that a trip by plane can be €140 and even €230 one-way during Easter. This is a major reason why most of the transnational movements between Greece and Albania happen by bus. The new ‘Egnatia’ road has made a big difference to the speed of travelling.

The bus is full of people; Easter holiday is just starting, so families, students and young men are travelling to Albania. There are students in Greece returning home for Easter holidays, a granny visiting relatives as one of them had lost a very close family member, middle-aged men, migrant heads of families with families back in Albania, single men, and mothers with children going there for holidays. Usually the front seats are reserved for young ladies (students) or other women who travel alone, elderly or people in bad health. The driver does not need to be told; whenever he sees a young lady unaccompanied, he reserves the front seat for her.

The *porosi* (an object you promise to take to a destination) for the relatives in Albania, the materials for the newly opened business or the one to be opened, and small packages start to arrive to the driver. There are a few object-elements that are part of these bus trips: the envelope – small amount of remittances; the urgent paper – sent to Albania for the documents in Greece; the TV – the electric appliances that symbolise the wish or obligation of the migrant to improve the family life; and a few ‘illegal’ goods—e.g. packs of cigarettes. After five years, a new element has joined the mini-community on-the-move: Greek citizens travelling to Albania or travelling through Albania to Montenegro. The single man, unshaved, who has brought only a pack of cigarettes, is still there. He is going back home for a family problem, to have a look at a piece of land to buy for the future house, or to check out a girl chosen by the family for marriage.

I am talking to a 33-year-old lady who is travelling with her two sons, aged seven and four respectively. She says that the family usually travels by car, but her husband is busy with his work in Greece, so they decide to take the bus.

I used to go often, but now the kids are going to school, so it’s not so easy to travel often to Albania. But of course I like to go; without your country you have no value! Both kids speak Albanian, but now that they go to school they are having difficulties with Albanian, because for example *ç*, *ë*, and *sh* do not exist in Greek. In the summer I want to leave the older one in Albania. My sister-in-law is a teacher of Albanian language in a secondary school in Berat and she will teach him to read and write Albanian. I want him to learn because the children who grow up knowing both languages are more intelligent.

There are also some complex dynamics developing in the bus. The students’ conversation is about their life as students in Greece and they exchange this with other labour migrants. ‘I was doing very well when I was in high school, but married quite early and couldn’t continue...’ a mother says to the student next to her seat.

(continues overleaf)

Along the way, before reaching the border, the Greek police has stopped a van and three Albanian young guys are huddled together sitting on the ground, while the police are interrogating the driver. Illegal migration continues; this does not seem special to the travellers. While the picture from the bus looks epic, the ‘disgrace’ is articulated as one of the events in the life of a migrant. ‘Oh, poor them, they have been caught! They will be sent back or sent to prison for a while. Let’s hope this one (the Greek policeman) is kind-hearted and won’t beat them up!’.

We reach the check-point close to the border, close to the end of the trip in Greek territory. ‘Hey, get ready; it’s *Rambo* coming!’ One of the migrants in the bus signals the approaching Greek policeman who checks the bus for undocumented migrants before they enter the Albanian border. The perception of irregularity, the events of crossing borders, taking the first trip, trying once, twice and other times, seem just normal, natural attempts to ‘get there’, to do something to improve one’s conditions, a way to succeed, a road towards some sort of economic project, but also a manly accomplishment. This makes the borders look artificial and yet so crucial and important. They are there to stop a natural trip and yet give to the journey a crucial importance, making it a life-changing experience.

Yet, crossing the border is not such a heart-stopping event as five years ago. The driver takes the whole pack of documents, the list of passengers and goes to the immigration officer at the border. It seems a daily formality: the bus contains ‘subjects’ to be registered beyond the ‘line’.

In Përrenjas the driver has to stop; one of the *porosi* has arrived at its destination. A middle-aged couple and a young man were waiting for the bus on the road. The TV—the big gift for the family/close relatives—was on the bus just like five years ago. Back in Greece the migrant, a middle-aged man who looked like the head of a family with his wife and children left behind, had proudly loaded the TV Funai into the baggage boot of the bus. Two other men were uploading a bath tub and accessories; one of them was building a new house and worked in construction in Greece, so he had made sure that he was taking his working instruments with him as well, so that he could install it properly in the new house.

The bus also serves as a local transporter: starting from Korçë, the bus starts stopping in every village, or rather anywhere closest to the migrants’ houses, or where their relatives are waiting for them. This plays a considerable role in facilitating transnational movements.

When approaching Tirana, only the students remain in the bus. While their conversation in the Greek territory is about the way the students see themselves as subordinated by their Greek peers, about their experiences when encountering locals, or their opinion of international affairs, when we cross the border the main themes are the bad infrastructure in Albania, and the incompetent border officer while so many highly skilled and people graduated abroad are unemployed. When entering Tirana, ‘the highly skilled despair’ for the country ‘not being made yet’ is on display, the still unfinished road close to Tirana bearing the symbolism. The chatter fades away as we approach the centre of the capital.

**19 April 2008**





**Photo 15:** ‘Keen transnationals’: Albanian migrants in Greece returning to Albania for Easter 2008 through the Kapshticë–Xristalopigi border point.



**Photo 16:** Albanian migrants in Thessaloniki in front of a travel agency preparing for the trip to Albania, April 2008.

Family obligations are one of the main reasons for transnational visits. In turn, the attitude and expectations of the extended family in Albania have a strong impact on the continuation and frequency of return visits. The role of the extended family is only recently acknowledged in the ‘transnational communities’ literature. The role of kinship networks has mostly been studied in relation to chain migration and the initial settlement of migrants (Choldin 1973); the focus on kinship in terms of return visits is recent (Mason 2004). Writing of the Caribbean context, Conway and Potter (2009: 234) note that intra-generational family connections expressed in family love, obligations and responsibilities are among the strongest reasons for performing transnational ‘mobilities’, mainly in terms of return. This view, however, contrasts with Albanian migrants’ attitudes towards the collective culture. The latter’s narratives show a move towards individuality on the one hand, but they also reflect the changes observed in Albania during return visits, such as the ‘loosening’ of ties between relatives and a different appreciation of kin, along with lack of appreciation towards community values and a move towards ‘appearances’ and materialism. This is also noted in other authors’ writings on Albania. Misha (2008: 125) maintains that the transition in Albania was characterised by a crisis of the value framework that underpinned the basis of social organisation until the collapse of communism, which in turn caused a serious social fragmentation in Albanian society. Abaz agrees:

**Abaz (father, 44, Thessaloniki):** Visits to Albania have become less frequent. This last time I went I was returning after six years. I went for New Year, because New Year’s is our traditional celebration, as you may know. I went there two years ago, but it wasn’t the same atmosphere as before... Everyone was just staying home, minding their own problems. The visits to the relatives, I am not saying they were not taking place anymore, but from one hundred per cent, I could say they were reduced by seventy five per cent! There weren’t visits anymore, back and forth to relatives’ houses. I felt like love and respect for kin and relatives were diminished in comparison with the old times when we were there.

Some of these evolving tensions go along with a change in understanding of the adults on the importance of the extended family; or the interference of the in-laws in the relationship of the couple, as Anila explains below. This latter relationship can change markedly during migration, especially involving more empowerment of the women and more importance given to the nuclear family and independence from the in-laws and relatives. There is also opposition from both parents and the second generation towards interference by the extended family into the choices which parents make for the children, especially the girls.

**Anila (mother, 35, Florence):** Last time we went, me and my husband, his parents interfered. He is very stressed because he works long hours and I understand him, but they don't get it that this human being is really tired and is working very hard. I don't see him myself all day; I see him only in the evening. And I also need to stay with him... We are spending all our lives like this! All year I see my husband once a week on Sunday, I also need to spend time with him, but they were with us morning till evening in our house. They made my life hell! I had to sacrifice myself for his mum and dad...

On the other hand, the quote from Tony, below, highlights a trend that cuts across the data, namely that return visits are an important occasion for meeting relatives who have migrated to different countries. By the same token, they offer a rare opportunity for the meeting up of second-generation children, for instance cousins, and thus an important setting for the creation and restoration of multiple transnational kinship ties.

ZV: How has the frequency of the return visits changed over the years?

**Tony (father, 41, Florence):** Until my parents passed away, I was going twice a year, and when they were ill, even four-five times a year. I went four times in 1999 when my dad passed away and the same when my mum passed away. I was there both for the funeral and the other rites. I went again in 2007 for the first anniversary and in 2008 I went again because my niece from Manchester was visiting. I hadn't seen her for eight years, so went on purpose to meet those cousins. Now they will be yearly, because I have my brothers there, and then we can't really go often, because of work here, expenses... Whereas when my parents were there, we were more prone to go and we were sacrificing something, because it was a beautiful thing. I was arriving and at the door of the house were mum and dad waiting for me... Now we will go a little bit to one brother, a little bit to the other, and just once a year.

On the one hand, relations with the extended family and the propensity to make return visits may reflect a weak social integration in the country where these immigrants and their children live. But the opposite may also happen: visits serve only to reveal the emotional distancing, even alienation, which they feel in Albania. They see the changes that have occurred in their identities and in their home country in their absence (cf. Duvall 2003: 299). Below, Anton talks about this 'disembedding' from Albania and his past life there:

**Anton (father, 38, Florence):** The fact is that I feel a little bit alien when I walk on the street. Not in my house, the house remains the same, my parents are the same. But you go out in the street and see the changes in the town and you don't see anyone from those you left sixteen years ago. You see a new generation with a new soul, you realise this and you feel a stranger in the place where you were born and grew up and spent your adolescence, more there than in the place where you live now... abroad.

There is also a feeling of opposition and subtle exclusion from the side of the general public in Albania towards immigrants, or a lack of consideration, growing over the

years, that makes return visits a negative experience and discourages their continuation in the future. Paralleling other research on return visits, there are also instances of articulation of ‘othering’ and even ‘madness’ towards migrants during these visits (cf. Potter and Phillips 2006: 586). In the Albanian case, this may reflect the assimilation of the first generation, especially in the case of those in Florence.

**Michelino (father, 46, Florence):** It’s not that we don’t love Albania; I love Albania. That’s why I go there every year. Although they treat us very badly, starting with the politicians of Albania. They take advantage because they know we can’t exist without going to Albania; they know we will go anyways... But we are learning! [...] If you would go there and say these things, people start laughing at you. They would say ‘What’s wrong with him? There he goes, the stupid one from Italy!’. They take us for idiots when we go there. ‘They have lost it completely, these people that come from Italy!’.

The difficulties of travelling and the long waiting hours at the borders are also an important negative part of return visits. This is especially mentioned by Albanians living in Greece, who get stuck at the border for hours, even days, during holiday seasons (see Photo 15). Those in Italy recollect negative experiences in Albanian ports. Some migrants articulate the issue of bad infrastructure as just another symptom of the disrespectful attitude of the Albanian state towards its emigrants and diaspora. The cost aspect is a barrier especially for those living in Britain and Italy, since they have to rely on air transport. These difficulties are mentioned as reasons for the discontinuation of return visits to the homeland and an orientation instead towards holidays in touristic areas in the countries where they live or in other countries or big cities (see also Duvall 2003: 302).

Transnational movements differ across the three countries and between genders. There are cases when only the father continues visiting, reflecting the poor social integration of Albanian men when compared to women.

ZV: Who takes the initiatives for the visits?

**Sidorela (girl, 22, Florence):** My dad... he because... My mum is practically completely adapted to the Italian world. She feels more Italian than Albanian. My dad, on the contrary, no; he feels more Albanian than Italian, so it’s him the one who always wants to go.

One factor that contributes to differences between sites is the situation with regularisation and residence papers. The serious difficulties with papers in Greece have obstructed transnational movements to Albania and other countries. From time to time, the Greek authorities have only allowed Albanians to travel home on holiday occasions.

Here, Entela sarcastically reveals the impact of the lack of movement rights on transnational care and transnational family ties.

**Entela (mother, 42, Thessaloniki):** We can travel only when they [the authorities] decide. They give us a document like that and we go. I have told to my parents ‘You have to die at Christmas or Easter, because before or after we cannot come; we don’t have papers!’

In contrast, the acquisition of British citizenship by participants in London marked the beginning of dynamic transnational movements. These movements are also facilitated by the good flight connections from London. Although these movements were initially only to Albania, they soon became oriented towards other European cities, as Miranda shows below.

**Miranda (mother, 34, London):** I will go to Bologna with my husband and my elder son because I found some very cheap tickets from London. How can you not travel with these prices! Fantastic! We have relatives there, so we see them and leave our son there then we go to Rome, me and my husband for a short holiday.

### ***7.1.2 Transnational ties through ICTs***

Research on the use of ICTs within transnationalism and migration literature is recent, as one would expect with a relatively new form of technology (e.g. Binaisa 2009). There is an obvious need to research the nature and implications of transnational ties established and maintained through ICTs, as well as their impact on migrants’ strategies of integration (Christiansen 2004; Panagakos and Horst 2006).

The migrants in my study were found to use various ICTs to keep in touch with Albania and relatives abroad, although the adoption of different ICTs has happened at different times. Invariably, the use of ICTs is dependent on the financial situation of the family and it is usually not prioritised over other needs and the goal of saving. The telephone was the first means used by the migrants, independently of their legal status, while the frequency of the calls to Albania depends on the financial means available. Digital broadcasting is far more recent and the use of internet depends on the level of education.

The use of ICTs such as mobile phones and the internet is very much related to the need to maintain the ties with the family, although there is a difference between the skilled and unskilled migrants, or the more educated and less educated. The more

educated participate also in various forums and international mailing lists, which discuss important issues related to events and developments in Albania.<sup>48</sup> These online discussions also give rise to a form of political transnational involvement, consisting of expressions of opinion towards governmental measures in Albania and international events that affect Albania and Albanians abroad, sometimes resulting in declarations and petitions sent to the Albanian government or other international bodies. In some cases, the online forums involve both users in Albania, those in the ‘historical diaspora’ in the USA, and others from the Albanian immigrant communities in different countries.<sup>49</sup> Recent topics in one forum were, for example, a survey on whether the events in Albania on 21 January 2011 were tantamount to a *coup d’ état*,<sup>50</sup> or how the post-communist transition has impacted people’s lives. Political transnationalism is otherwise missing among Albanian immigrant communities. Transnational ties of the highly skilled through the internet are also enabled by the websites of various Albanian newspapers published online.

In general, across the three countries families have subscribed en masse to the digital broadcasting platform of Albanian private media—DigitAlb.<sup>51</sup> This platform plays an important role for the family to keep in touch with Albania, although it is mostly the first generation that is the main consumer. There is also a difference in the types of information that the two generations consume from this platform, with the first generation being very interested in the day-to-day news, while the second generation relates to it more casually, watching mostly the music shows and foreign movies in the case of the teenagers, and cartoons in the case of younger children. As Fatmir shows below, the watching of homeland media is also a way of revealing the ‘positioning’ of the first generation in the host society and the need to be connected to the homeland.

**Fatmir (father, 41, London):** I don’t watch the English channels anymore since DigitAlb was issued. I don’t watch them... It’s five to six years now. Probably a bit in the morning when my wife checks out the news. But otherwise I watch DigitAlb... We are another ‘dough’, another generation; those who are twenty years old have no problem (to integrate), but us...

<sup>48</sup> See for example the webpage of the network of Albanian academics abroad: <http://www.alb-shkenca.org/> Accessed 18/03/2011; various pages on Facebook, such as Albanian Women Network UK; UK Albanians Network; The Albanians in the UK; British Albanian Kosovar Council; Centre for Albanian Studies.

<sup>49</sup> See for example The Albanian Forum <http://www.forumishqiptar.com/> or <http://www.webalbania.com/> Accessed 5/04/2011

<sup>50</sup> On 21 January 2011 there were massive public demonstrations in Tirana against corruption of the government that caused three deaths.

<sup>51</sup> DigitAlb was launched in July 2004. <http://www.digitalb.al/> Accessed: 11/03/2011

Although most parents take DigitAlb in order to be in touch with Albania, some of them use it for the children to listen to Albanian and keep the language. Therefore, the use of digital broadcasting is also related to the migrants' and their descendants' identification. In general, in families where parents are moving towards assimilation, Albanian broadcasting is not present, although transnational ties are kept through the telephone and internet.

There is a difference between the three countries in terms of the performance and maintenance of transnational ties through ICTs. Because of the differences in technological development, in Greece this kind of transnational tie mostly takes place through Albanian TV broadcasting and telephone. In Florence, along with the difference in the sample composition, mostly skilled migrants originating from urban areas in Albania, digital broadcasting was one of the main means, but ties through the internet were also very common. In turn, since the use of ICTs by the first generation is also related to social integration, DigitAlb in Britain entered many Albanian families not only as a transnational means but also out of necessity since many parents are not knowledgeable in English. Resonating with other research on transnational ties (Snel *et al.* 2006), this exclusive watching of the Albanian media may well become a cause for further decelerating of the social integration of low-skilled Albanian migrants in Britain.

ZV: Who wants to watch more the Albanian TV?

**Drita (mother, 45, London):** The children like both, the Albanian and the English. But I get very nervous because I don't know what they are saying and I switch channels immediately. That's why I have bought the satellite and we watch our country's TV.

Furthermore, as Donika explains below, the contacts via TV with Albania have an important function of comparing and evaluating the living standards in both countries.

**Donika (mother, 45, London):** But especially when we watch on TV young people in Albania who speak three foreign languages, I tell him [my son]: 'Do you see this? No light or running water and look how much they study.' His cousin who has the same age is studying to become a dentist, and tells us she has to study using a candle!

### 7.1.3 Remittances

Transnational ties from the first-generation migrants to their 'home' communities in Albania appear also in the form of social, financial and material remittances. However, the degree to which each type of remittance is welcomed by the communities in the

home country is different and the understanding of their meaning has changed over time. Different types of remittances are also related to each other.

Following Levitt (1998) and Levitt and Lamba-Nieves (2011), social remittances are considered as flows from immigrants to the home country that have to do with ideas, behaviours, identities and social capital which are remoulded by the migrants during their stay in the host country. One example, pertinent to Albanian migrants, is migrants' change in manners and behaviour in public spaces during the return visits, and their emphasis on sharing or sometimes enforcing their newly acquired norms and habits on their home-based kin.

**Lida (mother, 46, Thessaloniki):** People have changed a lot in Albania. There is a big difference in terms of manners; I noticed this last time I went to Albania. There are many changes, but still a lot of work is needed! Especially in terms of manners, behaviour, these things. Still a lot of work is needed, because all migrants have changed so much in terms of behaviour, that's why there are these clashes, as we saw this morning, with the bus's timetable. They should be accurate with the timetable!

A special case of social remittances relates to the transnational movements and ties of the Albanian artists in the respective countries. As Pali shows below, this is especially so in Florence where there is a concentration of artists who organise activities and exhibitions there, elsewhere in Italy and further afield in Europe. In some cases these consist of a particular form of two-way transnational engagement. While these artists keep their ties with Albania and with other cultural centres in Europe, they also organise promotional activities on Albania in the host country. For some artists, the social and material remittances originate from Albania. In other cases, previous transnational connections of artists have led to more permanent settlement, reversing the flow of remittances.

**Pali (father, 48, Florence):** The visits to Albania have become less frequent. Nowadays I have ties with Albania because of my creative activity... Basically I am like a migrating bird... since my creative activity started and was molded there, although I try to make it universal. I have my philosophy, for example, in terms of happiness. Everyone has his own thing, so creativity should be without frontiers. From this point of view, my creative activity is modest. But I say to myself, if there exists a society, a country that needs free information, a small 'window', that is my country. Because I have my relatives there, my nephews, my 'cell' there and I see it how it functions. So, in a few words, it is my artistic activity that takes me to Albania; I go every year and organise a performance, a theatre or dance performance, an exhibition.

Social remittances appear also in the form of transnational initiatives inspired by a more entrepreneurial and pro-active attitude cultivated during the stay in the host country.



Different from the experience of immigrants in other European cities (e.g. Fauser 2007), however, these initiatives are not related to the activity of immigrant organisations or local-level politics. Moreover, social remittances of this kind are often obstructed by the disjuncture between migrants and those at home. The latter are generally not receptive towards migrants' ideas and projects.

**Michelino (father, 46, Florence):** I went to the municipality of Peqin and told them: 'Could I bring two buses for free and you employ two of my relatives here?' The buses would then become the property of the municipality. So that also Peqin has two buses; one departs from the far end of the town, the other from the centre and this way Peqin's pensioners will have public transport, they won't need to carry everything all around! While two of my relatives will get a job and I won't need to help them financially anymore. I told them, but they started laughing; they wouldn't believe that I would send the buses for real. So we Albanians are the cause of our own problems!

Financial and material remittances continue to be an important way through which migrants keep in touch with Albania. There is a difference in the frequency and size of such remittances which is affected by both the change in needs of the immigrant family, focusing now on the needs of the children, and a change in understanding of the obligation to send remittances. In the early years of immigration, the uncertain legal status affected the flow of earnings and savings to Albania which, apart from contributing to the immediate survival needs of the family there, have been spent on land and construction. Usually the remittances were used to create a house and a space for potential business so as to secure self-employment in case of return (see also Dalakoglou 2010). However, unlike the findings of other research (e.g. Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001; Hemming 2009), the motives of achieving social status in Albania through the facilitation of potential return are not so strong among the participants of this study. Financial remittances are usually sent by male migrants, but there is also evidence that some mothers send remittances to their families, mainly in the form of financial support to their elderly parents (cf. Smith 2009). Nevertheless, the desire of the family in Albania for financial remittances has caused tensions and unmatched expectations. Michelino explains:

**Michelino (father, 46, Florence):** People in Albania can never have enough (remitted money)! Our parents can never have enough, neither the brothers, sisters, cousins... They behave like strangers now because you haven't helped them, but whom to help first? When you have fifty poor people to help, you will help first those closer to you. But the others don't speak to you anymore! [...] Whom to help first? We are being paid one thousand Euro a month now... But I think that to some people we shouldn't send even a cent! Not even a hundred Euro, not to the family, not to anyone! They should go and ask the state for help, those they have voted for and have promised them all those things... Not to come and ask me, ringing my phone all the time.

Therefore, in contrast to the view expressed by Conway and Potter (2009), the expectations of the family can also have the reverse effect towards transnational mobilities. As a result of negative instances experienced with the family as described by Michelino above, and the lack of appreciation or understanding towards migrants' difficulties and sacrifices in the host countries, return visits are not necessarily going to continue being regular over time. Mason (2004) has also reported tensions between the returning migrants and the extended family back in Pakistan, but these seem not to affect the continuation of visits.

These negative experiences can develop along different lines. Firstly, as noted, obligations in the form of remittances, which migrants are supposed to give to their families and relatives, put a burden on and discourage the first generation from continuing to visit. This is in contrast with classic studies on remittances and the family, which have talked about a 'mutual interdependence' established between the migrant and the family back home through remittances (Stark and Lucas 1988: 479). For Caribbean migrants, Chamberlain (2005: 53) maintains that 'clearly, with each remittance, contact was maintained. Just as family support enabled migrants to leave, so migration assisted in the maintenance of the family at home, ensuring family loyalty and identity across the generations, and across the seas'. This change of attitude among Albanian migrants of the first generation perhaps reflects a change in attitude related to a later stage of migration or a life-course issue. My data show that factors operating at a micro level such as family, and at the meso level—cultural changes and understanding of support and kin—also affect the likelihood of remittance sending of Albanian migrants. Here is one example of what I mean:

ZV: Do you visit Albania? Will you go this Easter?

**Merita (mother, 52, Thessaloniki):** Well, I don't think so...

Husband: we have to deal with the papers of Kleo. Besides Merita is jobless; in Albania we have to spend. The children don't like to go either. When we return and we have to wait 24 hours at the border... gosh, they can't stand that! We also don't have a place to stay in Tirana any more because when we left we emptied the flat in order to rent it out.

There is thus a mutual change of attitude between the parents, the children and those left behind. The adults don't see the extended family with the same eye, because they feel more independent and they focus on their own nuclear family. On the other hand, there is also a noticeable change perceived in the collective culture in Albania. The welcome

from the extended family is not seen as guaranteed once everyone creates his own family and the older-generation parents pass away. Explicitly or implicitly, Albania-based relatives indicate an unwillingness to host visitors ‘for free’. As the children grow up and because of the cultural changes on both sides, the first generation does not consider the sending of remittances to the extended family as an obligation anymore. This attitude is especially emphasised by migrants in Greece and Italy, who point to the long time spent supporting their families while ‘nothing changes in Albania’. And meanwhile, the economies of the countries where they live (especially Greece) decline. This discourages return visits, especially if they do not have a place to stay and have to ask extended family to host them.



**Photo 17:** Albanian migrants in Thessaloniki loading a TV set on the inter-state bus to Albania, June 2008.

Buying or constructing houses in Albania helps to resolve the accommodation situation and relieves the tensions. As a result, material remittances often consist of houses being built, either potential family homes or summer houses, in order to

facilitate return visits. Otherwise, material remittances can be in the form of presents to family members—clothes, toys, electric appliances, TV sets or even a bath tub, especially by Albanian migrants in Thessaloniki who travel by bus (Photo 17).

#### ***7.1.4 Attitudes towards return***

Literature on return migration—‘the movement of emigrants back to their homelands to resettle’ (Gmelch 1980: 136)—is growing, although little research has been conducted on factors that affect return. This is despite the fact that attitudes towards and intentions to return have been already identified as an important variable in migration research since they affect migrants’ links to the home country (Alhburg and Brown 1998).

In the case of the Albanian migrants in London, Thessaloniki and Florence, attitudes and intentions to return manifest various trends. Migrants are continually contemplating return over the years; at the same time, there is a growing uncertainty towards return. It is a common situation for the parents to feel like temporary residents in the host country, and also to realise the progressive establishment of ties over the time spent there. In many cases, return is seen as definite, but only after a certain number of years. This time ‘gap’ is usually related to an appreciation of how beneficial staying and working in the host country is, and is also heavily dependant on the age and stage of education of the children. Many parents see return as possible only after children have finished school and university studies and have settled in a job in the host country.

**Qerim (father, 46, London):** If it was for me, I would leave tomorrow! When I came my goal was to stay here and earn enough money to buy a house (in Albania). But as they say in Albania: ‘You know (what happens during) the outbound journey, but not the inbound one!’ Yet, I am pessimistic about our return, because the children now are at different ages... and you don’t want to ruin their future possibilities that might be here...[...] My son says about return: ‘Whenever you like now, but later in life I don’t guarantee you that I would like to return to Albania’. But then after him we had the girl and she is growing up now, and then the little boy... Maybe return will remain a dream. Because one has to consider the reality...

The final trend consists of first-generation migrants who rule out the possibility of return, despite in many cases planning or desiring a transnational life after they stop working. Sometimes life under communism and poverty is referred to as a memory that makes return improbable, as Farije explains below.

**Farije (mother, 45, Florence):** For the moment I have told people, ‘even when I die, just throw me in some corner. Just don’t take me to Albania!’ I don’t have nostalgia because we suffered a lot in our youth... we suffered to an extreme degree!

The education of children and plans for their future are often mentioned as key obstacles to return. However, although children’s opposition to return is one of the main reasons stated by the parents as a barrier, parents have their own dilemmas in regard to return, which are not always recognised and stated by them. Sometimes, indeed, it is the children who point to these dilemmas, remembering discussions taking place at home that they overheard. Parents’ uncertainties in regard to return relate most of all to their employment, as they consider whether they would be able to resume their professional identity and practice or whether they should consider investing. In the case of the highly skilled, return depends on the resumption or development of a professional career in the host country.

Together with the issue of their employment come considerations of their pension and insurance. Along with recognising the contribution to social security schemes in the host country, return is questioned also as a result of strong ties established in the host country and the poor services in Albania to support the returning migrants in their later-age lives:

**Michelino (father, 46, Florence):** It’s not that I have made up my mind to stay all my life here, but we have contributed here. I have been working here for twenty years, and in ten years I will be retiring. I can’t go back to Albania, leaving my contributions here. But even if I returned, what will I do there?

Houses and resources accumulated in Albania during the years of migration abroad facilitate plans of return, although such investments can be controversial in the family since they bring up the topic of return, which is usually resisted by the children. Nevertheless, investments during the migration years are seen by the parents as a means to provide an employment possibility, also to the second generation, in case of return. For some, return is inspired by the economic progress of Albania which migrants experience during return visits.

ZV: Where do you think your children will have a better future?

**Flutura (mother, 43, London):** If they don’t study here, they will go to Albania and work in our shops. You know, I really lost my mind when I went there last time. People have got luxury houses which we don’t even dream of here in England. I don’t know how they have managed to earn all that money, but still... And it’s time Albania gets ready to welcome its people [back]. In 5–10 years Albania has to change.

Sometimes it is the intentions to return that inspire investment in the homeland. In many cases, intentions and plans to return are made along with the recognition that parents will return on their own and children will remain in the host country. This also conditions the return of the parents.

ZV: Do you speak in the family about the future?

**Lutfie (mother, 36, London):** I work too hard and don't have time to start this kind of conversation. They (the children) see their future in the UK; when we discuss going back to Albania, the children don't like the topic at all. My husband and I though, we want to spend our retirement in Albania; we are buying a house there.

Attitudes towards return differ, however, across the three field sites. Intentions to return are more explicitly expressed by the first generation in London. Perhaps this is related to a shorter time of residence there when compared to the two other sites, so they are less 'settled'. Differently from what King *et al.* (2003) found in the pre-regularisation stage, now that they have achieved their goal of settlement, as they grow older and the children settle in Britain, some parents are contemplating return. Parents prefer to go back to their environment where kin and other networks are denser and there is much more support, to better weather for their retired style of life, and in the case of the skilled migrants as a way to 'rehabilitate' themselves from the downgraded migrant status and re-establish themselves as professionals.

**Donika (mother, 45, London):** I see my future in Albania. I would be the first to leave from here! I am more comfortable there. Here especially the climate is a big problem for me. I say to the children as well: 'I would go if it wasn't for you'.

Some parents in Florence are contemplating return or actually returning because the cost of living in Florence makes it impossible for them to make any significant savings to support the realisation of their plans for the education of their children. Migrants in Thessaloniki quote long-term residence in Greece as a reason to stay, while harsh discrimination and the accumulation of a certain financial capital inspire return. In turn, migrant women see return as improbable and regret not having gained skills that would facilitate return, because of their work in the domestic sector, as Monda explains.

**Monda (mother, 50, Thessaloniki):** I don't think I am going back to Albania. It's impossible; I left my job there sixteen years ago. There are so many new teachers now; the only thing I have there is the house that Enver Hoxha gave us. If I go back, how will I live? I would start a business, but what a shame I didn't gain any skills here. A real shame, we didn't learn a profession. For

example, if I learnt to make clothes, or to cook, so I could open a small restaurant and sell pizzas, but we don't know how... Or at least if I had a lot of money I would open a café or start a business. So how can I consider returning to Albania? Unless my children migrate to another country, then I might go back, but even then I can't because there we don't have a pension.

## 7.2 The second generation

### 7.2.1 *Return visits*

Empirical research on return visits of the second generation is recently growing (see King *et al.* 2011 for a Greek case-study and a comprehensive literature review). However, their position within transnationalism theory with its focus on identities as dynamic entities is unclear (Duvall 2004: 53). In the case of the Albanian second generation, the return visits are experienced according to two main trends. Depending on children's views on their identity and on Albania, these visits may consist of either a happy holiday celebration or as a 'compromise' with parents who have to go to Albania as part of family obligations or who choose Albania as a cheap option for the summer break.

Since all the participants live in urban areas, one of the main facets of such visits is the experience of freedom, play, nature and village life (see also King *et al.* 2009); this is mostly reported by those who are positive towards such visits. Interestingly, this view is also held by those children who are born in the receiving countries, who are surprised and impressed by the natural beauties of Albania. This holiday time is especially important and pleasant because of the lack of free time for parents and children to spend together in the receiving country, creating a mental distinction between the two places—the cities where they live for work and school, and Albania for holidays, emotional nourishment and fun. Therefore, for these second-generation participants, return visits give an idyllic image of Albania as most of the time is spent on the beach or travelling around to different places and cities. This is especially so for those children who were plucked out of their Albanian environment at an early age and were deprived of extended-family support. For these children, as Blerim describes below, return visits are a chance to 'restore' their childhood, by catching up with old friends and getting to make others with whom they keep in touch.

**Blerim (boy, 13, Thessaloniki):** I always stay there in the village, I don't go anywhere else [during the visits]. I don't go to Mamurras [the main town in his region of origin in Albania] or Tirana. I don't like to go anywhere. When I am there, I stay with my cousins. We all go and play all together, because I know everyone there. We are like brothers, because it's a small village, so we all play together... That's what I like, that we are all together.

Returns to the homeland also involve memory, cultural rediscovery and longing (see also Le Espiritu and Tran 2002). These memories and imagination are enhanced traditional Albanian hospitality, events and social activities, houses being built and so on. Based on these experiences, adolescents generally express intentions to continue visiting in adulthood; this is related to gaining financial independence from parents and the possibility to make their own decisions. There is also an appreciation of Albania and certain places as tourist destinations, but apart from 'pleasure-seeking', this is also an 'emotional tourism' inspired by a feeling of familiarity and comfort (cf. Basu 2004: 153).

Locality is an important factor that shapes the content of return visits and the attitude towards their continuation. Duvall (2003: 301) introduced the concept of locality in the study of return visits and transnational movement referring to different *countries* as destinations for the visits. However, locality (or, perhaps better, translocality—Brickwell and Datta 2011) is also related to the content and the quality of the return visits. In the case of migrants whose families live in remote villages in northern Albania, where the living conditions are harsh and the opportunities for leisure activities are practically non-existent, the return visits are limited to visits to relatives' homes and experiences of nature; see Lutfie's quote below. In the case of migrants who come from urban areas the experience is more positive, since there are more entertainment opportunities for teenagers. Most other research (e.g. Smith 2002: 161) describes return visits as a return to parents' hometown or village; however, in the Albanian case, due to internal migration of their relatives, the building of the houses in the capital or other major urban centres by the migrants, and because of the touristic preference of the second generation for beach holidays during their visits, the transnational experience is less bound to a particular place.

ZV: Why were you in Albania? Do you go often?

**Lutfie (mother, 37, London):** We go to Albania for holidays. We go often. Children like to go on holidays to Albania; they can't wait to have their tickets. But when they go there, they get bored easily. Their opportunities to play and get entertained are very limited, there is no electricity for the TV, no park or playground, so the entertainment is running after the cat, catching the chicken, killing the flies ... So they ask to go back (to the UK).



As signalled by some of the earlier quotes above, the family in Albania is an important reason for return visits. The role of the extended family in the performance and the quality of the return visits is mostly overlooked in other research. In this study the extended family figures especially prominently in the shape of the grand/parents who provide emotional support, praise and care for the children. Parents and children describe this as a 'special treatment of the children' by the grandparents and other family members in Albania, who pamper and express a high degree of affection towards them. There is therefore a strong emotional aspect in return visits.

The quotes below also indicate that the importance of the family is transmitted to, and is still strong in the lives of the second generation. In many cases, return visits consist of a lot of time spent with the extended families, especially in the case of the girls. This is spent with the grandparents, in the family that hosts the migrants, in visits to other families, at weddings and other family events. Weddings, an important life ritual and a collective cultural event in Albania, are one of the occasions to go on visits and coordinate with holidays in the homeland. Moreover, return visits are not only a source of fun and enjoyment, but also occasions to be present and to provide support to the extended family. The frequency of visits changes because of life-course changes for the immigrants, but also of their family members back home. When grandparents become elderly, the first generation returns home more often to provide care and support, which is usually fully embraced by the second-generation teenagers who express their readiness to be present in such situations.

Secondly, the role of other family members, especially cousins of a similar age, as much-valued company during the summer holidays can be paramount in inspiring the continuation of such visits for the second-generation teenagers. From the quotes below we also see that the touristic component is an integral part of a 'successful' return visit, especially for those in late adolescence.

**Altin (boy, 16, London):** I usually go for six–seven weeks to Albania every summer holiday. I think... I love it, I mean, I go spend time with my cousins, who are a bit older than me, 20 years old, you know, but um... It's good, we take my cousin, go and see the other cousins in another city. I like to travel, because if I am in Albania, I don't like to just stay at home. I live in Tirana, so I like to go Shkodër, Durrës, Elbasan, wherever I can. Just for fun and to spend as much time with my family, because then after six weeks you have to come back England, more school.

**Mondi (father, 48, Florence):** Children are always the same, they always want to go. Because... my brother-in-law has children; it's nine in the family and twelve children. They get together as they are also of the same age. They also keep in touch by phone...

The importance of the extended family in Albania in the continuation of return visits is also shown in the change of attitude of teenagers and parents when some of the extended family have also migrated and live in the same city or country. This is especially the case of Albanians in Florence. Once the extended family has also migrated, the frequency and content of return visits changes. Parents tend to go less regularly and mostly to look after their investments in Albania. From the insightful quote of Gjergji below, we see that return visits can be inspired by various reasons. They are seen as an expression of belongingness, of keeping contacts with Albania, to visit remaining family there, in order to take care of the family's investment and economic interests in Albania; they also change over time.

**Gjergji (boy, 17, Florence):** We go to Albania because of belongingness to our nation and our land, let's say; and then we have a few relatives, no? So we go to meet them and for being close to our nation, not to lose the customs... I don't know, there is always a feeling of belongingness to go there, let's say. Even though with every year that goes, this feeling of belongingness is weaker a little bit, because the interests that I used to have there have decreased because my relatives are here now. And then school, friends and all the rest, so I feel more 'tied' here, let's say. I go there for matters of... don't know, economic reasons, the house to repair, and all the rest. Because we have two houses, so... We go on holidays let's say; more than anything, to break the monotony of life here in Italy...

Another reason that inspires return visits is the simplicity of life, the collective spirit of people, and the lack of harassment. For teenagers, these feelings clash with the pressure of having to make important life choices by the end of adolescence. Those who do not struggle with their identity issues are caught between the economic advantages available in the receiving country and the longing for a life rich in emotional and social support in Albania.

**Admir (boy, 14, London):** I think I have more fun there. I think people are more caring. I feel more welcome there, more at home. I think if I could have the education I have in England; if I could have that in Albania, I would rather stay in Albania. [...] I think here where we live, there is... we have a few friends near us, but there is not... You know, people are not kind; they are kinder in Albania. I think you enjoy yourself more; here it is mainly for work, school, depending on what you do.

There is, however, a second trend in the attitude and experience of return visits, represented by teenagers who are against visiting Albania. This is related to an awareness of discrimination and negative public opinion on Albania in the host country.

The negative stereotypes promoted in the media and beyond seem to have an impact on teenagers' willingness to maintain ties with Albania. Moreover, teenagers also notice

the difference in economic development, infrastructure and culture. Furthermore, as King *et al.* (2009) found with the Greek and Cypriot second generations, girls have a problem with the culture and the gender restrictions. This is related to their recognition of a patriarchal way of family organisation and their perception of the places where they return as a 'small world' where there is no room for a young woman's identity to be expressed and further developed. The gender problems and cultural backwardness are also spotted by the boys, although less frequently. Some teenage girls experience restrictions from their parents during their holidays in Albania in terms of going out, while others, conversely, observe with awkwardness the liberal attitude in the way of dressing and relationships of their counterparts in Albania, which contrast with the values their migrant parents speak to them about. Eneida and Manjola express typical views on this matter:

ZV: Why do you go to visit Albania?

**Eneida (girl, 15, Florence):** Because it's my fatherland; I was born there... then because I have my grandparents [...] When I go there, I feel ... really like in my house, so I feel very free... yeah, I feel well, but... well, at times not very free, because of this thing of all those rules to follow... I don't know... Exactly because it's also a male society... and I say this also to my parents. I don't know, if a guy wants to do something then it's alright, and if instead the girl wants to do something, it's not OK....

**Manjola (girl, 18, London):** When I go to Albania, I mostly talk to my grandmother and aunts, not much with the cousins of my age. They are very 'civilised' and wonder how come I am such a good girl.

As the quotes above show, there is a variation in the attitude of adolescents towards return visits. In general, however, during adolescence, return visits become a burden if they are not accompanied by varied activities and entertainment. This is especially so for those children and teenagers who do not know Albanian. Sometimes their friendships and relationships in the host country make the teenagers to want to spend summer holidays there. In turn, return visits can also result in relationships between the second-generation teenagers and Albanian youngsters. Nevertheless, in general, in later adolescence and early adulthood return visits become less frequent.

On the other hand, these visits and keeping in touch with family in the homeland helps the second generation to improve their Albanian language skills. Some children go to Albania to spend the whole summer there, which makes a significant difference to their language skills. In some cases, returning for the summer season is precisely for the

purpose of learning the language. However, the fact that return visits are an important part of the country's holiday season, and in the emotional and cultural life of Albania, is more noticed and impacts more the teenagers who increasingly see the country as a holiday space.

Once the second generation comes of age, they (especially the young men) also perform independent visits to other countries as places of interest, or where other family members have migrated. As Gowricharn (2009: 16) has recently pointed out, the second generation's transnational orientation is by no means a 'zero sum game' and the dichotomy of home–host country reduces the complexity of the ties and the sites of reference to which the second generation refers in their everyday lives. Return visits in adolescence and early adulthood may also be part of the socialisation and the general cosmopolitanism of that particular age, driven in this case by the feeling of exotic rediscoveries in the homeland.

Return visits and ties with the homeland in general give rise to a comparative transnational appreciation of the opportunities in the home and host country, as Ilda shows below. These ties and comparisons inform and shape teenagers' attitudes towards return to the homeland. This resonates with the work of Louie (2006: 566) who observed that multiple frames of reference inform the identity formation of second-generation Chinese and Dominican adolescents in the US and their views on education. Ilda clearly sees herself as 'better off' in London:

**Ilda (girl, 14, London):** I don't know, if I hadn't come to England, some things wouldn't have changed. I don't know, I have experienced a lot from coming here. When I go to Albania I see children and other girls that would like to be in my place, to come here, have money, have food, go to school and have everything sorted out for you, not having to worry for everything. Whereas over there, people have to pay for everything and they don't have much money [...] You get to know what they feel. I don't really know, because I came to England when I was five, so I don't know in a way. But when you see them, with their old clothes, I feel sorry for them and you feel like giving them everything.

On the other hand, children feel mocked if the extended family or the locals in Albania find them 'assimilated' and changed, as Alfonso and Olta explain below. Likewise, Zinn (2005) has noted that the second generation's experience on visits to the 'homeland' includes instances of encountering barriers to acceptance by Albanian society.

**Alfonso (boy, 15, Florence):** I am not afraid to say here that I am Albanian, but when I go to Albania they call me Italian! We have remained *stranieri* (foreigners) everywhere! (*smiles*)

**Olta (girl, 16, Thessaloniki):** We go to our aunties... when I decide to go there I feel so happy, but once I am there, the next day I get very bored, because I see people, what they do all day and get really bored all day... To tell you the truth I get very bored when I go there, because you want to watch TV, the electricity is cut and you say, 'Oh, why I had to come here?!' When there is electricity, we watch TV, we go out sometimes... I try to go out, but I don't even like to go out, because they look at me like wondering which planet I have come from. So I prefer to stay home but I can't kill the time like that, so I get bored and I want to leave as soon as possible.

The way that the second generation experiences return visits varies somewhat by host country. Although the trends listed above are found across the three sites, the distancing of the second generation from return visits is more evident in Florence. There is more emphasis on the family and nature in the children from London (perhaps because they are mainly from rural northern Albania which has a 'wild' landscape and strong family values), whereas participants from Thessaloniki emphasise the discrimination they experience in Greece and how the return visits either are opposed as a result of this and the resulting prejudice towards Albania, or are cherished as they provide a completely different atmosphere filled with care, play and acceptance.

In Britain a general characteristic is the 'blocked transnationalism' that Albanian migrants and their families experienced because of slow regularisation. Blocked transnationalism created an estrangement and disruption of emotional ties with Albania for children.

**Lajmir (boy, 18, London):** If I would go there, I would be a refugee for the second time! I don't know anything; I left when I was 12 years old, a child ...Now...[...] I would go once, to see how things work and then simply ...may be once a year; for the family mostly. And that's it.

There is also a trend that shows that it is more difficult for the children visiting from Britain than those from Greece and Italy to initially adapt during return visits because of significant differences in weather and food. The visits of those living in Greece have been more frequent because of the close proximity with Albania, as Daniela explains below.

**Daniela (girl, 17, Thessaloniki):** Let's hope we won't stop going, like we did before when we didn't have papers. If we have papers we go often. Because we can go even for a Saturday or Sunday because it's close; it takes just a couple of hours. Dad goes very often during the weekends.

### 7.2.2 *Transnational ties through ICTs*

Like the first generation, second-generation teenagers keep transnational ties through various ICTs, including digital broadcasting of Albanian TV, internet, telephone; while the use of CDs, DVDs and other technological means is common, but not as systematic. Consuming the homeland media is part of the daily life of many teenagers. Sometimes the teenagers are passive consumers since their parents prefer to watch Albanian TV and often the household has only one TV set. Therefore, in most cases teenagers show a selective approach (cf. Panagakos 2003), usually combining programmes from the 'host' country media with homeland digital broadcasting, as Eliana explains below.

**Eliana (girl, 15, London):** It's always on, 24/7. It is only Albanian TV we watch, except when I have my Hollyoaks or Eastenders or something. Other than that, I don't really watch much English TV. I don't really watch Albanian TV, I prefer films and stuff. But I watch, like, Albanian Big Brother is coming up soon. Or I watch music shows, 'cause I like Albanian music a lot. Like half of my music is Albanian, the rest is English. I also watch documentaries about Albania, or just random stuff that's on, I just watch it.

Digital broadcasting has an important role in informing the second generation about Albania in general, inspiring more curiosity about its history, culture and current issues, and keeping the idea of a homeland alive (see Lira below). Following Albanian programmes is also a way of cultivating double identification and belongingness, as Era explains below. Furthermore, the promotion by the homeland media of Albania's image and attractions can have an important impact on the establishment and maintenance of transnational ties.

**Lira (girl, 15, Florence):** I am really keen to learn about Albanian history. When it comes to Italian history sometimes I skip it, I don't study it, whereas on Albanian history I always watch documentaries on DigitAlb. This week there was a documentary on Enver Hoxha which I watched because I was curious to know about him...

**Era (girl, 14, London):** When it comes to TV, I prefer Albanian to English, I don't know ... 'cause it has more channels and it is just more interesting to know about your country, like what's going on there, like you need to be informed, even if though you don't live there you like to be updated or whatever. So I prefer like, watching, like Albanian music, Albanian news, Albanian programmes, shows... whatever. [...] Say a new Albanian song comes up I would know it, the same with English... I am kind of both... 'cause it is my country really, no matter how bad it is, I still like it much better than this country 'cause like my family is there and... I like Albanian music and the more years go by I like it better, the more I am into it.

The internet is also a means for teenagers to carry out independent research on Albania and its history and culture:

**Altin (boy, 16, London):** I always go on Google, on the internet and type in ‘Albania and this’ whatever... I have read about Enver Hoxha, I have read about Skanderbeg, you know, Sali Berisha<sup>52</sup> and all that. You know, to pass the time, and learn something about Albania.

Participation of second-generation teenagers in Albanian websites and forums is limited. As mentioned in the previous chapter, even their participation in existing websites that focus primarily on the issues of the second generation is very low. For example, Rete G2, Network of the Second Generations in Italy,<sup>53</sup> has in general very few posts from the Albanian second generation, even though they consist of one of the most numerous second-generation groups in Italy. The only network organised by the second generation and youth I came across is *Fundjava Shqiptare* (The Albanian Weekend)<sup>54</sup> which according to its organisers aims to counteract the social disintegration of Albanians. Nevertheless, the site was also a space to express teenagers’ hybrid identities in-the-making, by allowing for the combining of youth culture as experienced in the ‘host’ country with the familiarity of Albanian language and peers. The quote below is taken from the forum of this network and is an example of the combination of the two languages in everyday life:

Username: London GirlL

bukuranja what do u mean e nesermja moj se me hallakate, [tomorrow because you are messing me up] the party is next month I think ma ngrine gjakun [my heart stopped for a moment], but anyways let me know nese eshte neseser [if it’s tomorrow] I’d love to come.

Websites and webforums can also serve as a site to exercise symbolic ethnicity. This is also expressed virtually by choosing usernames in chat forums such as ‘forever\_an\_Albanian’ or ‘Albanian red and black’ and using the Albanian flag and other national symbols as profile pictures. Nevertheless, the use of such websites to express ethnic identity or build online communities, as is the case of other second-generation groups (Brower 2006), is for Albanians relatively limited. While other research has shown the use of websites as a space for self-expression through cultivating a collective identity (on the Chinese second generation in Britain, see Parker

<sup>52</sup> Enver Hoxha was the dictator of Albania between 1994–1985. Skanderbeg is an historical folk-hero, as noted earlier. Sali Berisha is the current Prime Minister of Albania.

<sup>53</sup> Webpage: [www.secondgenerazioni.it](http://www.secondgenerazioni.it)

<sup>54</sup> [www.fundjava.com](http://www.fundjava.com). Accessed 18/01/2008. The website and the forum are down in April 2011. The organisers in 2008 were complaining that they lacked funding. The same group is now on Facebook, although not very active: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=6550247559#!/group.php?gid=6550247559&v=wall> Accessed 15/04/2011.

and Song 2007), second-generation Albanians are far more passive and individual in this regard.



**Photo 18:** Albanian youth celebrating Albanian Flag Day organised by *Fundjava Shqiptare* (The Albanian Weekend) Network, London, November 2007.

Transnational ties through ICTs are dependant on, and also have an impact on, knowledge of the Albanian language. Poor knowledge of Albanian is one of the main obstacles to the establishment or maintenance of ties between Albanian-origin teenagers in different countries and with Albania. In turn, some teenagers improve their written Albanian via online conversations with cousins in Albania. Transnational ties through the internet among Albanian second-generation teenagers in the diaspora, especially with those in North America, takes place in English. Of course, internet access is an important factor (Panagakos and Horst 2006). The Albanian second generation tends to keep more frequent ties through the internet with relatives in other countries rather than in Albania due to the more frequent use of the internet in countries like Germany, Britain or the US.

Ties through the internet can also play a role in keeping in touch with relatives, giving rise to virtual mobilities that interweave kinship and friendship ties (Adey 2010). Increasingly, this is a way to practice transnational care and emotional bonding. Telephone calls with the grandparents and internet calls to cousins are common across the three sites. Drita and Jonida explain:



**Drita (mother, 45, London):** My children are very close to my mother. So when I give them a pound as pocket-money they save it and buy a phone card and talk to her. They really love her. They don't speak often... maybe every two or three weeks; sometimes they spend the money with their friends and then, when they feel they miss her, you see them showing up with a telephone card. I feel sorry sometimes that they don't spend the money with their friends on chocolates or other things.

**Jonida (girl, 15, Florence):** With my relatives; we call my grandparents. My mum calls them practically every two days, it's a habit. I also speak to them through the phone, but also through the internet with a webcam so that we can see each other.

### ***7.2.3 Attitudes towards return***

Research on the return migration of the second generation has been growing recently (Byron and Condon 1996; Chamberlain 2005; King and Christou 2010; Phillips and Potter 2009a). We know little, however, on attitudes towards return of second-generation minors, or the conditions and negotiations within the immigrant family that might stimulate or obstruct return. Reflecting other research on transmigration that has seen this phenomenon as a process, which in the long term can diverge along different trajectories (Grillo 2007: 1999), three main narrative strands emerge from the interviews of my study. Firstly, a number of second-generation teenagers contemplate return to Albania for better social integration, reunion with the wider family, and possible business opportunities. A second trend is represented by tendencies towards 'onward' migration (Newbold 1997) of the second generation in Florence and Thessaloniki to North-West European countries, and in a few cases from London to North America. Finally, some teenagers show a cosmopolitan orientation towards global cities and an eagerness to get to know other cultures. My findings, furthermore, show that for second-generation teenagers the issue of return is seen more broadly in terms of mobilities (Urry 2007) rather than permanent return.

The majority of the Albanian second generation is either against or unsure about future permanent return to Albania. Feelings of belongingness to the host country are the main reason that prevents return. This is seen in a feeling of familiarity with the location where they live and the everyday experiencing of life events there. Lack of fluency in the Albanian language is a further brake on return. Parents also recognise the lack of desire of their children to return, mostly by pointing to the structural issues of reintegration in Albania, in terms of becoming part of various systems, which are

significantly different in the homeland. In particular, girls point to the social problems in Albania and difficulties of integration in the Albanian society. Some of these problems are noticed during return visits, for instance, differences in terms of manners and civility and in customer services. A more crucial issue is gender inequality, and a feeling of helplessness that things will not change. Therefore, some teenagers are determined not to return to Albania.

Yet there are factors which ‘pull’ in the other direction, towards return. After struggles to integrate in the host society, both parents and the second generation recognise the positive aspects of a potential return to Albania. Recently, this trend to think about return has been enhanced by the weak economic situation in the countries where they live, especially in the case of Greece. Opportunities for business in Albania are mentioned by the teenagers in all three sites. Teenagers begin to think that they can take the opportunity once they come of age and secure some financial capital. Experiences and activities in the host country can also serve as inspiration for business plans upon return to Albania.

ZV: Where do you see your future?

**Alfonso (boy, 15, Florence):** In Albania. [...] We will start a business, because here it's very difficult; you need a lot of money. Even an Albanian boy who is last in our class wants to go and start a business in Albania. (*smiles*) There are quite a few Albanians in my school, and everyone wants to go and work there. For example, I would like to go and open there a school for classic ballet dance.

**Angela (sister 12):** Yes, and it would be good to also help the children there because there are many children that need help. I have been to the hospital there and didn't like how it was... So I would like to go to Shkodër and become a cardiologist or a pediatrician.

There are, however, some differences between the three cities in terms of teenagers' attitudes towards return. In synthesis, intentions to return are affected by the degree of social integration in the ‘host’ societies and especially the experience of discrimination in the two Southern European cities, contrasted with the multiculturalism of London. Teenagers in London appreciate the broad range of opportunities that they have in Britain, which generally prevents any serious consideration of a definitive return to Albania. A good higher education system and the consequent possibilities to integrate in the labour market are the two main reasons for the teenagers and their families to continue staying in Britain. Furthermore, the acquisition of citizenship has ‘relieved’ the worries of integration and has also given them the possibility of taking the options and making use of the opportunities in the homeland. However, this is not the whole story:

in a few cases, the lack of social integration and the climate are reasons for teenagers to contemplate a return to Albania after education in Britain.

**Eliana (girl, 15, London):** I would like to go and live in Albania when I am older, because I find myself happier there than here. Here you have friends and stuff, but in Albania it is also the climate, 'cause here it can get a bit sad and depressing 'cause you don't get a lot of sun or anything. Whereas in Albania the climate and atmosphere is much warmer than here. There it's warm, lots of people, everyone would say 'Hi' to you or whatever. Here you just walk down the street, it's raining, no one says 'Hi' to you, everyone is looking down, minding their own business. Um, like Albanians are really friendly when I go, the ones I have met so far. So hopefully I can go to Albania once I pass, find a good job there, with enough money for me to live with. [...] 'cause my parents aren't going to stay for all their life here either. They know they want to go and live and die in Albania, as do I.

**Altin (boy, 16, London):** My dream is to do good in school, get a job that pays well, work for 10–15 years, but [then] I want to go to Albania and live there, build a house, build a business or something, in Albania before I am 40. It's not that England, London is not a good place; I mean it's good, it's alright, but my home is Albania. I am Albanian, I would rather live there, have family there. Here I have no family, except for my mum, dad, sister, brother. No cousins, no uncles... I would rather live in Albania.

Thoughts about return and the plans of spatial mobility are rather more variegated among the second generation in the two southern sites. Some second-generation youngsters are returning to higher education. This is mostly as a result of the difficulties to access higher education in Greece. In Albania a kind of transnational education is offered by affiliated educational institutions, such as international colleges that offer studies in English, some affiliated to American or Italian universities. This route makes it possible for the second generation to access university studies in Albania. In some cases, this results in 'counter-diasporic migration' of second-generation youth (King and Christou 2010), while the first generation is still in the host country.

The opposite trend also exists. The family's experience with migration seems to inspire a more mobile attitude towards their future life and ideas of settlement. Therefore, some teenagers in Greece and Italy are contemplating future migration towards more economically successful countries. Genti expresses this 'open' attitude rather well:

**Genti (boy, 18, Thessaloniki):** It doesn't matter; we have grown up here and there. We can go to another country, we can return here; wherever it is, wherever we like to be. Probably in Greece, Germany, England, wherever. I don't have a specific target. If things don't go well, I will go to England [...] I would like to go and live there and see how it is.

From the following excerpt from a focus group with teenagers in Florence we see how this flexible attitude towards future migration is very natural, based on appreciation

of opportunities in Italy, in Albania and elsewhere in the world, especially in other European countries. Apart from the issue of papers, which conditions their movement at this stage, their understanding of spatial movement, settlement and their geography of thinking in general is broader than that of the first generation. As a result, plans for future migration are interwoven with a cosmopolitan orientation, even if this may ultimately be constrained by resource complications. This reflects Beck's (2002) view that the focus of cosmopolitan sociology should be on inequality in terms of possibilities to be mobile. Nevertheless, cosmopolitanism is appreciated against the 'mono-cultural' societies by the teenagers because it would ensure their 'invisibility'.

**Xhilda (girl, 18):** If I could, I would go to another country to live, but not here in Italy. For example, in London or in Germany. I really like Germany... but it is very difficult to make documents there. And then it's difficult to go and start a life there. Because I am making my life here; what would I do in Germany, wash dishes? I have my life here, my parents... and they are getting old.

**Dana (girl, 15):** If you want better prospects you can go and do the university in London. I would like to do that.

**ZV:** What would you achieve by going somewhere else?

**Dana:** We open our eyes a little bit....

**Xhilda:** More money. Culture, you see something else...

**Klejdi (boy, 17):** Italy is finished in my opinion.

**Xhilda:** Besides my parents have always moved.... since I was very little we were moving to other places. Here and there; we have always tried to improve our lives.

**Dana:** And besides, we always look for better in life.

Cosmopolitan tendencies are framed between the need to move to a more accepting society where they are more 'invisible', and the genuine desire to explore and know the world. These trends are especially evident among the teenagers in Florence, perhaps reflecting their assimilation in Italian society, since a tendency to migrate 'northwards' out of Italy is common among Italian youth (Conti 2008). It is common also among those in Thessaloniki but less so among the teenagers in London. As Erjol explains below the tendency to migrate in search of better opportunities is also seen as a legacy from the first generation, as well as a reflection (echoing Klejdi, above) that things in Italy are going down the pan.

**Erjol (boy, 17, Florence):** When I grow up I want to explore the world. Maybe Europe... In my opinion opportunities here will start diminishing because Italy is declining economically... It's declining a lot. So let's see... The future is uncertain in Italy. If I finish school and don't start working, I will go somewhere else. Basically I have seen how my father has lived. He has always gone where there is work; he went to Greece, then came here. He did well here and stayed... Same for me, if I don't do well here, I will go... Like my Romanian friend did; he went to London. So basically one goes where there are more opportunities.

### 7.3 Intergenerational transmission of transnational ties

#### 7.3.1 General patterns

Previous research observes that transnational ties develop in two phases: in the beginning they are the outcome of international migration of the first generation, while in a second phase they are passed on to migrants' descendants and seem to develop a life of their own (Faist 2000a). In this study, the process of 'passing on' is dynamic and involves inter- and intra-generational differences, as well as tensions within the nuclear and the extended families of immigrants. The attitude of the parents towards transnational ties has changed over time, with a move from an appreciation of transnational ties because of obligations felt towards those left behind, to an attitude that views transnational ties as more instrumental and dependent on the needs and conditions of the nuclear family in the host country. This change is positively related to the length of stay in the host country (see also Dahinden 2009). As a result, this change is much more evident among the first generation in the two southern sites, where Albanians have a longer 'history' of migration and settlement.

Although (summarising key findings from the two previous chapters) agency and culture are important factors that determine the *identification* and the *integration* patterns for both the first and the second generation, structural variables were also found to be important. In the case of *transnational ties*, both generations experience a higher degree of autonomy in terms of their establishment and maintenance. Furthermore, transnational ties of both the first and the second generation are related to their identification and integration patterns and vice versa. As a result, the transmission of transnational ties exhibits various patterns. There are many cases where there is a difference in the attitude towards return visits between parents and children. The maintenance or disruption of transnational ties may be 'linear'. In the majority of cases, the first generation keeps transnational ties and wants to pass them on, to involve the second generation in the maintenance of ties. Generalising from my mass of field data, this is the main pattern. However, there are also cases where the first generation has internalised stigmatisation and discrimination, and therefore is prone to 'loosening' transnational ties. This affects children's attitudes and the actual establishment and maintenance of ties, not least because they lack resources for such activities. The

intergenerational transmission can also show discontinuous patterns, with the second generation being resistant towards the transmission of ties from the first generation. Or, on the other hand, children can also act as independent actors in the establishment of ties, for example through the internet, or by showing keenness to continue visiting, despite parents' estrangement from Albania, as Dana narrates:

**Dana (girl, 15, Florence):** My parents don't want to go to Albania. Not at all! It's me who wants to go. For example, we went this year and had a lot of fun. Now they are saying 'after three years'. I really like to go. Next year I don't think we are going. They don't want to go, they don't like it (Albania).

Sometimes the transmission of transnational ties is obstructed by objective factors. For example, the possibility to perform return visits depends on the type of employment of the parents. Those who have jobs in the service or tourist sector, and many of those who are self-employed, find it hard to travel to Albania as they work during the holidays, which does not match with the school schedule of the children. There are also differences between the highly skilled and the unskilled parents. The former generally recognise more the importance of cultivating of the native language and the negative impact of discrimination, which makes them keener on the maintenance and transmission of transnational ties with Albania. They also encourage a redirection of the second generation towards other sources of support or other activities of cultural exchange.

However, we should not underestimate the differences in the motives of the first and the second generation to keeping ties with the homeland. Parents need to relate to their past in the homeland as they experience loss and longing through memories of childhood, of places and of different sensations. They also need to work to smooth the disruption of their life-course because of migration. Mondì explains:

**Mondì (father, 48, Florence):** When I go to Albania I am organised. Usually I go during the winter because of the work in the restaurant. My wife and children go in the summer, me during the winter. I go to Durrës to see my parents and the in-laws; from there to other relatives in Milot, and stay there. If I take 15 days off I divide them five in Durrës, five in Milot and five in Skrapar. I don't come back to Italy without going to Skrapar. Because it's the place where I was born... the nostalgia... it's the place where I was born, I just can't... can't go without seeing it. Understand? I have a picture this big at home.

Discrimination acts as a moderating factor on intergenerational transmission and, as a result, it affects the attitude towards transnational ties. There seems to exist a general dichotomy among the teenagers. Because of discrimination and exclusion in the

receiving countries, some children prefer to cut all ties with Albania; some refused to even say the name of Albania during interviews—they referred to it as ‘there’. In these cases, transnational ties are conditioned by the image of Albania in the countries where they live, and also of the attitude of the receiving society, which considers these ties as an expression of identification and loyalty towards Albania. In the second case, discrimination and the resultant exclusion in the host society inspire transnational ties, as a way to make up for the lack of social life and friends. The quotes below show this dichotomy among the second-generation teenagers in terms of return visits, and also say something about how their views can change over time (the case of Anna):

**Rabije (grandmother, 63, London):** My grandchildren have never been (to Albania) since they came here. They refuse to go. They left so early, when they were very little... you know... parents are here with them...

**Anna (girl, 16, Thessaloniki):** We usually go at Christmas and Easter, and sometimes during the summer. We go because my parents want to go; I usually don't want to go. Because I don't have anything to do there, because we have a house in a village and Albanian villages are... the roads are horrible! I am used to here in Greece where it's different. I don't know the language, nothing. And besides I don't like to go to Albania, that's why. [...] I will go less often in the future... because my parents will not tell me continuously what to do, and I will do what I want and I don't think that I will go to Albania let's say continuously. I will go sometimes, but not often.

**Vilma (girl, 15, Thessaloniki):** When I go there I get accustomed very easily. Immediately when I get out of the car I get accustomed with the place, I like to go out, to speak with people, to see what they learn, where they live. Because I have come here and I have learnt about Greek history, whereas about my country I know nothing and I like to learn many more things [...] Here I feel like a stranger, I have been here 10 years and I still feel foreign. I go very often to Albania and I see the differences between the two countries and I see that I am not from here... It seems like I belong more to Albania than here.

In terms of adaptation in the host country and migrants' transnational orientation, my study contrasts with research that has found that a high degree of discrimination in the receiving country is associated with 'reactive transnationalism' (Itzigsohn and Saucedo 2002: 72) or a tendency towards engagement in activities that reaffirm migrants' collective identity (Faist 2000a; Popkin 1999). In the Albanian case, experiences of discrimination in the receiving country can cause the disruption of transnational visits and distancing of the second generation from transnational ties, since migrants' ethnic identification is linked to their maintenance of ties with the homeland. Transnational orientation is maintained or rejected on the basis of their self-identification, their identification by others, and their perception of the homeland (see also Leichtman 2005: 281).

In effect, what it means is that the attitude towards transnational ties is related to attempts to divert discrimination and integrate into the host society. The identification of the Albanian children in Thessaloniki shows the deep impact that the negative articulation of Albanianness has had on the teenagers' identification and attitude towards their homeland (Vathi 2010a). In Italy, this articulation is more subtle, but the exclusionary attitude of the receiving society towards Italian identity and the pressure to assimilate has also caused a similar attitude. There is, therefore, a relationship between identification as Albanian and feelings of affinity towards Albanian culture, and the propensity or lack of opposition towards transnational ties.

The following sections focus specifically on the transmission of attitudes towards visits to Albania and towards return.

### ***7.3.2 Intergenerational transmission of attitudes towards visits***

Despite the change in their attitude over the years, parents acknowledge the lack of social support to them and their families on the part of the host society as well as the exposure to discrimination of their children. They see return visits as a source of much-needed support and 'fun time' to ensure a more positive childhood for the children.

**Mimoza (mother, 39, London):** The first time I went it was very emotional. It was very emotional. [...] Because I have mum and dad, brothers and sisters and I go to see them. And besides, come on, it's my country. [...] And for the children, so that they learn their language, the history, to know the places and to know the relatives. It's good for them to know their relatives.

**Bardhi (father, 45, Thessaloniki):** When my daughter goes to Albania, with grandmothers, grandfathers, with the cousins there, she sees that her country is beautiful, she likes it. Because there during holiday visits she is more free, she makes friends. [...] All the time they have fun during the summer in Albania, and the communication with caring and loving people like grandparents, uncles, aunts and other relatives... their love is great. Because of this, the visits in Albania remain in children's memories. So my daughter wants to go often and when I ask her 'Do you like Albania?', she is always positive and wants to go. I believe this is the reason, especially as they are under significant pressure here, with the Greek language... It's very difficult to bring up [Albanian] children in Greece!

**Egla (girl, 15, Florence):** Mum takes these trips only for us. Before we used to go for the grandparents because they were old and we wanted to see them, but if it was for mum and dad they wouldn't go every year, because it's very expensive. But we have come to Italy and we are still very young so they send us every year; if it wasn't for us, they would go once in 2–3 years... But they sent us so that we don't stay here all the time, because there isn't much to do as you get stuck at home, everyone minds his own business so...



In the quote of Abaz below we also see how the return visits contribute to children's identification. This is as a result of the emotional and social support that the second-generation children experience during these visits which serves as a resource in cushioning the effects of isolation and exclusion in the 'host' country.

**Abaz (father, 44, Thessaloniki):** My youngest son has a strong feeling of patriotism towards Albania. It surprises me because he came here one year old. We go always during the summer to Albania; he likes socialising there, because he has cousins of the same age. He plays with them, so he likes it better there than here. Here he feels a bit excluded; here there are many Greeks, Russian and Turkish children but he is not very fast in making friends. He is shy. He has only one friend, so he always says 'Dad I like it better in Albania'.

Return visits also help in introducing the children to their parents' past and in narrowing the emotional 'gap' between the two generations, which widens during the years of settlement in the receiving society. One of the observations about the relationship between parents and children is the lack of knowledge of the children about their parents' past, education and life-style. These visits, therefore, help in countering the feeling of disruption between the past of their parents and the family's current life as settled immigrants.

**Entela (mother, 42, Thessaloniki):** We go first to see our relatives, I don't want to cut the ties. I want to go and see what's going on, what kind of changes, to see them from up close. I see the changes on TV, but I want to see them in reality. I also want the children to go and see the place; I don't want to distance them from Albania. For example, soon there will be a wedding of one of the relatives in the village of my husband in Lushnjë. And I asked my husband to take our holidays so that we could go with the children, because they don't know what the village looks like! They ask me time after time. So I want the children to go and see the village and the place where their father grew up.

The experience of return visits can be especially significant for skilled migrants, who experience a temporal restoration of their professional identity, and a unique occasion when the children get to see this trait of their parents' identity.

**Fatmir (father, 41, London):** When we went to Albania after eight years I took my son and went to the café where we used to go always with my colleagues from the theatre. And musicians were coming, both the professionals and the amateurs... They were coming and were hugging me, 'Hi, how are you?', everyone. And we sat there for a coffee. My son was staring at us: 'They still respect you, even after so many years!' [...] That's why every time we go, I feel a different person when I go there.

The first generation's relations with the homeland, and especially with the extended family, condition the return visits of the second generation. It is thus important that parents' relationships with the extended family are positive, which they not always are

(cf. Levitt 2009: 1226). Children are sensitive to such conflicts, which in turn impact on their perception of the homeland and Albanian culture. Era and Sidorela explain:

**Era (girl, 14, London):** Yeah, the reaction of people and how they are over there. In Albania people are well... yeah... All they think about is, I don't know... money and things.

**Sidorela (girl, 22 Florence):** I have not been to Albania because my parents have come here to work. The fact is that when you go to Albania it's not that you have only two people waiting for you, you have the whole community! And when you go there, they all expect something, don't they? Even ten euro. But if you make the calculations: two hundred people multiplied by ten euro....

Some second-generation teenagers find it hard to deal with kinship traditions and conventions of family support in Albania. This is more evident in the narratives of those in late adolescence, who appreciate less the affection and support of grandparents (or maybe the grandparents are no longer alive).

**Rudina (girl, 18, Florence):** My visits are like this: first of all when we go, we go all together, me, my mum, my cousins. So it's a little bit like sending me to my home (*smiles*). We go there... OK, I go and see my aunt who lives in Tirana; I go often to hers. But I don't feel at home, I feel a little bit like out of place. I go out with my cousins, go for a walk. But then I stay at home and can't wait to come back to my house here.

**Anna (girl, 16, Thessaloniki):** I go [to Albania], but I don't know anything. For example, when my mum goes she says, 'I feel so well in my village', whereas I don't like it in Albania. Because I don't have friends, I don't know the language, so I have difficulties. Whereas when I am in Greece I have my friends, I know the language, I feel more comfortable... that's it [...] To them, the visits mean a lot of things. Because they remind them of their childhood, their village, the people... they see their relatives who they love, people they grew up together with, so they have a good time, because they know the language so they don't have problems.

As we can see in the quotes of Rudina and Anna above, older teenagers recognise the difference in meaning that these visits hold for them when compared to their parents. Sometimes their reluctance to continue visiting is expressed through the contrast in the different emotionalities of the two generations, as well as in attitudes towards a possible return.

### ***7.3.3 Intergenerational transmission of attitudes towards return***

Children's predominant attachment to the 'host' country and parents' plans for their education there are the main reasons that oblige the parents to put return on hold.

**Lirime (mother, 38, London):** It's a big one, because we are, you know... we are fighting. We are fighting; it is between us and the children. So that (return) is the big question mark. And we don't know what to do!

There is also a relation between return and intergenerational transmission. Families who plan return are very oriented towards savings and investment in Albania. In these cases, parents do not put much effort into integrating in the local environment where they live, so the human and social capital they accumulate is very limited. The gap with the second generation in these cases can be enormous. Intentions and plans to return on the other hand push the parents to teach Albanian to the children and since the family lives cut off from the rest of the receiving society and frequently visits Albania, children are transmitted or they independently pick up many Albanian customs and are more in contact with Albanian culture.

**Clara (mother, 41, Florence):** One of my neighbours left the house 10 years without curtains! And the installations and other wires of the house were on the floor. 'Why should I fix up the Italian house?' she used to say. 'But your children are growing up here; what kind of idea of a home will they have?' Saving everything, she managed to buy two houses, one for each of her children. The children grew up here and they don't want to go to Albania, so the two houses have remained empty. In the end she was forced to buy a home here in Italy.

As mentioned above, the second-generation teenagers are indecisive about return, while across the three sites the decision of the parents on return in many cases depends on where the children will settle. Many parents express their wish to be close to their children in later life. Attachment to the children and the ties that both parents and children establish in the host country make return an unnatural move, as Selim explains.

ZV: Where do you see the future?

**Selim (father, 66, Florence):** Well, we have an only daughter, so our life is related to hers... according to the tradition of the Albanian family, we are close to our children. So our future is where the future of Aulona is. [...] Her future is here, because it's here she was educated and got employed. And most likely it's here she will marry, when the time comes (*smiles*).

At times parents use return discussions as a threat to the children so as to motivate them to succeed with their studies or when they are especially undisciplined. This shows once more the disjuncture between parents and children in terms of the perception they have on their settlement and belongingness in the host country.

**Flutura (mother, 43, London):** If he continues like this, my son will do really well. Maybe my daughter will do even better, but she is very shy, only studies. We say to them every night: 'You have to study; if you don't study we will go back to Albania'.

It is very common for parents and children in the same family to have different plans and attitudes towards return. Differences between mothers' and fathers' attitudes are common, too. Where there are differences, Albanian men appear keener to return. They feel less socially integrated abroad, and more symbolically attached to Albania.

ZV: Where do your parents see their future and your future?

**Altin (boy, 16, London):** Well, my mum wants to stay here, to be honest. ... She wants to earn more money. Maybe build another house in Albania or something. My dad... definitely wants to go to Albania, I think, because his mum is getting old, you know, he wants to spend time with his mum. He goes every summer of course, with us, but he goes winter as well and he leaves us here, so he goes winter to see his mum, on his own. So yeah, he wants to go to Albania for his mum, but he has to stay here for our education, for our future.

## 7.4 Conclusions

The findings of this chapter show that both the first and the second generation develop and maintain various kinds of transnational ties. These ties change over time alongside the process of integration in the host country. As the various patterns of integration and identification unfold, different kinds of transnational ties are established and the patterns of their maintenance change over the years.

Transnational ties show different patterns between and within the two generations. These differences are demonstrated both in the symbolic elements of these ties and in the more logistical ones. In particular, *return visits consist of significant events in the immigrant family that usually bring up emotions, feelings of longing and belonging, but also highlight underlying tensions and differences between parents and children and within the extended family and kin networks.* These events are important as they push parents and children to question and re-evaluate their identity and related issues such as gender relations, discrimination and the institution of family.

*Nevertheless, in the case of the first generation, integration is usually prioritised against transnational ties, especially in terms of distribution of family resources and the orientation towards future life goals.* This inevitably affects the *intergenerational transmission* of these ties. While parents are generally keen on transmitting the symbolic ties and are meticulous in regard to more material ties, the second-generation teenagers appear also as independent actors in establishing ties and showing willingness to maintain ties, despite their weakening in the first generation.

*Furthermore, the intergenerational transmission of transnational ties is not as automatic and uniform as outlined by the very limited literature in the field. For example, Faist (2000a) observes that transnational social spaces develop in two phases: in the beginning they are the outcome of international migration of mainly the first generation, while in a second phase they are passed on to migrants' descendants and seem to develop a life of their own. My findings show that certain ties are transmitted more easily, whilst others are overlooked or transmitted passively.*

The two main concepts of 'transnational ways of being' and 'transnational ways of belonging' (Glick Schiller 2004) find support in my data, although both have been changing over time. Transnational ways of being are much more common among both the first and the second generation. Transnational ways of belonging are more emphasised among the first generation, although this belonging is mostly to the past spent in Albania and to their families, rather than a symbolic belongingness expressed in the name of a group towards a homeland. *In turn, the geographical approach, emphasizing space and place, and associated mobility tendencies and orientation are more a second-generation phenomenon, whose members also show tendencies towards cosmopolitanism.*

In terms of differences between the three sites, the findings of this chapter are very much in line with one of the classic writings in transnational studies. As mentioned in Chapter 4, Glick Schiller *et al.* (1995: 50) maintain that the conduct of transnational lives is related to three main contextual factors: the history of immigration and the modes in which immigrants are received in the host country; migrants' cultural resources; and discrimination and hostility faced by an immigrant group. Furthermore, compatible with research reviewed in Chapter 4 (Joppke and Morawska 2003; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007), the state is a major factor in conditioning and shaping transnational ties. This is seen especially in the case of return visits and other spatial mobilities, where the mechanism of regularisation has played a crucial role. Because discrimination was much stronger and more persistent in the two southern sites, transnational ways of being and belonging were much weaker in Thessaloniki and Florence, along with the phenomena of identity contraction and mimicry (Romania 2004). In turn, transnational mobilities were severely obstructed by the irregular nature of Albanian migration and the long process of regularisation.

My findings support the work of Vertovec (2009: 80) who maintains that the relationship between transnationalism and integration is not a zero-sum game. They are

also in line with Dahinden (2009: 11) who found that the longer the migrants stay in the receiving country, the less transnational they are, and the strength and the proportion of transnational ties diminishes as the duration of stay increases—an argument that supports assimilation theory. In this study integration and transnational ties interact in different ways: the more integration for some, the weaker their transnational ties. *But certain transnational ties, such as those through ICTs, have co-existed through the integration process.* I would say integration and transnational ties do develop at different paces; *moreover, certain transnational ties develop progressively, but others do not.* For example, transnational ties through ICTs have been evolving, from telephone to TV and Internet/skype, but return visits have seen different patterns. They were initially obstructed by lack of papers; then started to develop intensively after regularisation; and then stopped or reduced because of clashes with kin or disappointments with the way migrants are treated in the home country; or even increased because of (perceived) business opportunities in Albania.

In turn, the data on the role of kin and locality also support the views of Nagel (2002) and Olwig (2003) who maintain that a broader approach, that focuses on socio-cultural systems in relation to migrants' life trajectories and fields of inter-personal ties, is needed, and a focus on culture as produced and reproduced located beyond the nation-state into the migrants' households, neighbourhoods and workplaces. The typology offered by Faist (2000b) comprising transnational kinship groups, transnational circuits and transnational communities, is not fully supported by the data. These constructs are based on the principle of reciprocity either within kinship groups or circuits crossing countries, or the more symbolic reciprocity over time and space, which are rather missing among Albanian migrants and their descendants.

## Chapter 8

### CONCLUSION

#### **‘Capitalising’ on the second generation: a generational assessment of identification, integration and transnational ties**

In this final chapter, the main research questions are revisited and a final evaluation is made as to how the thesis analyses and answers them. Reflecting the general structure of the thesis, I first summarise and elaborate on findings regarding ethnic identity, followed by those on integration, transnational ties and intergenerational transmission. As I proceed through this chapter, I also indicate avenues for future research. In the final main section, I employ theoretical assumptions related to identification and integration, and the concepts of agency, power and capital, to demonstrate interconnections between identification, integration and transnational ties. The chapter rounds off with some remarks on the wider implications of research in this field, including some personal reflections. Throughout this chapter, I liberally use italics to emphasise key points of my concluding analysis.

#### **8.1 Ethnic identity**

The analysis of the role of ethnicity in identification processes of the Albanian migrants and their children was listed as the first research question in this project. This was then related to the research summarised in Chapter 4 that focused on ethnic identity as one of the main factors that impacts the integration of the second generation in various situations worldwide. Related to the particular group under study (Albanians), researching the role of ethnicity is even more important since previous research located on other ethnic groups in various parts of the world has suggested that widespread discrimination and stigmatisation of the first generation could be interpreted as bequeathing a negative ‘legacy’ to the second generation. Chapter 5 analysed the identification processes of the first and the second generation of Albanian migrants, taking a broad approach towards the understanding of these processes and analysing the effect that ethnicity has on them.

*The experience of the Albanian first generation and that of the Albanian-origin teenagers in this study shows that the specific ethnicity characteristic of an ethnic group is not—in this case—the central frame of reference that affects identity processes. As Barth (1969: 14) observed, there seems to be a difference between the process of self-ascription to an ethnic group, and the experience, and especially the performance, of an ethnic identity. In this research, the choice (or not) of the ethnic label, and articulations of belongingness, seem to be rational and to change over time, depending on an evaluation of opportunities in the home and the host country, and the host society's politicisation of ethnicity and its attitude towards immigrants.*

*Therefore, the references to ethnicity, at least when primordial ethnicity is considered, seem to be instrumental and conditioned by its centrality in the host societies' context. The patterns of identification processes, for both the first and the second generation, are context-bound and are shaped by factors operating at different levels, related to the structural features of the host society and the characteristics of the immigrant group. More specifically, they point to the institutionalisation of sharp symbolic boundaries by the dominant group and the politicisation of the 'other'; the positioning and the relative size of the migrant group; the mode and stage of incorporation of the first generation; and different sources of social capital interacting at different levels, mostly the family. As evidence presented throughout the thesis has shown, these factors intersect with class (high- and low-skilled, more or fewer years of education) and gender (cf. Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992).*

As a result, a recognition of a 'blending of cultures'—an expectation one would have when researching second-generation teenagers—is not the general main trend when the Albanian teenagers' identification is concerned. Although hybrid identities appear to be under construction, the recognition of such identities is discouraged because of the stigmatisation of the Albanian culture in their everyday environment and the denial of full membership and belongingness to the host society and culture.

Their 'cultural repositioning' as a group in a host society and the above-mentioned strategies of Albanian migrants and their children can be related to the 'structure' of Albanian ethnic identity, as discussed at the beginning of Chapter 2. Scholars have pointed to historical primacy, cultural homogeneity and indifference towards religion as 'myths' of Albanian identity, employed symbolically by the Albanian diaspora in its historical struggles to build a national ideology (Malcolm 2002). Others have seen Albanian ethnic identity as based on the honour of the family and kinship and on respect



for the given word, considering the lack of a single common religion as a historical obstacle to a strong ethnic identity (Dingo 2007); referring thus to a more ‘micro-level’ ethnicity. However, rather than attributing these identification patterns to essential traits of identity, in the case of these settling and integrating migrants and their descendants, the ‘other’ has a privileged power position in the host country and an affirmed and advantageous positioning at a national and international level. This positioning provides a positive signifier to the identity ambivalence and fragility, encouraging thereby an assimilatory form of integration.

## 8.2 Integration

The study of integration, seen in relation to ethnic identity, was the main focus of the TIES project, from which my thesis research was drawn in its broadest sense (but not in its methodological or empirical detail). A major hypothesis that underlies the comparative approach of the TIES programme of research is that different contexts within Europe impact on the integration of the second generation in a different way to produce different outcomes. Chapter 5 focused on the integration dynamics of both the first-generation Albanian migrants and their children. In this study integration was conceptualised as a process rather than a state. While certain factors such as, for example, regularisation schemes, the institutional environment and the media were ‘expected’ to impact on integration, as other research in the field has shown, the inductive approach of my study uncovered other patterns and outcomes. Furthermore, my research has added value because it studies integration across two generations at the same time, as well as the three-city/country comparative dimension.

The findings of this part of my research have shown that there are important differences in terms of integration between different groups, between different sites, and between different dimensions—structural versus socio-cultural. *The first and the second generations differ in terms of their tendency and expectation to integrate, and the sectors of the host society into which they strive to ‘belong’.* The different policy frameworks and institutional arrangements appear indeed as important factors in affecting the integration of both the first and the second generation, justifying the ‘comparative integration context theory’ (Crul and Schneider 2010: 1249). *In terms of*

*different dimensions of integration, structural integration is the main goal of the first-generation migrants, whereas the second generation appreciates more the dimension of social integration, seen through socialisation and friendship circles, and host-country 'youth culture'.* This latter trend (socio-cultural integration) could be the focus of future research on the integration of youth of immigrant origin. Moreover, as Glytsos (2005) points out, mainly in the case of the first generation, social integration affects structural integration and vice versa.

It appears also that the relative and absolute size of Albanians as an immigrant community is an important factor in the emergence of stigmatisation and discrimination at a macro level and the formation of stereotypes that block interactions at a micro level. In Greece, and for some time also in Italy, Albanians consisted of the biggest immigrant group, while in Britain they are a small group. Following Esser's (2004) theory of integration on the basis of relative and absolute size of the immigrant group, and also Barth's (1969) ecological model, this differentiating fact alone should have played an important role in the way they were perceived in these host countries and the characteristics of the respective inter-ethnic boundaries. In the two southern sites, in the face of 'bright' boundaries, assimilation into the host society is attempted as an individual boundary-crossing strategy, but is obstructed by the exclusive nature of ethnic identity as developed in the public discourse in the host society. This exclusivity is especially marked in the Greek case. As Dümmler *et al.* (2010: 34) conclude, 'if symbolic boundaries are widely agreed upon and institutionalised through reified ideas about culture, nations, tradition and gender relations, then minority groups have to deal with social boundaries that assume a kind of natural and objectified character. This in turn renders it impossible to blur, cross or shift the boundaries'. Similarly, Wimmer (2008), observing earlier developments in the literature, rightly notes that the boundary-crossing can be made even more difficult by the dominant groups when they 'seal' their boundary against 'trespassers'. In the two southern sites, the 'problematic' Albanian ethnic identity was instrumentalised and stigmatised in order to bolster the 'purity' of the respective national identities.

The politicisation of ethnicity reinforces the basis of social exclusion; religion counts as the main element on which the racialisation of minorities is constructed. For Albanians it is not so much their 'Islamic' identity for which they are vilified, for—as we have seen—Albanians wear their religious heritage lightly; rather, it is their 'non-belonging' to the hegemonic, national religions of Greek Orthodoxy in Greece and

Roman Catholicism in Italy. The cases of Greece and Italy thus show the institutionalisation of 'bright' boundaries or sharp symbolic categorising distinctions based on religion, citizenship and language (Alba 2005; Lamont and Molnar 2002). Therefore, while national belonging at an international level is increasingly defined in terms of civic participation (Tzanelli 2006) and transnational studies regard single loyalty to the nation-state and the consequent pressure on immigrants to assimilate as a thing of the past (Glick Schiller *et al.* 1995: 51), this is not yet the case of the new immigration countries in the Southern Europe. In turn, multicultural organisation and specific policies in London seem to tone down salient expressions of discrimination and create social and institutional 'spaces' for the people of immigrant origin to integrate. Nevertheless, the class distinctions and the 'parallel' societies created by the 'faults' of multiculturalism (Johnson 2007) make Albanians part of the struggle of minorities in London to join the native mainstream, by counting on their 'racial invisibility'.

*Otherwise, the Albanian-origin teenagers show a weak 'ethnic agency' needed to perform the strategies that target the location of existing boundaries or modify their meaning by challenging the hierarchical order of ethnic categories.* The boundaries are externally erected and the strategies that require a group's ethnic action are not distinguishable. What is more visible is the tendency towards boundary-crossing and repositioning, performed at an individual level and accompanied with an indifference towards other co-ethnics, referring to the negatively articulated 'Albanianness' as the reference for distancing. When positioning themselves along ethnic and social boundaries, external categorisation and identification by others are the main frames which Albanian-origin teenagers refer to, although there are differences between the middle- and lower-class second generations, with the former being more autonomous in their inclination towards the retention of the culture of the country of origin (see also Morawska 2003: 157). This also reminds us that, in contrast to what American authors maintain, the operation of structural factors can have the reverse effect on ethnic identification. In the absence of ethnic agency, a structural factor such as discrimination can have the opposite effect, weakening rather than strengthening the vitality of the ethnic group (Waters 1990). Furthermore, although discrimination is an important factor that hampers integration, this research shows that the role of the family, the educational system and micro-level socialisation can significantly enhance patterns of integration.

It is important to draw the distinction between the integration strategies of the two generations. In the case of the second generation, we see a different perception on the

*space where they integrate. The second generation gets more engaged with discourses on city identity and culture and more observant towards the qualities of space and beauty which affect feelings of belongingness. Cosmopolitan orientation, predisposition towards mobility and appreciation of diversity are much more evident in the case of the second generation, which represents a different understanding by them of the nation-state as a 'unit' of integration.* It should be mentioned, however, that the cosmopolitan orientation could be linked to age-related attitudes and aspirations. Research on young people has shown that the emergence of youth as a social category is consonant with Western modernisation. As a result, tendencies towards experimentation, hedonistic consumption and mobility are considered important markers of teenager identity (Kjeldgaard and Askegaard 2006). I should nevertheless stress that mine is a significant contribution to research on new immigrants in Europe by including both the first and the second generation, which I hope will be extended to other regions and groups.

### **8.3 Transnational ties**

Transnational ties were another important 'variable' of this research. They were the focus of one of my initial research questions (refer back to 1.4) and were specifically treated in Chapter 7. They were included in the research in light of literature showing that transnationalism and integration are not exclusive phenomena; they co-exist and take place with a different relationship and pace in different contexts and across different immigrant groups. This research investigated the establishment and performance of transnational ties of both the first and the second generation and the intergenerational transmission of these ties between the two.

Findings show that transnational ties are developed along with the process of settlement in the host country. Nevertheless, transnational ties do not take place away from 'bumpy' developments and family and kin politics. *In contrast to a large body of research on transnationalism, transnational ties in this study appear to fade away or get disrupted by tensions taking place in the transnational social fields. My findings contrast especially with studies on families and transnationalism that support the persistence of family and kin networks and of ethnic solidarity.* For example, Lima (2001: 91) maintains that 'the transnational family is buffered by its extensive social

networks, allowing the transnational experiences to form a fluid continuum rather than a radical divide compartmentalising life into two separated worlds'. The contrast is even more striking with those studies that point to the centrality of migration in family's identity and ethos, which in turn rests on the basis of loyalty towards the family back home (Chamberlain 2005: 64–66). Instead, rather more akin to what Levitt (2009) observes, *the transnational ties of Albanian immigrants and their children expose the moral disjunctures between migrants and those remaining behind since each group relies on different cultural references.*

The role of kin and the pressure that they exert on transnational networks have been picked up by other researchers, although not in relation to return visits. Glick Schiller (2004: 461–462) observes that studies of transnationality should take into account the contradictions and disparities within transnational social fields and focus on the intersections of kin, local and national institutions. This points to what Carling (2008: 1474) observes about migrants and non-migrants: 'the differences and tensions between the two groups must be taken seriously. When transnationalism coexists with ever greater barriers to migration, there is a danger of obscuring these frictions through a focus on hybridity and flux and an abandonment of the traditional binary of origin and destination'. *My results point to the need to focus on cultural changes happening in the sending countries and immigrant families, leading to a redefinition of cultural norms.* In a broader sense, my findings also support research that emphasises the role of culture in transnational engagements and experiences, seen now in relation to micro-level interactions and migrants' interpersonal ties, without overlooking the national and transnational structures that condition migratory movements (Olwig 2003).

In terms of adaptation in the host country and migrants' transnational orientation, this study contrasts with research that has found that a high degree of discrimination in the receiving country is associated with 'reactive transnationalism' (Itzigsohn and Saucedo 2002) or a tendency towards engagement in activities that reaffirm migrants' collective identity and open up 'entrepreneurial enclave' opportunities for economic prosperity (Faist 2000a; Popkin 1999: 232). While 'reactive transnationalism' is not the case, 'linear transnationalism' and 'resource-based transnationalism' (Itzigsohn and Saucedo 2002: 789) are common among Albanian migrants and their children in the three cities. *Findings show that experiences of discrimination in the receiving country can cause the disruption of transnational visits and distancing of the second generation from transnational ties, since migrants' ethnic identification is linked to their proneness*

*to visit the homeland, while transnational orientation is maintained or rejected on the basis of their self-identification and identification by others and their perception of homeland (Leichtman 2005: 281).*

My research insights also support the variation in transnational engagement according to factors such as gender, social class, migration channel, legal status, economic means, migration and settlement history, which are often found combined with factors related to community structure, gendered patterns of contact and political circumstances in the homeland (Pessar and Mahler 2003; Vertovec 2009). *The length of stay in the receiving country also matters (Dahinden 2009), but instead of talking of increase or decrease we should concentrate on the redefinition of transnational ties by both immigrants and their countries of origin.*

Again related to capital, this study shows that transnational orientation and experience differ between the skilled and unskilled migrants and their children. This resonates with previous research that has shown that transnational ties and cosmopolitan orientation can vary according to class (Kothari 2008). As Grillo (2007: 212–213) puts it, ‘whether referring to transnationals, translocals, cosmopolitans, hybrids, creoles, *hommes des confins*, postnationals or anything else, we have to be aware that there are different personal and institutional subject positionings *vis-à-vis* nation, ethnicity, culture and class, that multicultural and intercultural practices [...] may take many different forms, and that there is no magical state, accessible through transmigration, which allows people readily to escape national, ethnic and cultural rootedness’.

Attitudes towards return are another important element analysed under transnational ties. In previous research, intention to return has been analysed mostly as a factor that affects migrants’ contribution to the home country (for instance, Duvall 2004). *In this study attitudes towards return appear to be developed through a transnational understanding and evaluation of the opportunities in both home and host country, thus throwing light also on integration patterns.* Future research could elaborate on this aspect of transnational ties by including attitudes towards return as part of research on transnationalism and integration. More research could also focus on the role of locality on integration and transnationalism and the cosmopolitan orientation of the second generation: these being insights that emerged particularly during my fieldwork in Florence.

## 8.4 Intergenerational transmission

Intergenerational transmission was another element of the research design of this study, reflecting the necessity to consider how the two generations interact and impact on each other's identification, integration and transnational ties while they settle in the host country. By including this process, the study responded to the need for further research on intergenerational transmission, especially through a qualitative methods approach. Each of the three empirical chapters—Chapters 5, 6 and 7—included a section on the intergenerational transmission of identity, integration and transnational ties respectively.

In general, in terms of content, the process of intergenerational transmission consists both of intergenerational discontinuities and 'linear' transmission. For example, lack of interest of the parents to transmit the Albanian language, and the different religiosity of the second generation, constitute cases of intergenerational discontinuity. *Moreover, the intergenerational transmission process is far more complex than the one-way transmission (parents to children) which is embodied in most standard thinking and research on the topic. In my research, the intergenerational transmission appears bidirectional, although the intensity, mediation and content are different between the transmission from parents to the children when compared to the converse case.* This is also in line with research on intergenerational transmission between parents and adolescents outside migration research, which finds parents' role and influence to be stronger than that of the teenagers (e.g. Pinquart and Silbereisen 2004), but the reverse process is by no means absent.

Far from a 'quantifiable' process, intergenerational transmission appears as complex and fragmented, changing over time by involving redefinitions of concepts, values, practices and their importance by both parents and children. This process is conditioned by parents' capital (human, social, cultural etc.) and moderated by discrimination. Means and strategies of transmission are focused on counteracting stigmatisation and lack focus on ethnic identity and culture of origin, in favour of achieving financial security and equipping the second generation with universal values and life-long lessons. The process of intergenerational transmission is characterised by negotiations and strategies that counteract the disadvantageous status as migrants and as a stigmatised group. The dynamics and content of this transmission appear to be positively affected by the empowerment and accumulation of various forms of capital

by the parents, who aim to ensure that the second generation experiences upwards mobility. There are, however, significant differences across the three cities. Due to the familiarity and affinity of the first generation with Italian culture in general, and language in particular, the intergenerational transmission is less conflictual and fragmented than reported in the other two settings and groups.

Discrimination is an important factor that disrupts intergenerational transmission, especially in the case of ethnic identity and transnational ties. From a theoretical perspective Esser (2004) holds a similar view. He maintains that structure—that is, institutional and cultural factors at a national level—are the most important determinants of intergenerational transmission, taking as example the educational system. He attributes a major role in the process to the generalised forms of capital, not restricted to ethnic limits, and especially to human capital in the form of technical and administrative knowledge.

My own findings show that intergenerational transmission is significantly affected by the particular patterns of identification, integration and transnational ties of the first generation. For the hybrid identity to be constructed and acknowledged by the second generation it is very important that a healthy intergenerational transmission of ethnic identity and transnational ties takes place. Although early-life experiences of discrimination or acceptance certainly influence the ethnic identification of the teenagers, the emotional and social support along with the capital transmitted by the family play an important role in cushioning discrimination and allowing for teenagers to draw from different cultural ‘sources’ during adolescence and later in life.

## **8.5 Re-interpreting integration: agency, capital, power**

The final main research question of my thesis deals with the relationship between ethnic identity, integration and transnational ties, the factors that affect this dynamic and how this relationship ultimately affects integration. As outlined by previous research presented in Chapter 4, identity, integration and transnationalism interact with each other, and this is supported by the copious evidence I have presented in the three successive empirical chapters. Most research, however, does not explain why some



identities become salient and are activated in the transnational social context (Levine 1999: 168).

The Albanians in Thessaloniki, Florence, and increasingly in London, are 'mature' communities which have a good understanding about the opportunities offered in the relevant host country. They have now completed the 'golden' 5–10 years of immigration and have put their return 'on hold', partly to secure a better education and potentially better life prospects for their children. Indeed, the successful settlement and integration of the children is an important goal and also an indicator to which the first generation constantly refers to when evaluating the 'outcomes' of their migration project. The lack of resistance towards discrimination and the 'forced assimilation' experienced in the early years of their settlement, especially in the two Southern European sites, and the change of attitudes over the years could well be explained within the framework of capital and power. Barth (1969: 28) did not elaborate extensively on this element, but sensed an 'anomalous' general feature of ethnic identity as a status: while *ascription* rests mainly on origin and commitment, the *performance* of the roles required to realise identity is conditioned on certain assets.

Ethnic identification is therefore found to be significantly related to the distribution of resources. According to Levine (1999), it is common for social and cultural factors that become progressively established and elaborated by being used to describe identities and social situations, to be related to differential access to resources. This differentiation is thought to be inevitably related to conflict and ideological perspectives, which in turn contribute to ethnicity becoming institutionalised. Jenkins (1997) observes that the relationship between the distribution of resources on the one hand, and penalties of identification on the other, is characterised by a combination of domination and resistance, taking place both in the internal and external dimensions of identification. Identity in these processes is an important criterion for distribution, while the distribution patterns are in turn significant in the constitution of identity. Furthermore, Barth (1994) maintains that the ethnic competition for resources and all other ethnic processes can be only understood by referring to and including the state as an important actor as a provider of public goods and regulator of the lives and movements of groups and categories of people. Experiencing migration as an only way to improve their existence and facing harsh discrimination made Albanian migrants in the three countries unable to draw or rely on any resources, while experiencing harsh identification penalties. Therefore, this 'change' of Albanian migrants towards ethnic

identification reflects also the relevance and migrants' understanding of generic principles of hierarchical social differentiation and access to economic resources in conditioning the ability of different actors to categorise others (Jenkins 1997). The access to economic resources obstructs or enables a group's collective ethnic agency and its ability to define its own ethnic identity. It also relates to the perspective of Todd (2005: 452) on identity change, which she explains in terms of three variables: existing identity structure, power relations, and resource distribution. Due to the 'micro-level ethnicity' that Albanian migrants display and all the structural conditions they have faced in the host countries, it is the 'migrant' and 'parental' identities that characterise the first generation. From their narratives it seems that the 'ethnicity' of their incorporation strategies is indeed the realisation of their migration project: a better life for them and a brighter future for their children. This reflects strongly on the individual boundary-crossing strategies of their descendants.

The 'contraction' and transformation of identity can be better understood also by referring to research that has shown that agency and culture, and all the interrelations they are part of, are marked by the notion of power. As Ratner (2000: 430) maintains, the individual notion of agency as based on personal meanings ignores the barriers agents encounter in their struggles for a sense of equality, democracy and fulfilment. A common view in the literature that recognises power as a factor that shapes the social world is that people are situated in different social locations, which are influenced by power hierarchies, including those attached to gender (Pessar and Mahler 2003). Power hierarchies are also taken as the mechanisms that make individuals into subjects through the imposition of categories, through the impact on their individuality (Foucault 1982: 781). On the other hand, power and capital are interrelated, with the possession of capital resting on the basis of power (Bourdieu 1989). It is for this reason that the emergence of mimicry, discussed by other researchers as a sign of losing oneself in favour of social integration (Romania 2004), at this stage of integration contains a strong element of intentionality (Todd 2005). The accumulation of capital strengthened a sense of autonomy which in turn makes mimicry itself a strategy of integration informed by the new competence in understanding social hierarchies and identity politics.

The inclusion of capital in studies of immigrants' integration and that of the second generation in particular is not new (e.g. Zhou and Bankston 1994), although theories of integration have not yet really acknowledged capital and its relations to power and

agency as factors that affect integration. While the insistence of the parents on children's education appears as an important factor in this study, as in many other studies of the integration of the second generation (Modood 2004; Zhou 1997b), *the main finding of this study is that capital appears in various forms and levels (see also Bankston and Zhou 2002; Coleman 1988) and impacts on integration while different forms of capital are differently important for the first and the second generation. Financial and human capital* appears as important in the case of the first generation, who are able to ascertain through experience that expertise and skills in the workplace will give them more security and increase their agency. As mentioned in Chapter 6, *social capital* based on individual characteristics that affect socialisation, and that derived from peer group networks—an aspect completely ignored in the second-generation literature—is very important for the immigrant-origin adolescents to feel integrated. Therefore, the second generation is more appreciative of the social and cultural capital that can be harnessed to create opportunities, for instance, in accessing employment once their education has come to an end.

Therefore, *the integration of the second generation does not relate directly to their primordial ethnicity. Although the way that primordial ethnicity is articulated in the 'host' country's discourse affects the way the second generation perceive their culture of origin, it is capital that affects their integration. The two generations give importance and harness different forms of capital. Nevertheless, both the social and the financial and human capital disposed and transmitted by the parents impact on the second generation's integration because they enable the second generation to harness more social and cultural capital. The opposite – the lack of such capital – obstructs teenagers' integration strategies.*

Here, then, is another important opportunity for future research on the Albanian second generation: its education-to-work transition. The next few years will be a good opportunity to carry out this research, given the cohort-age of the second generation currently. Meanwhile, in both generations, the existence of capital appears to increase their autonomy and to affect their perceptions of integration, by making them assess integration in the host society and the embracing of its culture more as an option. Capital thus affects the building of boundaries and their permeability.

Therefore, the increase in the experience of Albanian migrants, associated with a steady accumulation of resources and capital enabling the gaining of power, has caused a significant change in agency and vice versa, along with a knowledge of identity

politics and class, and a capacity to recognise boundaries and the mechanisms that determine them. This process of external identity contestation followed by a self-questioning and hybridisation at a later stage may well consist of the genesis of a delayed 'reproduction' of ethnicity in the Albanian diaspora. Furthermore, although the notions of the second generation and hybridity have been widely related to the broader concept of diaspora, the findings of this study show a more dynamic picture. As mentioned above, although hybrid identities are emerging, they are not explicitly claimed by the first and the second generation. As with the patterns of mimicry, the attitude towards hybridity is consciously or unconsciously affected by external categorisation, as is the claim towards a common homeland. With the accumulation of capital and the gaining of power, which affect the understanding of identity politics and the opportunity structure in the host country and also the attitude towards Albanian identity, there is now a clearer recognition of the connection with others of the same origin in the country where they live and beyond. Among Albanian migrants in these three cities, the idea of diaspora as a source of positive identification is a recent development, with different features in each of the sites. In London, this idea is rooted in the Albanian organisations' action towards the recognition of the Albanian 'community' as one of the many ethnic communities in Britain. More symbolically felt, and based on a feeling of permanence and settlement in the receiving country, is the 'self-recognition' among Albanian immigrants in Florence. In turn, a very strong contestation of the Albanian identity in Greece, and the unsettling situation with papers, makes the Albanian community in Thessaloniki oriented towards Albania in less symbolic terms, so the issue of hybridity a more ambivalent one. These findings make the concept of diaspora largely irrelevant for the analysis of the identification and settlement patterns of Albanian migrants, in line with other work that discusses the limitations of the concept of diaspora as based on common historical roots and destinies and on internal coherence and unity (Ang 2003; Clifford 1994).

I am acutely aware that the study of the second generation has been essentialised. The 'second generation' is seen as a very particular group in the migration literature, expected to 'perform', 'outperform', 'fail', or 'assimilate', 'integrate' or cause a 'Balkanisation' (Aparicio 2007: 1170) of the places where they live. By constructing the 'second generation', we reify ethnicity and emphasise the nation-state and its impact in the definition of identities and also as a frame of reference for the immigrants and their descendants. This study shows that the second generation is externally defined, at least

culturally speaking, and that the second-generation teenagers do not see the ethnicity of their origin as an intrinsic quality of them. More importantly, they make use of all the limited resources at their disposal, and view their integration processes through broader geographies, showing sometimes a cosmopolitan orientation, but also localised reference-points, such as the school, city or urban neighbourhood.

During my work on this thesis I have come across many professional dilemmas and questions concerning the purpose of my study: ‘We do research in order to help people. I don’t know about you; who are you thinking to help?’ Although I acknowledge that this project does not fall into an action research design, I still wanted to give voice to my participants, not least because Albanians have been criminalised and marginalised in the countries where they live. By leaving the reading, evaluation and interpretation of this research to the academic community, I finish my thesis fascinated by the strength and resilience that Albanian migrants and their children have shown throughout these twenty years of settlement in different European countries, despite facing persistent adversities. The humility, hope and courage, the significant improvement of their families’ welfare, and the strength of the teenagers I met, which we as academics frame into concepts and theories, are a significant positive story. Paralleling with the historical research on other ‘older’ immigrant groups within Europe, such as the Irish or the Italians, this may well be a defining moment in the history of ‘successful’ settlement and assimilation of Albanians in other European countries. Identity transformations and assimilation into the host country’s society and culture show nothing less than remarkable cultural mechanisms and versatile attitudes towards integration in the host country. Is this not what we refer to when we speak about the modern notions of culture, and what European societies expect of immigrants after all?

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**APPENDIX 1.** List of participants interviewed in each site**London**

## Second-generation teenagers

No	Name <sup>55</sup>	Sex	Age	Time of residence
	<i>Albanian-origin</i>			
1	Era	F	14	8
2	Erjola (sister of Era)	“	14	8
3	Darina	“	13	9
4	Eliana	“	15	8
5	Manjola	“	18	10
6	Erinda	“	14	8
7	Ilda	“	14	9
8	Admir	M	15	9
9	Albi	“	13	9
10	Altin	“	16	9
11	Ermal (brother of Albi)	“	15	8
12	Gezim	“	14	8
13	Mali	“	13	9
14	Saimir	“	19	7

	<i>Kosovan-origin</i>			
1	Arlinda	F	16	14
2	Borana	“	16	9
3	Dardana	“	13	10
4	Liridona	“	13	12
5	Mereme	“	15	10
6	Mrika	“	19	10
7	Vjosa	“	14	14
8	Guri	M	14	8
9	Visar	“	15	15
10	Armend	“	14	10
11	Mendi	“	14	14

## First-generation parents

No	Name	Sex	Age	Time of residence
	<i>Albanian</i>			
1	Lutfie	F	36	8
2	Miranda	“	34	9
3	Drita	“	45	8
4	Marjeta	“	37	9
5	Donika	“	45	10
6	Mimosa	“	39	10
7	Lule	“	39	10
8	Mirela	“	35	10

<sup>55</sup> All names used are pseudonyms

9	Majlinda	“	41	10
10	Flutura	“	43	9
11	Qerim	M	46	9
12	Fatmir	“	41	10

	<b><i>Kosovan</i></b>			
1	Burbuqe	F	42	15
2	Jetona	“	33	8
3	Kimete	“	35	10
4	Lule	“	40	17
5	Malique	“	38	12
6	Mine	“	30	6
7	Mynyre	“	42	11
8	Naile	“	33	10
9	Ora	“	35	14
10	Vesa	“	31	10
11	Vlora	“	43	17
12	Arsim	M	40	13

### Thessaloniki

#### Second-generation teenagers

No	Name	Sex	Age	Time of residence
1	Kejsi	F	15	10
2	Arjana	“	17	16
3	Joana	“	16	10
4	Maria	“	12	12
5	Olta	“	16	12
6	Orjana	“	16	15
7	Vilma	“	15	11
8	Fabiola	“	14	10
9	Anna	“	16	14
10	Daniela	“	18	9
11	Anjeza	“	12	10
12	Viola	“	14	12
13	Vassiliki	“	16	13
14	Mariela	“	19	11
15	Manjola	“	18	10
16	Mario	M	13	13
17	Aldo	“	15	10
18	Genti	“	19	10
19	Tori	“	17	11
20	Alvaro	“	13	9
21	Blerim	“	12	7
22	Endri	“	18	10
23	Jonald (brother of Endri)	“	13	10
24	Eros	“	18	10
25	Olsi (brother of Eros)	“	12	10
26	Flavio	“	14	12

27	Apostoli	“	13	13
28	Geri	“	13	9

First-generation parents

No	Name	Sex	Age	Time of residence
1	Valbona	F	38	13
2	Monda (and Jorgo)	“	40	16
3	Mirjeta (and Agron)	“	36	19
4	Tereza	“	37	10
5	Merita	“	52	11
6	Liljana	“	34	10
7	Lida	“	46	11
8	Alma	“	32	13
9	Entela	“	42	10
10	Dila	“	45	8
11	Demir	M	52	13
12	Alban	“	37	17
13	Fuat (and Leila)	“	50	12
14	Abaz	“	44	16

## Tuscany

Second-generation teenagers

No	Name	Sex	Age	Time of residence
	<i>Florence</i>			
1	Xhesi	F	15	7
2	Jonida	“	15	9
3	Eneida	“	15	5
4	Besiana	“	15	10
5	Sonila	“	18	8
6	Rudina	“	18	14
7	Sidorela	“	22	13
8	Egla	“	15	6
9	Erjol	M	17	9
10	Driton	“	17	10
11	Dorian	“	16	8
12	Alfonso	“	15	10
13	Angelo (and Angela)	“	17 (12)	15

	<i>Prato</i>			
1	Nertila	F	20	12
2	Marsida	“	14	8
3	Klotilda	“	17	10
4	Ida	“	18	8
5	Denada	“	16	7
6	Besarta	“	14	8
7	Alta	“	14	14
8	Alma	“	14	5

9	Alba	“	16	12
10	Giulio	M	16	16
11	Gjergji	“	17	13

First-generation parents

No	Name	Sex	Age	Time of residence
1	Tina	F	38	11
2	Gjelina	“	40	13
3	Ana	“	52	14
4	Lola	“	37	17
5	Farije	“	45	15
6	Dora	“	43	8
7	Anila	“	35	13
8	Valmira	“	28	2
9	Selim	M	66	16
10	Mark	“	54	17
11	Murat	“	36	12
12	Lumi	“	38	10
13	Edi	“	36	10
14	Anton	“	38	16
15	Tony	“	41	14
16	Pali	“	48	15
17	Mondi	“	48	12
18	Michelino	“	46	18
19	Gino	“	37	15
20	Turi	“	38	15
21	Xhavit	“	59	16

## **APPENDIX 2.** Interview questions for second-generation teenagers

### *Background questions*

- When were they born?
- How many years have they been living in the UK/Greece/Italy for?
- Do they speak English/Greek/Italian? At what level?

### *School experience and performance*

- Do they go to school? What school do they go to? What level are they attending?
- What school did they go to for the first time when they came to the UK?
- What school do they go to now?
- Would they have preferred to go to another kind of school? What kind of school?
- How many schools levels have they completed?
- Have they ever changed school? Why?
- How do they get along with the teachers and other pupils?
- Do they have friends at school? What ethnic origin are they?
- Do students of different ethnic background make friendship with each other?
- Who do they rely on when they need homework guidance?
- What are their results at school? What do they think of their school performance?
- What are the factors that could make they fare better/worse?
- Where do they do the homework and the studying at home?
- Did they get any advice or orientation when they completed a school level? If yes, from whom and what advice did they get?
- Do they think their teachers are interested in their education?
- Did they ever perceive unfair treatment in school? Elsewhere? From whom and how?

### *Ethnic identity and transnational ties*

- Mention a few categories that can be relevant to the participant as a person. Let's say a girl/boy, a student, Greek, Albanian, a teenager, they may be an artist or sports person. Are there other categories they would like to add?
- Which one of these is the most important to them?
- Which one mostly represents them and they experience it in their everyday life?
- Does this change in different times or different places?
- Where do they feel they belong most?
- Which ethnic group they identify with? Why?
- What is their knowledge of Albanian language?
- In which settings do they use Albanian/host country language?
- Do they take part in any organisations? What do they do there?
- Do they take part in any Albanian organisations?
- Do they use the internet? On what occasions, for what purposes?
- What is their attitude towards the Albanian community in the UK?

- Are they in touch with Albania? In what ways?
- Do they visit Albania? When/on what occasions and how often do they go there?
- How would they describe their experience during the visits in Albania?
- What do the visits in Albania mean to the family? Who takes the initiative for such visits?
- Have these visits become more/less frequent along the years? What has affected the change in frequency?

#### *Integration pathways*

- Who are the people they hang out with?
- Do they have a boyfriend/girlfriend? What is her ethnic origin?
- Do they work? If yes, what is their job? If no, are they planning to get a job? What kind of job?
- Do they want to go to the University? Why?
- What do they want to become in the future? Why?
- Where do they see their future?
- In general, what are their main future life goals?
- What is their opinion about the British society and the opportunities that it offers to people of foreign origin?

#### *Family and intergenerational transmission*

- Are they living with their family? Are they living with both parents?
- What is the education of their parents?
- What is their parents' job position? How about their occupation status/work arrangements?
- Do their parents speak English?
- Do their parents own or rent the place where they now live?
- Do they have siblings? What is their age? What school/level do they attend?
- What language do they use at home? Why?
- What are the main celebrations in their family?
- Is their family religious? What religion do they adhere to?
- Do their family members participate in any organisation? Any Albanian organisation?
- Are there discussions at home about home/host country culture and future life plans?
- Are there discussions at home about issues of host country politics, host country media and issues of discrimination?
- How would they describe the immediate family and the relationships with their family members?
- What customs do they expect their children to follow: Albanian customs or host country ones?
- Are there conflicts between parents and teenagers in their families? Of what nature?

*Legalisation and naturalisation*

- What is their current legal status?
- What citizenship do they have?
- When and how did they gain the citizenship of the host country?
- Do they plan to apply for the citizenship of the host country? Why?
- What is their experience with getting information and accessing legalisation/naturalisation procedures?

*Final word*

- Is there anything else they would like to add?
- Do they think this study is useful?
- What questions would they ask in case they were conducting this study?



### **APPENDIX 3.** Interview questions for parents

#### *Family background*

- How old are they?
- How many members are there in the family? How old are they?
- What is their marital status?
- What is their education now?
- What is their partner's level of education?
- What is their partner's employment status?
- Do they have relatives in Greece/Italy/UK?

#### *Migration history and experience*

- How many years have they been staying in Greece/Italy/UK for?
- What was their education and profession in Albania?
- What do they do now?
- How many hours/jobs do they work?
- What kind of work arrangements/status do they have?
- What level of income do they earn?
- Where are their employers and co-workers from?
- What kind of neighbourhood do they live in?
- Do they own or rent the place where they live?
- What is their current legal status in Greece/Italy/UK?
- What is their knowledge of the host country language?
- What do they think of the attitude of Greek/Italian/British society towards immigrants? How about the attitude towards the Albanians?
- Do they feel discriminated? If yes, where and how does this happen?
- What would they say are the main reasons for the emergence of discrimination towards them?
- What is their opinion about Greek/Italian/British society and the opportunities that it offers to people of foreign origin? How about Albanian immigrants?
- Who are the people they mostly socialise with?
- Where do they see their future and why?

#### *Ethnic identity and transnational ties*

- Mention a few categories that can be relevant to the participant as a person. Let's say a man/woman, they are a worker, they are Greek may be; or may be Albanian, they are a parent, husband/wife, they may be an artist or sports person. Are there other categories s/he would like to add?
- Which one of these is the most important for them?
- Which is the one that most represents them and that they mostly experience in their everyday life?
- Is there any variation in this ranking in time and space? Why?
- Where do they feel they belong to?
- Which ethnic group they identify with? Why?
- Which are the main celebrations in their family?

- Are they and their family religious? What religion do they adhere to?
- What language do they speak at home? Why?
- Are they member of any Albanian organisation? Other organisations?
- Which TV channels/shows do they and their family mostly watch?
- Do they read Albanian press in the country of residence?
- Do they socialise with Albanian families in Greece/Italy/UK?
- Do they have relatives in the country where they reside (Greece/Italy/UK) or other European countries?
- How often do they meet with these relatives? What kind of relationships do they have with them?
- Are they in touch with Albania? In what ways?
- Do they visit Albania? When and how often?
- How would they describe their experiences during these visits? What do visits to Albania mean to them?

#### *Expectations towards their children's future*

- How would they describe their children's school performance?
- Do they help their children with their homework and studying?
- How far do they think their children will go with education?
- What is their expectation about their children's relationships with host society?
- What do they want their children to become in the future?
- Where do they think they will have a better future? Why?

#### *Intergenerational transmission*

- What language do they use at home? Why?
- Do their children speak Albanian? Would they think of sponsoring Albanian language classes for their children?
- Are there discussions at home about home/host country culture and future life plans?
- What customs do they expect their children to follow: Albanian customs or host country ones?
- What do they expect regarding their children's future partner?
- Are there discussions at home about host country politics towards people of foreign origin?
- What is their opinion on Greek/Italian/British media and any potential impact on the integration of the Albanian community?
- Does it happen for issues of discrimination to be discussed at home?
- Are they in touch with Albania? In what ways?
- Do they go to Albania? What does this mean to them?
- What do the visits in Albania mean to the family? Who takes the initiative for such visits?
- Have these visits become more/less frequent along the years? What has affected the change in frequency?
- Are there conflicts between parents and teenagers in their families? Of what nature?

#### *Legalisation and naturalisation*

- What is their current legal status in the UK?
- What citizenship do they have?
- When and how did they gain the citizenship of the host country?
- Do they plan to apply for the citizenship of the host country? Why?
- What is their experience with getting information and accessing legalisation/naturalisation procedures?
- How would they describe the contacts with state administration institutions of the host country?
- What is the role of the Albanian government towards the Albanian communities abroad?

*Final word*

- What would you say are the main issues that the Albanian community in London/Thessaloniki/Florence faces?
- Is there anything else you would like to add?

#### **APPENDIX 4.** Interview questions for teachers

##### *Educational system*

- What are the criteria for the selection of pupils?
- In their opinion, does the school system consider the presence of children of immigrant background in Greece/Italy/the UK? How?
- Are there special classes or assistants for children of foreign origin?

##### *Teachers*

- What is the percentage of children of immigrant origin in their school?
- Are there discussions in the class about diversity?
- How do they address/integrate these issues during their teaching? Can they give examples of these cases?
- Do they recognise/promote the different cultural and linguistic background in the classroom?
- Have there been any cases of complaints from students/parents of ethnic origin regarding discrimination at school? If yes, what has been their outcome?
- Are there conflicts between children of immigrant origin and natives in the class?
- What are the reasons for such conflicts?
- What role would they assume in such cases?
- What is their expectation about the performance of immigrant-origin students?
- What is the performance of immigrant-origin teenagers? How about Albanian-origin teenagers?

**APPENDIX 5.** Interview questions for key informants

- Please describe the main activities you are engaged with that relate to the Albanian community in London/Thessaloniki/Florence.
- What are the main activities of the organisation that you lead?
- How do you know the Albanian community in London/Thessaloniki/Florence? What is the total number of Albanian immigrants there? How about the number of the second-generation Albanians?
- How would you describe the integration of Albanian in London/Thessaloniki/Florence?
- Are there differences between men and women, Albanians from different regions of Albania, according to the level of education?
- What would you say about the organisation of Albanians as an ethnic group in London/Thessaloniki/Florence?
- Which are the main characteristics of the integration of the Albanian second-generation teenagers in London/Thessaloniki/Florence?
- What is the attitude of the Albanian-origin teenagers in London/Thessaloniki/Florence towards education?
- What are the main factors that would affect their performance?
- What would you say in regard to the social integration of these teenagers in schools?
- How do Albanian origin teenagers in London/Thessaloniki/Florence identify? Please comment on language retention, participation in organisations, attitudes towards visits to Albania, etc.
- How are their relations with their parents?
- Do they keep contacts with the Albanian culture and the Albanian community in London/Thessaloniki/Florence?
- What would you say are their main goals for the future?

## **APPENDIX 6. Information sheet**

This form contains information about the study. Please, have a look at it; it will take a few minutes to read it. Please also note that this information is not exhaustive. You can ask any questions that may arise during and after reading it or the interview/group session.

### **1. What is the purpose of this study?**

This study will explore the experience of the children of Albanians living in Greece, Italy and the UK. I am particularly interested to know about the adolescents, aged 14 years and above. The purpose is to understand their living and educational experience in Greece/Italy/UK, and to explore their relations with Albanian culture and/or Greek/Italian/British society. For this reason I will also talk to Albanian parents and teachers in high schools.

### **2. Who is conducting this study?**

The study is conducted by Zana Vathi. I work as a researcher at the University of Sussex in the UK. My work is directed and supervised by Prof Russell King in this University. This project is part of a European project which involves 11 other countries and researchers across Europe and is funded by the European Commission ([www.tiesproject.eu](http://www.tiesproject.eu)).

### **3. What will be involved if I take part in this study?**

We will talk for 1-2 hours about the theme I explained above. You can decide whether you want to talk to me, and the day, time and place that you prefer to meet me. I will ask you some questions and will record the conversation in a tape-recorder or will take notes, depending on your wish. You can decide whether you want to answer to any of the questions and what you want to say to me. In case you do not want to continue the talk, you can leave at any time. If in doubt, you can ask me to change the information you gave me. Although I would highly appreciate if

you decided to talk to me, it is not possible to me to compensate you materially for your time and effort.

#### **4. Where and when will the study take place?**

This study has started in April 2007 and it will end in April 2010. The research will take place in three different cities. I will stay in winter 2007 and the beginning of 2008 in London, in spring 2008 in Thessaloniki, and autumn 2008 in Florence. During 2009 and beginning of 2010 I will write my thesis and prepare publications for scientific journals.

#### **5. What information will be collected?**

I will ask you about your/your children's/your pupils' living and educational experience. Among others we will talk about your/their friendships circles, your/their grades, your/their relationships with parents, relatives, teachers, your/their trips to Albania, etc.

#### **6. Do I have to take part?**

You are not obliged to take part. However, this can be an interesting experience. It also gives you the opportunity to share your concerns about problems you may be experiencing and influence the attitude of institutions and governments towards the education and the future of teenagers of foreign origin.

#### **7. Will all information be kept confidential?**

Yes. My work is for study and scientific purposes only. Thus, the information you will give me will be read only by me and my supervisors. I will transcribe and analyse your interview and may include some of your expressions as you say them in my writings. I will not include your name or other indications that disclose you and your experiences to others, unless you prefer not to remain anonymous. I will not talk about you or our talk with other people and will treat the recorded material with great care.

**8. How can I contact the researcher?**

Researcher's contact details:

Zana Vathi

Marie Curie/DPhil researcher

Sussex Centre for Migration Research

University of Sussex

Falmer, Brighton

BN1 9RH

United Kingdom

[z.vathi@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:z.vathi@sussex.ac.uk)

During the period of fieldwork:

Address:

Brighton/Thessaloniki/Florence: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you very much!

Yours

Zana Vathi



**APPENDIX 7.** Research consent form for all participants**Title of the project:**

The Children of Albanian Migrants

in Europe:

Ethnic Identity, Transnational Ties and Pathways of Integration.

Have you read the information sheet? Yes No

Have you had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the study? Yes No

Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions? Yes No

Have you received enough information about the study? Yes No

Who have you spoken to? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study:

- at any time Yes No

- without having to give a reason for withdrawing? Yes No

Do you agree to take part in this study? Yes No

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX 8.** Research consent form for parents for the participation of their  
children

**Title of the project:**

The Children of Albanian Migrants  
in Europe: Ethnic Identity, Transnational Ties and Pathways of Integration.

Have you read the information sheet? Yes No

Have you had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the study? Yes No

Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions? Yes No

Have you received enough information about the study? Yes No

Who have you spoken to? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you understand that your child is free to withdraw from the study:

- at any time Yes No

- without having to give a reason for withdrawing? Yes No

Do you agree for your child to take part in this study? Yes No

Is there any other information you want me to consider during the interview?

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Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_